

## **FINANCIAL HARDSHIP POLICY**

### **Definition of Financial Hardship**

A situation where a customer is unable, reasonably, because of illness, loss of employment or any other reasonable cause, to discharge of the financial obligations in relation to our services but where the customer expects to be able to do so over time if payment arrangements are changed.

### **Identification of Financial Hardship**

Next Business Telecom considers financial hardship a state that involves a customer's inability to pay bills, rather than an unwillingness to do so. Customer hardship can arise from a variety of situations, and can be of either limited duration or long term. Common contributing factors to financial hardship include:

- Loss of employment of you or a family member
- Illness, including physical incapacity, hospitalisation or mental illness of you or a family member
- Family breakdown
- A death in the family

### **Contacting Us Regarding Financial Hardship**

We encourage you to contact us if you experience any difficulties paying our services. Please contact us by calling 1300 788 029 if you would like to discuss any Financial Hardship matters with us.

You can do so from Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5pm.

### **Financial Hardship Process**

When assessing your eligibility for Financial Hardship, we may ask you to provide certain documents such as:

- A statement of your financial position including details such as your Financial circumstances, employment information, income details (including any government assistance), debt statements, whether this is temporary or not.
- 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,

We may not be able to make an assessment of your circumstances if you do not provide us with the requested information. We may use the information you provide as well as other information available to us. Once we received all required information, we will let you know within 7 working days whether you are eligible for assistance under our Financial Hardship Policy.

If you are eligible, will work with you to come to an arrangement that allows you to pay your outstanding charges in a way that does not worsen your financial position. Where appropriate we will discuss means

with you how to limit your spend (this may include barring some service features) during the time of our arrangement and thereafter.

We will not charge you for assessing your Financial Hardship circumstances or for administering the matter.

### **Finding a financial counsellor**

There are also a range of financial support services available such as free financial counselling services offered in each state and territory of Australia. These organisations are in no way affiliated with Next Business Telecom, but may be able to help you. You can talk to a phone financial counsellor 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.financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au/Corporate/Find-a-Counsellor>.

You can also visit the [ACMA website](#) which has information on managing your telecommunication services during financial hardship.