



8. FINANCE

Policy 8.5

PENSION REBATES

Version 7

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OBJECTIVE

To provide the framework for providing eligible pensioners with the appropriate financial concessions with regard to Council Rates and Charges.

POLICY

Council will provide a rebate of rates to eligible pensioners under Section 575 of the Local Government Act 1993.

1. Eligibility

The policy applies to pensioners who are ratepayers and who have a current Blue Pensioner Concession Card (PCC Card) issued by Centrelink/Veteran Affairs or who have a Gold Card embossed with either TPI, EDA, WW or MRCA.

The property to which the rebate is applied must be:

1. Solely or jointly owned by the pensioner with the Blue PCC Card or Gold Card (TPI, EDA, WW or MRC); and
2. The applicant's sole or principal place of living; and
3. The applicant must be residing at the property; and
4. There must be a dwelling on the property where a rate or charge is levied on.

If an applicant has a War Widows gold card and does not have a current blue Pensioner Concession Card, they should contact the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) to test their eligibility for the DVA income support supplement. Eligibility is subject to an income and assets test. Holders of cards other than those listed above are not eligible for the concession. For assistance from the DVA call 133 254.

Concession Amounts

The rebate available to eligible pensioners is set out in Section 575(3) of the Local Government Act (1993). The total amount by which:

- (a) all ordinary rates and charges for domestic waste management services levied on any land for the same year are reduced is not to exceed \$250, and
- (b) all water supply special rates and charges so levied are reduced is not to exceed \$87.50, and
- (c) all sewerage special rates or charges so levied are reduced is not to exceed \$87.50

An additional (voluntary) rebate may be granted by Council in accordance with Section 582 of the Local Government At 1993. Council may waive or reduce rates, charges and interest by any person prescribed by the regulations who is in receipt of a pension, benefit or allowance under the Social Security Act 1991 of the Commonwealth.

The maximum amounts of the pension rebates allowed are adjusted downwards proportionately subject to whether the person making the application is solely liable or jointly liable with eligible dwelling occupiers.

Granting of a Concession

Pensioners requesting a rebate are required to submit an application on the prescribed form available from Council's website or by contacting the Council. Council will only accept applications for pensioner rebates made on a form approved by the Director General of the Office of Local Government.

Applicants are required to produce a current Pension Concession Card as part of the application determination and to sign the Centrelink consent form.

The application must be signed by the applicant or a person with a power of attorney for the applicant. A copy of the Power of Attorney should be provided with the application.

The eligible pensioner must meet the eligibility criteria to receive a pension concession.

Once assessed, the applicant will be notified in writing of the Council's decision together with details of the outstanding rates and charges..

Verification of pensioner status

Validation of eligible pensioner reference card holders will be carried out regularly in conjunction with Centrelink and Department of Veteran Affairs.

If the validation results in the eligibility as not confirmed, Council will remove any further concession. Re-instatement of a concession will require reapplication. A letter will be forwarded to the ratepayer advising them that the rebate has been removed from the account and any balance remaining to be paid.

Date of Effect

Pension rebates will generally be granted from the year the application is first made.

To receive the full year's rebate the pensioner must be eligible on the date of service of the Rates Notice. If the pensioner becomes eligible after service of the Rate Notice they are entitled to a pro-rata amount of the rebate, which is determined as follows:

Date of Eligibility	Amount of Rebate
Eligible after issue of Rates Notice but before 30 September	$\frac{3}{4}$ (75%)
1 st October – 31 December	$\frac{1}{2}$ (50%)
1 st January – 31 st March	$\frac{1}{4}$ (25%)
1 st April – 30 th June	NIL

The rebate will be shown on the Rates and Charges notice and will be deducted from the total amount payable.

Backdated Rebates

Applications for previous years may be considered on a case-by-case basis with supporting documentation.

Any backdating of the rebate will generally be limited to only the prior year of application.

Reversal of non-eligible rebates

If an eligible pensioner becomes ineligible for any reason, the Council rebate will be written back proportionally according to the number of full quarters left in the rating year (Section 584 of the Local Government Act 1993).

Aged Care Facility

If a ratepayer is required to leave their principal place of living for a temporary period (less than 6 months) to enter hospital or an aged care facility with an intention to return to their home, Council has the discretion to assess whether the ratepayer is still eligible for a pensioner concession. Factors for consideration include whether the property is vacant or only occupied by the ratepayer's spouse during the time of their absence.

If a ratepayer (receiving a pensioner concession on a property considered to be their sole or principal place of living) is required to permanently enter an aged care facility for health or care reasons, the pensioner concession will be written back proportionally according to the number of full quarters left in the rating year (Section 584 of the Local Government Act 1993).

Eligibility to avoid hardship (Section 577 of the Local Government Act 1993)
Section 577 enables council to make an order deeming certain persons who are jointly liable with an eligible pensioner, but who are not themselves eligible, to be eligible pensioners for the purpose of a mandatory reduction. Section 577 also enables an order to be made deeming an eligible pensioner to be solely liable where the person otherwise is not.

Definitions

Pensioner Concession Card (PCC Card) – Entitlement card that has been issued by either Centrelink or the Department of Veteran Affairs

TPI – Gold Card embossed with TPI meaning Totally & Permanently Incapacitated

EDA – Gold Card embossed with EDA meaning Extreme Disability Allowance

WW – Gold Card embossed with WW mean War Widow

MRC – Gold card embossed with MRCA meaning Military Rehabilitation Compensation

Eligible pensioner in relation to a rate or charge levied on land on which a dwelling is situated means a person-

- (a) who is a member of a class of persons prescribed by the regulations, and
- (b) who occupies that dwelling as his or her sole or principal place of living.

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