

VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

Policy Type – Operational

Effective date: July 2017

Responsible officer(s): General Manager Customer and Community

Next revision date: July 2019

Purpose

Central Highlands Water (CHW) understands that some customers may find it difficult to pay their account due to financial difficulty or due to family violence. 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 difficulty and a path to move back into normal payment arrangements.

Policy statement

Central Highlands Water (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 financial difficulty and family violence. CHW is also keen to develop commercially realistic and innovative assistance programs for customers experiencing financial difficulty.

Central Highlands Water is committed to:

- Assist customers experiencing financial difficulty or family violence 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.
- Increase the opportunity for customers in financial difficulty to move back into normal payment arrangements.
- Provide training to staff dealing with customers in financial difficulty or family violence to enable them to treat customers with sensitivity and without making value judgements.
- Engage in discussion with customers to determine the best available financial 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
- Communications and Engagement

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
- Victorian Water Industry Guidelines (Oct 2010) for unexplained usage and undetected leak enquiries
- Water Act 1989
- Water industry residential hardship guide

(END POLICY)