



**NEXT  
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## **Financial Hardship Policy and Respectful Collections**

**How to achieve best outcomes for ratepayers and your council.**

Grace Pelle

11<sup>th</sup> April 2019

City of Playford

## Demographics (2016 ABS)

92K residents

32K households

12% over 65

29% born overseas

Most socio-disadvantaged council area (855 on SEIFA)

38% rented properties

11% NFP/SAHT

29K jobs

13% Unemployment

23% Youth unemployment

**City of Playford** is located in Adelaide's outer northern suburbs, about 30 km's from the CBD and includes metro, commercial, rural and agricultural land.



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# SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY

Recently introduced their Rates Hardship Policy and Guidelines and Respectful Collections model.

Our strategy is a long term plan to engage with and ensure ratepayers can manage their council rates in a sustainable manner.



# FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

Financial Hardship is where the ratepayer has the intention, but not the financial capacity to make payment within payment terms.

They may be experiencing

- Temporary hardship
- Ongoing hardship

# HARDSHIP TOOLBOX

- Hardship Assessment template.
- Payment arrangement calculator ensures arrears and ongoing rates are paid in the one weekly, fortnightly or monthly payment.
- Centrepay and direct debit over the phone.
- Fines exemption when meeting their agreed payments.
- Protection from further debt recovery action and costs.
- Direct phone line access to the Rates team.
- Ratepayers treated in a professional, empathetic and constructive manner.
- Staff training supplied by Lifeline for “The Accidental Counsellor”.
- Referral to see a free accredited Financial Counsellor.

ACCOUNT SUMMARY		
1 Balance		974.45
Frequency of Payment		
<b>Fortnightly</b>		
USAGE CALCULATOR		
Bill 1	\$	300
Bill 2	\$	346
Bill 3	\$	336
Bill 4	\$	336
1 Year's Consumption	\$	1,318
PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT		
Payment Amount	\$	100.00
Increment Date		20/02/2019
Inst No	Due Date	Amount
1	20/02/2019	\$ 100.00
2	6/03/2019	\$ 100.00
3	20/03/2019	\$ 100.00
4	3/04/2019	\$ 100.00
5	17/04/2019	\$ 100.00
5	1/05/2019	\$ 100.00
7	15/05/2019	\$ 100.00
8	29/05/2019	\$ 100.00
9	12/06/2019	\$ 100.00
0	26/06/2019	\$ 100.00
1	10/07/2019	\$ 100.00
2	24/07/2019	\$ 100.00

PAYMENT ESTIMATES					
<b>Weekly</b>					
Paid within	6 months (<\$1k)	1 year (<\$2k)	2 years (<\$3k)	By negotiation (3k+)	
Weekly Usage	\$ 25.34	\$ 25.34	\$ 25.34		\$25.34
Arrears Payment	\$ 37.48	\$ 18.74	\$ 9.37		\$74.66
<b>Payment Arrangement</b>	<b>\$ 62.82</b>	<b>\$ 44.08</b>	<b>\$ 34.71</b>		<b>\$100.00</b>
Instalments Required	26	52	104		13.05
			Years to pay		0.25
<b>Fortnightly</b>					
Paid within	6 months (<\$1k)	1 year (<\$2k)	2 years (<\$3k)	By negotiation (3k+)	
Fortnightly Usage	\$ 50.69	\$ 50.69	\$ 50.69		\$50.69
Arrears Payment	\$ 74.96	\$ 37.48	\$ 18.74		\$49.31
<b>Payment Arrangement</b>	<b>\$ 125.65</b>	<b>\$ 88.17</b>	<b>\$ 69.43</b>		<b>\$100.00</b>
Instalments Required	13	26	52		19.76
			Years to pay		0.76
<b>Monthly</b>					
Paid within	6 months (<\$1k)	1 year (<\$2k)	2 years (<\$3k)	By negotiation (3k+)	
Monthly Usage	\$ 109.83	\$ 109.83	\$ 109.83		\$109.83
Arrears Payment	\$ 162.41	\$ 81.20	\$ 40.60		-\$9.83
<b>Payment Arrangement</b>	<b>\$ 272.23</b>	<b>\$ 191.03</b>	<b>\$ 150.43</b>		<b>\$100.00</b>
Instalments Required	6	12	24		-\$9.18
			Years to pay		-\$8.27

# ENGAGEMENT WITH THE FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SECTOR

Financial Counselling service ensures ratepayers can access local free, confidential, accredited and professional support and advocacy.

