

Rates Remission Policy			
Approved by	Pending Approval by Council		
Department	Finance		
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Relevant Legislation	Local Government Act 2002, Local Government (Rating) Act 2002		
NCC Documents Referenced	<p>Published in the Long Term Plan 2018-2028 which was reviewed between March/Apr 2018 and adopted on 29-06-18</p> <p>Reviewed and amended as part of 2019/20 Annual Plan</p> <p>Reviewed and amended as part of 2020/21 Annual Plan</p>		

Purpose

To enable Council to remit all or part of the rates on a rating unit under Section 85 of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 where a Rates Remission Policy has been adopted and the conditions and criteria in the policy are met.

Policy

1. Remission of Penalties

Objective

The objective of this part of the Rates Remission Policy is to enable Council to act fairly and reasonably in its consideration of rates which have not been received by the Council by the penalty date due to circumstances outside the ratepayer's control.

Conditions and Criteria

Penalties incurred will be automatically remitted where Council has made an error which results in a penalty being applied.

Remission of one penalty will be considered in any one rating year where payment has been late due to significant family disruption. This will apply in the case of death, illness, or accident of a family member, at about the times rates are due.

Remission of the penalty will be considered if the ratepayer forgets to make payment, claims a rates invoice was not received, is able to provide evidence that their payment has gone astray in the post, or the late payment has otherwise resulted from matters outside their control. Each application will be considered on its merits and remission will be granted where it is considered just and equitable to do so

Remission of a penalty will be considered where sale has taken place very close to due date, resulting in confusion over liability, and the notice of sale has been promptly filed, or where the solicitor who acted in the sale for the owner acted promptly but made a mistake (e.g. inadvertently provided the wrong name and address) and the owner cannot be contacted. Each case shall be treated on its merits.

Penalties will also be remitted based on the application, by officers, of Council criteria established after Council has identified that Significant Extraordinary Circumstances have occurred that warrants further leniency in relation to the enforcement of penalties that would otherwise have been payable. The criteria to be applied will be set out in a council resolution that will be linked to the specific Significant Extraordinary Circumstances that have been identified by Council.

Penalties will also be remitted where Council's Chief Financial Officer considers a remission of the penalty, on the most recent instalment, is appropriate as part of an arrangement to collect outstanding rates from a ratepayer.

2. Remission for Residential Land in Commercial or Industrial Areas

Objective

To ensure that owners of rating units situated in commercial or industrial areas are not unduly penalised by the zoning decisions of this Council and previous local authorities.

Conditions and Criteria

To qualify for remission under this part of the policy the rating unit must:

- Be situated within an area of land that has been zoned for commercial or industrial use. Ratepayers can determine where their property has been zoned by inspecting the City of Napier District Plan, copies of which are available from the Council office.
- Be listed as a 'residential' property for differential rating purposes. Ratepayers wishing to ascertain whether their property is treated as a residential property may inspect the Council's rating information database at the Council office.

Rates will be automatically remitted annually for those properties which had Special Rateable Values applied under Section 24 of the Rating Valuations Act 1998 up to 30 June 2003, and for which evidence from Council's Valuation Service Provider indicates that, with effect from the 2002 revaluation of Napier City, the land value has been penalised by its zoning. The amount remitted will be the difference between the rates calculated on the equivalent special rateable value provided by the Valuation Service Provider and the rates payable on the Rateable Value.

Other ratepayers wishing to claim remission under this part of the policy must make an application in writing addressed to the Chief Financial Officer.

The application for rates remission must be made to the Council prior to the commencement of the rating year. Applications received during a rating year will be applicable from the commencement of the following rating year. Applications will not be backdated.

Where an application is approved, the Council will direct its Valuation Service Provider to inspect the rating unit and prepare a valuation that will treat the rating unit as if it were a comparable rating unit elsewhere in the district. The ratepayer may be asked to contribute to the cost of this valuation. Ratepayers should note that the Valuation Service Provider's decision is final as there are no statutory right of objection or appeal for values done in this way.

3. Remission for Land Subject to Special Preservation Conditions

Objective

To preserve and encourage the protection of land and improvements which are the subject of special preservation conditions.

Conditions and Criteria

Rates remission under this Section of the policy relates to land that is subject to:

- A heritage covenant under the Historic Places Act 1993; or
- A heritage order under the Resource Management Act 1991; or

- An open space covenant under the Queen Elizabeth the Second National Trust Act 1977; or
- A protected private land agreement or conservation covenant under the Reserves Act 1977; or
- Any other covenant or agreement entered into by the owner of the land with a public body for the preservation of existing features of land, or of buildings, where the conditions of the covenant or agreement are registered against the title to the land and are binding on subsequent owners of land.

Ratepayers who own Rating Units meeting this criteria may qualify for remission under this part of the policy.

Rates will automatically be remitted annually for those properties which had Special Rateable Values applied under Section 27 of the Rating Valuations Act up to 30 June 2003, and which meet the above criteria. The amount remitted will be the difference between the rates calculated on the equivalent special rateable value provided by the Valuation Service Provider and the rates payable on the Rateable Value.

Other ratepayers wishing to claim remission under this part of the policy must apply in writing to the Council office, and must provide supporting documentary evidence of the special preservation conditions, e.g. copy of the Covenant, Order or other legal mechanism.

The application for rates remission must be made to the Council prior to the commencement of the rating year. Applications received during a rating year will be applicable from the commencement of the following rating year.

Applications for remission under this part of the policy will be approved by the Council. The Council may specify certain conditions before remission will be granted. Applicants will be required to agree in writing to these conditions and to pay any remitted rates if the conditions are violated.

