

Hardship Policy

PURPOSE

City West Water's vision is to be a truly sustainable water business. For us, sustainability means balancing our social, environmental and economic responsibilities. This Policy outlines how we seek to meet our residential customer hardship responsibilities.

OBJECTIVES

In meeting our residential customer hardship responsibilities we seek to achieve the following strategic objectives:

Economic – efficiency and growth

- Financial strength to deliver sustainability
- Prudent and efficient

Customer – right product, right price, right way

- Services matched to customer needs
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To achieve these objectives we are committed to:

- Treating all customers experiencing financial hardship with dignity and respect;
- Not discriminating against customers experiencing financial hardship;
- Exempting residential customers who are experiencing hardship from further recovery action or restriction of supply;
- Providing information to residential hardship customers on all support programs, water efficiency programs, dispute resolution processes and payment options that are available;
- Confirming any alternative payment method with a residential hardship customer within 10 days of reaching an agreement;
- Implementing the Essential Services Commission's Hardship Guaranteed Service Level (GSL) program for residential customers
- Advising residential hardship customers that if they choose not to be involved in the hardship program, then any payment arrangement will 'cease to apply' and the customer will be advised that normal debt recovery practices will commence; and
- Referring residential hardship customers in extreme financial difficulty to an accredited financial counselling agency.

SCOPE

This Policy reflects our aspiration to lead by example in enhancing the sustainability and capability of our community. This Policy applies to all residential customers identified by themselves, CWW or an independent financial counsellor, as experiencing financial hardship, either temporarily or permanently.

STRATEGY

This Policy guides City West Water's customer contact centre and credit management processes, which are outlined in its Customer Charter and the Essential Services Commission's Customer Service Code. This Policy is implemented via CWW's Residential Hardship Guidelines, which:

- Define hardship for our business;
- Encourage the early identification of residential customers experiencing hardship;
- Explain the rights and responsibilities of our customers;
- Direct the provision of relevant and timely information for residential hardship customers;
- Allocate accountability for managing residential hardship customers within the business; and
- Provide for training of our staff to ensure residential customers in hardship are treated with sensitivity and without value judgments.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We assign accountability for implementing this Policy to our management team. The Executive Management Committee is responsible for incorporating our residential hardship responsibilities into its business planning activities. The Board will oversee implementation of the policy through its Environment and Social Sustainability Committee.

The General Manager Corporate Services is responsible for directing, reviewing and reporting upon the implementation of the Hardship Policy in CWW. All employees are responsible for developing an understanding of how their work functions are affected by this Policy.

REFERENCES

IRD -136	Residential Hardship Guidelines
PRO-75	Procedure for Managing Enquiries and Complaints
POL-44	Social Policy
POL-23	Sustainability Policy
POL-22	Community Engagement Policy
POL-20	Risk Management Policy

REVIEW PROCESS

The Policy and associated Guidelines will be reviewed annually.

Approved By Board 22 June 2011.