

Hardship

POLICY

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As Chief Executive, I fully support Sydney Trains' Hardship Policy. Sydney Trains understands that private landowners may not always be able to afford the cost of bushfire mitigation work, which is necessary to protect the community and to ensure the safety of Sydney Trains' electricity supply. Sydney Trains is committed to ensuring that where it seeks recovery of costs of bushfire mitigation work from private landowners who are experiencing hardship, those landowners have access to fair and equitable payment options.

Vision

A rail electricity network which is safe from bushfire hazards and a fair and equitable system for recovering payment from persons on whose behalf Sydney Trains performs essential bushfire mitigation work.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide assistance and support to persons who are experiencing difficulties due to hardship in connection with their obligation to pay for the cost of works done by Sydney Trains for the purpose of bushfire prevention.

Policy Statement

Under the *Electricity Supply Act 1995* (NSW) (**Electricity Supply Act**), Sydney Trains has the power to direct an owner of premises on bushfire prone land to do bushfire risk mitigation work on that land. If the owner of the premises does not perform the work within the required time, Sydney Trains has the power to enter the premises and do the required work on behalf of the owner. In some circumstances, Sydney Trains is entitled to then recover the reasonable cost of this work from the owner of the premises.

It is a requirement of the Electricity Supply Act that Sydney Trains have and make publicly available a policy for the purpose of assisting persons who are experiencing difficulties due to hardship in connection with payment of the cost of works done by Sydney Trains for the purpose of bushfire prevention.

This policy was approved by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal on 24 June 2016.

The most current version of the policy can be accessed on our website at https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/ab-out-us/access-to-information/policy-documents#Sydney_Trains_policies_published. We will ensure that affected persons are provided with information about the hardship policy when first notified by Sydney Trains about bushfire risk mitigation work that is to be undertaken.

Financial hardship

This policy applies to a person who:

- is the owner of a premises on which Sydney Trains has performed bushfire mitigation work under the Electricity Supply Act; and
- is experiencing difficulties due to hardship in connection with recovery by Sydney Trains of the cost of that work.

For the purpose of this policy, a person is experiencing "hardship" if they are a landowner who is willing to meet their financial obligations, but does not have the financial capacity to do so. This may include but is not limited to any one or more of the following factors:

- unemployment;
- low income;
- reliance on government assistance;
- financial stress due to disability or health issues;
- the size and unexpectedness of the sum incurred.

This list is not exhaustive and we will consider each case on its own basis.

Flexible payment options

We will offer assistance to persons who are experiencing difficulties due to financial hardship.

In cases where financial hardship has been identified, we will work with the party to establish flexible payment options if required.

These flexible payment options may be:

- a one-off extension of time to pay the full amount owing on the account; or
- agreed payment amounts over a specific time period.

If you are the owner of premises on which Sydney Trains has performed bushfire mitigation work under the Electricity Supply Act and are experiencing difficulties due to hardship in connection with recovery by us of the cost of that work, please contact Manager Financial Standards on (02) 8922 0192 to discuss how we can assist you.

Customer rights and obligations

We will recognise your rights and obligations in all circumstances where this policy applies.

Customer's rights

- To be treated fairly by Sydney Trains.
- To maintain confidentiality of information provided to Sydney Trains for the purposes of this hardship policy.
- To be provided with flexible payment options that are clear and easy to understand.
- To be protected from any action for recovery of the cost of bushfire risk mitigation works done by Sydney Trains during the term of the flexible payment plan.

Customer's obligations

- To assist Sydney Trains in its assessment of hardship and flexible payment options by providing all reasonable information, documentation and evidence requested by Sydney Trains.
- To be honest in your dealings with Sydney Trains.
- To comply with the requirements of the flexible payment option once it is in place.

- To promptly advise Sydney Trains if your financial circumstances change while your case is being assessed; while flexible payment options are being considered; and while providing repayment to Sydney Trains under one or more flexible payment options.

Dispute Resolution

If you have a complaint or grievance arising from this Hardship Policy, you can contact Sydney Trains on 131 500 or by post at Customer Relations Unit, PO Box K349, Haymarket NSW 1238.

Your complaint or grievance will be referred to the Deputy Executive Director Asset Management for resolution at first instance.

If your complaint or grievance is not resolved by the Deputy Executive Director Asset Management, it will be referred to the Chief Executive of Sydney Trains for resolution in the second instance.



Howard Collins OBE
Chief Executive