



RATES REMISSION POLICY



NAPIER
CITY COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera o Ahuriri

Rates Remission Policy



Adopted by	Napier City Council on 01 June 2021
Relevant Legislation	Local Government Act 2002, Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 Building Act 2004 Rating Valuations Act 1998
NCC Documents Referenced	Reviewed and amended as part of 2020/21 Annual Plan Reviewed and amended as part of Revenue & Financing Policy Review (adopted 11 February 2021). Reviewed and amended in preparation for the Long Term Plan 2021-2031.

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 Farmland Under 5 Hectares

Objective

To provide rates relief for farms where a Rating Unit is less than 5 hectares.

Conditions and Criteria

- The Rating Unit must be used predominantly for land based agriculture or farming activities.
- Remission will be revoked where a change in land use has occurred.

The amount remitted will be the difference between the rates calculated on a Residential or Rural Residential differential and a Rural differential.

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 Council by the 30th of April prior to the commencement of the rating year. Any remission for applications received during a rating year will be applicable from the commencement of the following rating year. Remissions will not be backdated. Declarations must be renewed every 3 years.

3. Remission of Refuse Collection and/or Kerbside Recycling Targeted Rates

Objective

To enable Council to provide rates remission where, refuse collection or kerbside recycling services are not able to be provided, or where a ratepayer receives a reduced service.

Conditions and Criteria

- Remission of part of the charge may be provided where a Council service is not provided or where Council officers have approved an alternative service.
- Remission of part of the charge be provided where a ratepayer applies for a reduced service, and a Council officer deems a reduced service to be appropriate. Under this condition, Refuse Collection may be reduced from a weekly service to a fortnightly service (or from a thrice-weekly service to a weekly service for properties within the CBD).
- Applications for remission must be made in writing by the ratepayer or their authorised agent.
- Remission may be revoked where a change in service has occurred.

Applications must be made to Environmental Solutions. Applications will be advised to the Chief Financial Officer for approval.

4. Remission for Residential Properties Used Solely as a Single Residence

Objective

To enable Council to provide rates remission where properties that are identified as having separately used or inhabited portions are used solely as a single family residence.

Conditions and Criteria

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

A signed declaration must be provided to Council stating that the properties are used as a single family residence. The application must be made to Council by the 30th of April prior to the commencement of the rating year. Any remission for applications received during a rating year will be applicable from the commencement of the following rating year. Remissions will not be backdated. Declarations must be renewed every 3 years.

Accommodation arrangements must not be for pecuniary benefit.

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 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.

The Council considers a significant increase to be 25% or more over the current assessed rates for a single property.

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 (including Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) where appropriate), 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

The review timeframe of this policy will be no longer than every three years.



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