

EC4 – Adoption of Revised Hardship Policy

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TRIM 5907

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Council's current Hardship Policy was last revised in April 2015.
- A Notice of Motion seeking support for primary producers affected by drought was considered at the March 2018 Council meeting where it was resolved to investigate and implement measures to support them, including a review of the Hardship Policy.
- A review of the Policy has identified a number of amendments that will provide greater clarity of the requirements of the Policy and the Local Government Act.
- It is recommended that the Revised Hardship Policy be adopted.

REPORT

The policy provides transparency when assessing claims for relief due to financial hardship, ensuring a fair and equitable approach is followed.

The policy will comply with the relevant sections of the Local Government Act, the Regulations and other applicable legislation and will allow for a fair and equitable approach to assessing genuine claims of financial hardship.

This policy was last revised and adopted by Council in April 2015. Best practice suggests that this Policy should be reviewed at least every three years and therefore a review was recently undertaken.

A Notice of Motion seeking support for primary producers affected by drought was considered at the March 2018 Council meeting where it was resolved to investigate and implement measures to support them, including a review of the Hardship Policy.

The provisions of the Hardship Policy are largely dictated by the requirements of the Local Government Act 1993 and it is difficult to single out one category in favour of another due to the requirement to maintain equity. Notwithstanding, the Policy wording has been amended explicitly limiting eligibility for hardship relief to residential and farmland rating categories only (refer section 4.1.4). This limitation was previously only implied.

The review has also highlighted opportunities to reword a number of sections of the Policy to provide greater clarity of the requirements of both the Policy and the Local Government Act 1993. Each of the changes are detailed in the attached summary sheet.

Efficient and Effective Council
Report to the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on Monday 21 May 2018

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While undertaking the review, it was identified that the use of a Financial Hardship Relief Application Form would help improve the process of assessing applications by ensuring all necessary information is provided by the applicant, rather than relying on the applicant to include all relevant details in a written letter. The new application form is attached to this report.

CONSULTATION

- Debt Recovery Officer
- Revenue Team Leader
- Chief Financial Officer

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This matter has no financial impact on Council's adopted budget or forward estimates.

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED IN SEPARATE BOOKLET

1. Summary of Changes to the Hardship Policy
2. Revised Hardship Policy
3. Financial Hardship Relief Application Form

RECOMMENDATION

That the Revised Hardship Policy be adopted.