Financial Counsellors liaise direct with the council rates staff with the provision of:

- Supply an Authority to Act from ratepayer
- Supply Income and Expenditure statement
- Mutually negotiate an acceptable payment arrangement
- Assist with setting up centrepay

## Financial Counselling Services Northern Suburbs

**ANGLICARE SA**



Phone 1800 759 707  
Email: [financialcounselling@anglicaresa.com.au](mailto:financialcounselling@anglicaresa.com.au)  
91-93 Elizabeth Way  
Elizabeth SA 5112



The Salvation Army  
AUSTRALIA SOUTHERN TERRITORY



National Debt helpline  
Phone 1800 007 007  
Email: [fcsupport@aus.salvationarmy.org](mailto:fcsupport@aus.salvationarmy.org)

**UCWB**  
Hold your head high

UnitingCare  
Wesley Bowden



Phone 8245 7100 UCWB Outreach  
Email: [ucwb@ucwb.org.au](mailto:ucwb@ucwb.org.au)

Centrelink offices  
7 Langford Drive  
Elizabeth SA 5112

Munno Para library  
Munno Para Shopping centre  
Smithfield

**LUTHERAN  
community care**



Phone 7070 6711  
Email: [davorenpark@lccare.org.au](mailto:davorenpark@lccare.org.au)  
22 Heytesbury Road  
Davoren Park SA 5113

**UNITING  
COMMUNITIES**



Phone 8202 5980  
Email: [FConduity@unitingcommunities.org](mailto:FConduity@unitingcommunities.org)  
2/2b Morialta Drive  
Smithfield SA511

# EASE OF PAYMENT

- Mutually agreed payment arrangements
- Centrepay set up over the phone
- Direct Debit available online or over the phone
- Ensured payment options clearly promoted on communications and website
- Utilizing smart working online services for self service options

“ An easy way to stay on top of your Council rates is by setting up an ongoing direct debit – you can simply set up your account online and pay your rates how you like, whether that is weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly. Register to set up direct debit payments by visiting Council's Online Services”

 <p><b>In Person / By Telephone</b></p>	 <p><a href="http://www.playford.sa.gov.au">www.playford.sa.gov.au</a></p>	 <p><b>Telephone &amp; Internet Banking - BPAY®</b></p>	 <p><b>Post Billpay</b> Australia Post</p>	 <p><b>Centrepay Deductions</b></p>	<p><b>Council's online service</b></p>
<p><b>In Person</b> Payments accepted at Council's Customer Service Centres. See overleaf for locations. Payments acceptable by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EFTPOS</li> <li>- MasterCard</li> <li>- Visa</li> <li>- Cash (Elizabeth office only)</li> </ul> <p><b>By Telephone</b> Minimum Payment \$20 Credit card payments accepted by telephone on 1300 278 903.</p>	<p><b>Internet Payment</b> Minimum Payment \$20</p> <p>Visit Council's website <a href="http://www.playford.sa.gov.au">www.playford.sa.gov.au</a> and access "Report and Pay Online".</p> <p>You will need your Assessment No. supplied on the front of this notice. (DO NOT INCLUDE ANY SPACES).</p>	<p>Minimum Payment \$20 Visit your bank's website or call your bank to pay by BPAY. You will need to quote Biller Code 303206 and your Assessment No. supplied on the front of this notice. (DO NOT INCLUDE ANY SPACES)</p> <p><b>BPAY VIEW®</b> Managing bills with online banking has never been easier. BPAY View® sends your notices electronically straight to the same online bank you use to pay them.</p>	<p>Australia Post Billpay Minimum Payment \$20 Pay your rates at Australia Post or pay online at <a href="http://auspost.com.au/postbillpay">auspost.com.au/postbillpay</a> or pay by phone on 13 18 16.</p> <p>For all options you will need your Billpay code and Reference No. Those are supplied on the front of this notice. (DO NOT INCLUDE ANY SPACES).</p>	<p>Use Centrepay to arrange regular deductions towards your rates direct from your Centrelink payment.</p> <p>Contact the City of Playford Rates Team on 8256 0333 to set up Centrepay Deductions over the phone.</p>	<p>Please scan the QR code with your smart phone or iPad to make a payment at council's website.</p>  <p><b>Direct Debit</b> Sign up to pay your rates by Direct Debit at <a href="http://reportandpay.playford.sa.gov.au">reportandpay.playford.sa.gov.au</a> Choose to pay quarterly, monthly, fortnightly or weekly online.</p> 

# RESPECTFUL COLLECTIONS

Our strategy to improve recovery of overall debts includes

- Early proactive customer engagement regarding overdue rates
- Training and support for staff to manage difficult calls
- Payment escalation request guidelines
- SMS/ email reminders
- Clear and concise messaging on letters and other communications
- Contact customer's before referral for debt recovery (where possible)
- Active collection of contact information through Customer Contact Centre
- Promote first point resolution-the first phone call is the most important one
- Defaulted payment arrangement follow up by SMS.
- Referral to hardship assistance where appropriate.
- Working with collection agency to ensure best outcomes.
- Developed monthly reporting and KPI's.
- Developed a Debt Recovery Policy and Guidelines.
- Created a Mortgagee (bank) contact register.
- Improved online services for self service.
- Promoting our services in the social inclusion sector.



# POSITIVE OUTCOMES

- First point resolution reduces repeated contact
- Online services promote self service
- Reduction in debt recovery activity and costs
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Reduction in aggressive and abusive calls
- Reduction in complaints from customers
- Reduction in aged debt and arrears
- Improved KPI results
- Improved brand reputation with ratepayers

# QUESTIONS?



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