

Media Release

The Hon Nick Staikos MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs
Minister for Local Government



Thursday, 5 February 2026

NEW SUPPORT FOR VICTORIANS FACING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

The Allan Labor Government is strengthening support for Victorian ratepayers by providing councils with new, fair and clear guidance for people experiencing financial or other forms of hardship.

Minister for Local Government Nick Staikos today announced new Ministerial Guidelines on the Payment of Rates and Charges, designed to better support vulnerable and at-risk ratepayers experiencing financial hardship, family violence, and economic abuse – are now in effect.

The guidelines, developed in consultation with ratepayers, stakeholders and councils, set clear expectations on how councils recognise and respond to hardship in a fair, compassionate and proportionate way.

This includes flexible rate payment options designed to ease financial pressures on local ratepayers, such as deferrals, waivers, or payment plans.

The new guidelines also clarify councils' responsibility to provide easy online and in-person access to their hardship policies and application processes.

The guidelines also support councils to refer ratepayers to a financial counsellor for assistance, reducing barriers to ratepayers submitting hardship or financial hardship applications.

Councils collect rates and charges annually to fund critical community services, as well as manage community facilities and open spaces, such as parks, libraries, community centres, roads and footpaths, and sporting facilities.

Rate increases have been capped at 2.75 per cent for the upcoming 2026-27 financial year to ease cost of living pressures on Victorians and to meet the forecasted Consumer Price Index.

To learn more about how council rates are set, visit localgovernment.vic.gov.au/council-innovation-and-performance/council-rates-and-charges.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Local Government Nick Staikos

"These hardship guidelines will ensure councils treat ratepayers who are dealing with difficult financial or personal circumstances with compassion, fairness and understanding."

"By providing clear guidance, we're giving councils the tools they need to support vulnerable Victorians facing prolonged hardship or unforeseen hurdles such as job loss, illness, or other changes to family circumstances."