

# CENTRAL TELECOMS PTY LTD – FINANCIAL HARDSHIP POLICY

1<sup>st</sup> May 2020

## Overview

This financial hardship policy is intended to assist customers who may experience financial hardship in relation to our goods and services. This policy is applicable to current customers and former customers.

We are here to help. We will endeavour to work with you to help you respond to financial difficulty, whether temporary or long-term, in relation to our goods and services. We are committed to helping customers facing financial hardship maintain telecommunications access and working with you to find a sustainable solution. Any help we can give will depend on your individual circumstances, and we provide help on a case-by-case basis.

Should you be experiencing financial hardship in relation to our goods or services, you can contact us in the following ways:

- by calling our customer service team during the hours of 9am to 5:00pm [Sydney time] on 1300 677 406
- by e-mailing us at any time at [info@centraltelecoms.com.au](mailto:info@centraltelecoms.com.au).
- by writing to us at any time at PO Box 147, Terrigal, NSW. 2260.

You can also contact a community financial counsellor or consumer advocate who deal with financial difficulty matters. You can talk to a phone financial counsellor or a consumer advocate who deals with financial difficulty matters from anywhere in Australia by ringing 1800 007 007 (minimum opening hours are 9.30 am – 4.30 pm Monday to Friday). This number will automatically switch through to the service in the State or Territory closest to you. Alternatively, you can find the financial counselling service nearest to you by visiting <http://www.financialcounselingaustralia.org.au/Corporate/Find-a-Counsellor>.

The procedures and assistance set out in this policy are provided free of charge to our customers.

In this policy, **financial hardship** means a situation where:

- (a) a customer is unable to discharge the financial obligations owed by the customer under their customer contract or otherwise discharge the financial obligations owed by the customer to us, due to illness, unemployment, being the victim of domestic or family violence, or other reasonable temporary or ongoing cause; and
- (b) the customer believes that they are able to discharge those obligations if the relevant payment arrangements or other arrangements relating to the supply of our goods or services are changed.

## Options for assisting with financial hardship

We make the following options available to assist individual customers in cases of financial hardship. We will choose which option is available to you, depending on what is most appropriate in the circumstances.

*Options for keeping the customer connected:*

- (a) spend controls;
- (b) restriction of service, in respect of overall or specific services;
- (c) transferring the customer to a pre-paid service;
- (d) transferring the customer to a contract which includes hard caps or shaping;
- (e) low cost interim options until the customer can continue with original payments;

*Options for suitable financial arrangements:*

- (a) temporarily postponing or deferring payments (for a longer period than would typically be offered to customers requesting an extension outside of financial hardship arrangements);
- (b) agreeing on an alternative arrangement, plan, or contract, including discussing pre-paid services;
- (c) waiving late payment fees;
- (d) waiving cancellation fees;

**Information we may require to make an assessment of financial hardship**

We may require you to provide certain information so that we can make an assessment of financial hardship, for example income details, details regarding the relevant services (e.g. telephone number, broadband) and your most recent contact details.

We will make an assessment of financial hardship having regard to your particular circumstances, the size and duration of the debt owing, how long you have been a customer, and any other circumstances we consider relevant.

Where it appears that the financial arrangement will need to be long term, or we consider the amount to be repaid large or significant, or you have not been a customer for very long, or we reasonably believe there is a possibility of fraud, we may need further or more detailed information from you. Such information may include, for example:

- a statutory declaration or official written communication from a person or support group that is familiar with your circumstances;
- evidence that you consulted a recognised financial counsellor; and
- a statement of your financial position.

If we require supporting documentation from you in order to assess your eligibility for assistance under our financial hardship policy, we will tell you where to send it.

You should also note that:

- (a) the assessment may be based on the information provided by you or other information available to us;

- (b) where the requested information is not provided, an assessment may not be made;
- (c) the provision of false or incomplete information may result in us cancelling any hardship arrangements; and
- (d) if the information provided by you is not sufficient to make an assessment of eligibility under the financial hardship policy, we will tell you what other information is needed to make such an assessment.

### **Notification of assessment**

We will tell you how long it will take to make an assessment for assistance. In any case, this will be within 5 working days after receipt of the final information from you.

You may request that we give the details of a financial hardship arrangement to you in writing.

You must promptly inform us if your circumstances change during the term of the financial hardship arrangement.

### **Suspension of credit management action**

We will suspend credit management action whilst an arrangement under our financial hardship policy is being discussed or is in place unless:

- (a) you do not meet your obligations under the financial hardship arrangement. In that event, if you do not contact us to discuss a new arrangement, we will take reasonable steps to contact you before taking credit management action;
- (b) we decide it is reasonable to do so given the circumstances (e.g. to prevent a further increase in the debt owed);
- (c) you agree that the financial hardship arrangement is unable to be completed.

### **Restarting Credit Management action**

We will only restart credit management action when:

- (a) paragraph (c) immediately above is unable to be completed; or
- (b) either paragraph (a) or (b) immediately above is met (as applicable to your individual situation) and we are unable, using reasonable steps, to make contact with you.

### **Complaints**

Please note that our complaints handling policy may also be applicable (available at <https://centraltelecoms.com.au/complaints>), for example if you wish to seek review of the outcome of a financial hardship application.