

Council Policy

Policy Title:	Rates Postponement Policy
Responsibility:	Finance
First Adopted:	12 June 2012
Review Date:	Three Yearly During Review of Long Term Plan
Review Frequency:	Three yearly



Policy Objectives

- 1.1 To provide a measure of rating relief to property owners where the full payment of rates would cause extreme financial hardship.

Principles

- 1.1 This policy outlines Council's temporary rates relief for extreme financial hardship. The policy provides for remission on all rates except service targeted rates. All ratepayers will pay at least one set of targeted rates.
- 1.2 The policy targets the following outcomes-

Healthy Communities and People

Caring for our people

- That there is access to affordable and effective health and education services.
- That leadership is trusted, transparent, accountable and visionary and takes a co-ordinated approach in finding solutions.

Background

- 1.1 Section 110 of the Local Government Act 2002 and Section 87 of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 provides for Council to postpone rates in cases of extreme financial hardship. The "Act" provides the necessary authority to grant relief after Council's full enquiry and on being satisfied that financial hardship exists or would be caused by non-postponement.

Policy Statement

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Rates postponement is available only on properties that are defined as residential and occupied by the ratepayer applicant(s) as their place of residence.
 - (a) Holiday homes are not eligible.
 - (b) Postponement is available only to applicant(s) who are the legal owners of their property. This excludes homes owned by family trusts, units and retirement villages

held under licences to occupy and any other arrangement where the applicant is not the registered owner.

- 1.2 The person entered on Council's rating information database as the "ratepayer" must not own any other rating units or investment properties (whether in the District or in another District).
- 1.3 When considering whether extreme financial hardship exists, all of the ratepayer's personal circumstances will be relevant including, but not limited to, the following factors: age, physical or mental disability, injury, illness and family circumstances.
- 1.4 Ratepayer equity in the property is not less than 75% of the rateable value of the property.
- 1.5 No property owner(s) would be eligible for rates postponement relief if the total assets held exceed:
 - (a) The property to which the application for rates postponement relief relates;
 - (b) Normal household chattels;
 - (c) A car;
 - (d) Other assets of whatever nature (including cash and investments) with a total value of more than \$20,000 - (updated three yearly in line with LTP review).
- 1.6 Applications must be received by Council for processing before 1 May to be applied to rates for the following financial year.

(Note: Council's financial year starts on 1 July and ends on 30 June each year. For example, to apply for rates to be postponed for the year starting 1 July, the application must be received by Council before 1 May.)
- 1.7 All applications will be considered on a case by case basis and must meet the criteria described above.
- 1.8 The ratepayer is required to make a minimum contribution towards the rates on the property, by paying service charges for Water, Solid Waste Collection and Sewerage as applicable.

2.0 CRITERIA

- 2.1 The postponement will continue to apply until:
 - (a) The death of the ratepayer(s) (rates owned fall due within three months after grant of probate or letters of administration); or
 - (b) The ratepayer(s) ceases to be the owner of the rating unit; or
 - (c) The rating unit ceases to be the principal place of residence of the ratepayer(s) – (this means that if the ratepayer(s) moves out of the home into residential care, technically the postponed rates become due and payable. In practice, however, if Council is satisfied that the house remains in the ratepayer(s) name and remains empty, the postponement will remain for that financial year.
 - (d) A date specified by Council; whichever is the sooner.
- 2.2 The property must be insured for its full value and evidence of this produced annually (this applies both to properties which are currently insured and to properties which are currently uninsured)

- 2.3 Each approval for postponement is valid for a period of one year only. Ratepayers must re-apply each year as their gross income and other details may change. Thus, a new application form, which includes a new voluntary declaration, is required to be completed if a further year's rates postponement is required.
- 2.4 Postponed rates and any part thereof may be paid at any time.
- 2.5 Applicants may elect to postpone a lesser amount than the maximum they would be entitled to under Council's policy.
- 2.6 If accrued rates and charges reach 70% of the value of the property, Council will not postpone any further rates but instead require that current rates are paid as they fall due.
- 2.7 Any part of the postponed rates may be paid at any time.

3.0 REVIEW

- 3.1 Ratepayers to be given details of postponed rates each year
- 3.2 Not less than once annually every ratepayer, whose rates have been postponed under this policy, will be provided with:
 - (a) A statement showing the total annual rates currently due;
 - (b) A breakdown showing year by year the total amount of the postponed rates and interest charges.
- 3.3 Following the end of the financial year, a schedule of rates postponed will also be provided to Council (annually), listing all the properties for which rates postponements have been granted
 - (a) And which remain outstanding
 - (b) When rates are no longer eligible to be postponed on the property, all postponed rates will be payable within three months

4.0 LEGAL ADVICE

- 4.1 All applicants are advised to seek legal advice before postponing rates.

Annotations

Date	Description
June 2012	First Adopted