

COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy

Preamble

Bass Coast Shire Council recognises that the current Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in financial hardship for some individuals and businesses. Council has established this policy for assessing Covid-19 financial hardship applications that enables ratepayers who suffer, or would suffer financial hardship if they were to pay the debt, to seek assistance from Council. The policy empowers Council to recover outstanding debt, wherever possible, in a manner that does not create or exacerbate a ratepayer's financial hardship.

Policy objectives

Council will assist ratepayers who have been impacted by Covid-19 pandemic and are experiencing financial hardship by providing options to help them meet their obligation of paying rates and/or special charge scheme account.

Policy statement

The management and recovery of outstanding revenue is an important aspect of Council's financial management function. The principles that will apply in the management of this policy are as follows:

- Issue notices detailing amounts owing, due dates and payment methods available.
- Consider applications from ratepayers to deviate from the standard payment options by entering into an appropriate payment arrangement.
- Consider applications for deferment as provided by the Local Government Act 1989 and this policy.
- The application process will be as unobtrusive as possible for the applicant.
- Where possible the applicant will be provided with short term assistance to meet their financial commitments.
- Council expects every applicant who has been granted assistance under this policy to make agreed payments on time, and where possible actively seek appropriate financial counselling services to assist themselves further. It is the applicant's responsibility to contact the Revenue Office if they cannot adhere to their arrangement.

Rate Relief Measure	Qualifying criteria
<p>4th Instalment – Due 31 May 2020, deferred to 30 June 2021 (Interest free) 1st Instalment – Due 30 September 2020, deferred to 30 June 2021 (Interest free) 2nd Instalment – Due 30 November 2020 (to be reviewed) 3rd Instalment – Due 28 February 2021 (to be reviewed) 4th Instalment – Due 31 May 2021 (to be reviewed)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Principal place of residence 2. Loss of employment, self or partner 3. Significant business impairment, revenue loss of at least 30%
<p>4th Instalment – Due 31 May 2020, deferred to 30 June 2021 (Interest free) 1st Instalment – Due 30 September 2020, deferred to 30 June 2021 (Interest free) 2nd Instalment – Due 30 November 2020 (to be reviewed) 3rd Instalment – Due 28 February 2021 (to be reviewed) 4th Instalment – Due 31 May 2021 (to be reviewed)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business premises owned by ratepayer 2. Significant business impairment, revenue loss of at least 30% 3. Qualification for other government support (payroll tax reduction, withholding tax adjustment, Jobkeeper allowance)
<p>Landlord 4th Instalment – Due 31 May 2020, deferred to 30 June 2021 (Interest free) 1st Instalment – Due 30 September 2020, deferred to 30 June 2021 (Interest free) 2nd Instalment – Due 30 November 2020 (to be reviewed) 3rd Instalment – Due 28 February 2021 (to be reviewed) 4th Instalment – Due 31 May 2021 (to be reviewed) ** This deferral is conditional on the landlord passing the benefit through to the lessee (the business or effective ratepayer)**</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business premises leased by effective ratepayer 2. Significant business impairment, revenue loss of at least 30% 3. Qualification for other government support (payroll tax reduction, withholding tax adjustment, Jobkeeper allowance)
<p>4th Instalment – Due 31 May 2020, deferred to 30 June 2021 (Interest free) 1st Instalment – Due 30 September 2020, deferred to 30 June 2021 (Interest free) 2nd Instalment – Due 30 November 2020 (to be reviewed) 3rd Instalment – Due 28 February 2021 (to be reviewed) 4th Instalment – Due 31 May 2021 (to be reviewed)</p>	<p>For persons experiencing severe financial hardship including all Government pensioners.</p>
<p>Interest free deferral of special charge scheme account up to 30 June 2021</p>	<p>Principal place of residence</p>

General Information

Applicants will be required to supply sufficient information to support their case for assistance under this Policy. Additional information or time to verify information may be sought before the application proceeds.

If an applicant intentionally provides inaccurate or misleading information, Council can immediately revoke any assistance given and terminate the arrangement. If an applicant wishes to appeal a decision made in relation to their situation, the Chief Financial Officer will consider the appeal and make a determination.

Reference to other documents

Local Government Act 1989

Review process

6 Months from date of adoption

Approval

Adopted by Council at its meeting held on

Date 20 May 2020

Signed by the Mayor, Cr Brett Tessari

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brett Tessari', is written over a light grey rectangular background. The signature is cursive and includes a long horizontal stroke at the end.