

COVID-19 Hardship

COUNCIL POLICY NO. 140

1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

To outline options for Council to assist ratepayers who are experiencing temporary financial hardship due to the impacts of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic on the 30 January 2020 and a State of Emergency was declared in Victoria on the 16 March 2020.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to ratepayers who have an outstanding rate or charge account with Council who are experiencing temporary financial hardship due to COVID-19.

This policy allows Council to withhold interest raised on outstanding charges levied, place a hold on referring accounts to Council's debt collection agency for recovery and allows Council to put in place payment plans tailored specifically to the debt holders needs.

3. REFERENCES

Local Government Act 1989

4. POLICY

Council to hold interest on all outstanding debts during the COVID-19 pandemic and hold off on legal action of rates and charges.

The interest hold date will begin from the declaration of the State of Emergency, 16 March 2020 and stay in place for 6 months, to be reviewed by 16 September 2020.

If the debt is not paid in full by this time and COVID-19 Hardship policy has not been extended, Council's Rate Relief – Policy No. 034 will apply and interest will be accrued from policy end date.

Rates notices will continue to be issued while interest holds are in place.

5. RELATED POLICIES

- Policy No. 034 – Rate Relief

6. RESPONSIBILITY

Council will review the COVID-19 Hardship policy within 6 months of the adopted date.

Council will notify account holders of outstanding balances at the expiry of COVID-19 Hardship policy timeframe.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

Members of the public may inspect all Council policies at Gannawarra Shire Council's Kerang and Cohuna offices or online at www.gannawarra.vic.gov.au.