Where an application is approved, the Council will direct its Valuation Service Provider to inspect the Rating Unit and provide a special valuation. The ratepayer may be asked to contribute to the cost of this valuation. Ratepayers should note that the Valuation Service Provider's decision is final as there is no statutory right of objection or appeal for values done in this way.

The equivalent special rateable value will be determined by the Valuation Service Provider on the assumption that:

- The actual use to which the land is being put at the date of valuation will be continued; and
- Any improvements on the land will be continued and maintained or replaced in order to enable the land to continue to be so used.

It will be assessed taking into account any restriction on the use that may be made of the land imposed by the mandatory preservation of any existing tenements, hereditaments, trees, buildings, other improvements, and features.

4. Remission of Uniform Annual General Charges (UAGC) and Targeted Rates of a Fixed Amount on Rating Units Owned by the Same Owner

Objective

To provide for relief from UAGC and Targeted Rates of a fixed amount per Rating Unit or Separately Used or Inhabited Parts of a Rating Unit, where two or more Rating Units are owned by the same person or persons, and are:

- part of a subdivision plan which has been deposited for separate lots, or separate legal titles exist; or
- but the Rating Units may not necessarily be used jointly as a single unit, and each Rating Unit does not benefit separately from the services related to the UAGC and Targeted Rates.

Conditions and Criteria

Remission of UAGC and Targeted Rates of a fixed amount applies in the following situations:

- Unsold subdivided land, where as a result of the High Court decision of 20 November 2000 'Neil Construction and others vs. North Shore City Council and others', each separate lot or title is treated as a separate Rating Unit, and such land is implied to be not used as a single unit.

All remissions under this part of the policy will be approved by the Chief Financial Officer.

5. Remission for Water Rates (by meter)

Objective

To provide ratepayers with a measure of relief by way of partial rates remission where, as a result of the existence of a water leak on the Rating Unit which they occupy the payment of fuller rates is inequitable, or where officers are convinced that there are errors in the data relating to water usage.

Conditions and Criteria

- The existence of a significant leak on the occupied Rating Unit has been established and there is evidence that steps have been taken to repair the leak as soon as possible after the detection, or officers have reviewed the usage data and are convinced that the usage readings are so abnormal as to require adjustment.
- The Council or its delegated officer(s) as determined from time to time and set out in the Council's delegations register shall determine the extent of any remission based on the merits of each situation.

6. Remission to smooth the effects of change in rates on individual or groups of properties

Objective

To enable Council to provide rates remission where, as a result of a change in Council policy or other change that results in a significant increase in rates, Council decides it is equitable to smooth or temporarily reduce the impacts of the change by reducing the amount payable.

Conditions and Criteria

- Remission of part of the value based rates to enable the impact of a change in rates to be phased in over a period of no more than 3 years.

To continue with any existing rates adjustment where, due to change in process, policy or legislation Council considers it equitable to do so subject to a maximum limit of 3 years to a remission made under this clause in the policy.

7. Remission for Special Circumstances

Objective

To enable Council to provide rates remission for special and unforeseen circumstances, where it considers relief by way of rates remission is justified in the circumstances.

Conditions and Criteria

Applications for rates remission must be made in writing by the ratepayer or their authorised agent.

Each circumstance will be considered by Council on a case by case basis. Where necessary, Council consideration and decision will be made in the Public Excluded part of a Council meeting.

The terms and conditions of remission will be decided by Council on a case by case basis. The applicant will be advised in writing of the outcome of the application.

8. Remission of Rates in Response to Significant Extraordinary Circumstances being identified by Council.

Objective

To enable Council to provide rates remission to assist ratepayers in response to Significant Extraordinary Circumstances impacting Napier's ratepayers.

Definitions

Financial Hardship: for the purpose of this provision is defined as the inability of a person, after seeking recourse from Government benefits or applicable relief packages, to reasonably meet the cost of goods, services and financial obligations that are considered necessary according to New Zealand standards. In the case of a ratepayer who is not a natural person, it is the inability, after seeking recourse from Government benefits or applicable relief packages, to reasonably meet the cost of goods, services and financial obligations that are considered essential to the functioning of that entity according to New Zealand standards.

Conditions and Criteria

For this policy to apply Council must first have identified that there have been Significant Extraordinary Circumstances affecting the ratepayers of Napier, that Council wishes to respond to.

Once Significant Extraordinary Circumstances have been identified by Council, the criteria and application process (including an application form, if applicable), will be made available.

For a Rating Unit to receive a remission under this policy it needs to be an "Affected Rating Unit" based on an assessment performed by officers, following guidance provided through a resolution of Council.

Council resolution will include:

1. That the resolution applies under the Rates Remission Policy; and
2. Identification of the Significant Extraordinary Circumstances triggering the policy (including both natural and man-made events); and
3. How the Significant Extraordinary Circumstances are expected to impact the community (e.g. financial hardship); and
4. The type of Rating Unit the remission will apply to; and
5. Whether individual applications are required or a broad based remission will be applied to all affected Rating Units or large groups of affected Rating Units; and
6. What rates instalment/s the remission will apply to; and
7. Whether the remission amount is either a fixed amount, percentage, and/or maximum amount to be remitted for each qualifying Rating Unit.

Explanation

The specific response and criteria will be set out by Council resolution linking the response to specific Significant Extraordinary Circumstances. The criteria may apply a remission broadly to all Rating Units or to specific groups or to Rating Units that meet specific criteria such as proven Financial Hardship, a percentage of income lost or some other criteria as determined by council and incorporated in a council resolution.

Council will indicate a budget to cover the value of remissions to be granted under this policy in any specific financial year.

The types of remission that may be applied under this policy include:

- The remission of a fixed amount per Rating Unit either across the board or targeted to specific groups such as:
 - A fixed amount per residential Rating Unit

- A fixed amount per commercial Rating Unit

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least once every three years.