

HARDSHIP

Effective date: 04 June 2014

Responsible officer(s): General Manager Customer and Community

Next revision date: June 2017

Purpose

Central Highlands Water understands that some customers may find it difficult to pay their account due to financial hardship. CHW will offer customers a number of payment assistance methods to enable customers to stay connected. Create an informative, respectful and engaging environment supporting customers identifying themselves to CHW in financial hardship and a path to move back into normal payment arrangement.

Policy statement

CHW is committed to open and inclusive dialog with, its customers, the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV), financial counsellors and other customer representative bodies, to improve the mutual understanding of complex issues involving hardship. CHW is also keen to develop commercially realistic and innovative assistance programs for customers experiencing financial hardship.

Central Highlands Water is committed to:

- assist customers experiencing financial hardship to manage their payments to ensure that they remain connected;
- create an informative, respectful and engaging environment where customers requiring support can identify themselves to CHW; and,
- increase the opportunity for customers in financial difficulties to move back into normal payment arrangements.
- Provide training to staff dealing with customers in hardship to enable them to treat customers with sensitivity and without making value judgements.
- Engage in discussion with customers to determine the best available financial hardship assistance options for their circumstances.
- Not engage in legal action, restriction of water supply, and additional debt recovery actions, against customers who meet the necessary criteria and continue to make payments according to an agreed schedule;
- Develop and maintain employee guidelines for liaising with customer experiencing financial difficulty and undertake regular staff briefing and training.

Responsible for implementation

- Customer contact centre
- Community engagement and marketing

Related policies

- Code of Conduct
- Privacy & Data security
- Tariff

Related and referenced documents

- Central highlands water customer charter
- Customer service code
- Instrument of Delegations
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- Valuation of Lands Act 1960
- Victoria water industry guidelines (Oct 2010) for unexplained usage and undetected leak enquiries
- Water Act 1989
- Water industry residential hardship guide

(END POLICY)