POLICY	ROXBY COUNCIL	Responsible Department	Finance
		Original Adoption Date	24.02.2011
		Current Adoption Date	**25.09.2024**
		Date of Next Review	25.09.2026

ELECTRICITY, WATER & RATES PAYMENTS	
Latest Review Changes	Formatting and editorial amendments to consolidate payment options.
Previous Council Reviews	24.02.11, 24.02.12, 30.05.13, 23.06.16, 31.08.22

Applicable Legislation

Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA) Pricing Principles

Local Government Act 1999

National Energy Retail Law (South Australia) Act 2011

Ombudsman Act 1972

Office of the Technical Regulator (OTR)

Roxby Downs (Indenture Ratification) Act 1982

Water Industry Act 2012

Related Policies

Rate Debt Recovery Policy

Roxby Council Municipal Rates Hardship Policy

Roxby Power Hardship Policy

Roxby Power Supply Terms and Conditions

Roxby Water Hardship Policy

Roxby Water Supply Terms and Conditions

Related Procedures

Bad Debt Policy, Electricity Bond Policy

Reference Documents

Reference to the Strategic Plan 2021-25: ES2, IES1, IES2

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to outline the various legislative requirements that relate to the payment of accounts for electricity supply (Roxby Power), water & sewerage services (Roxby Water) and municipal rates (Council)

Each aspect has different legislative requirements, and this policy provides appropriate guidance to create an understanding for relevant officers, consumers and the public.

2. PAYMENT ALTERNATIVES

Council has a range of methods for customers to pay accounts, but each can vary slightly according to the relevant legislative controls. Broadly speaking they are classified as follows:

2.1. Payment Options

Payment Options for consumers to pay regular accounts and should not be confused with arrangements that may be required to pay any arrears outside normal billing terms. These options are defined as what is acceptable to the Council as the minimum terms of payment and should be advertised as such in all communications.

2.2. Payment options

Payment options can be by either of the following;

- Default option as laid down in the relevant legislation.
- Discretionary option which Council is prepared to assist customers generally. Any such discretionary option must be under the terms and conditions as determined by Council. Should a customer fail to agree to the terms provided by Council, then the default option applies.

2.3. Payment Arrangements

Payment Arrangements refers to a situation where a customer pays amounts relating to arrears outside normal billing terms. Payment arrangements are to be submitted in writing and are to be adhered to, to avoid further action.

Water & Electricity

Payment arrangements for Water and Electricity are for a specified amount of time:

- If arrangements are made before the pay by date of the original notice, maximum of four weeks extension is given from the due date,
- If arrangements are made on or after the pay by date of the original notice, a maximum of two weeks extension is given from the arrangement submission date.

If the above terms cannot be met, the Electricity Services Officer and the Water Services Officer can negotiate terms they consider to be reasonable.

Rates

Payment arrangements for Council rates can be tailored to suit a ratepayer's circumstances. During the time of the arrangement interest and fines will accrue in accordance with the Local Government Act. At the completion of the payment arrangement and payment of account in full the fines and interest may be reversed. Any arrangements that extend past the current financial year, must be reviewed and authorised by the Chief Executive.

3. PAYMENT METHODS

Acceptable payment methods are outlined as follows:

3.1. Default Options

Default payment options available are:

- In person by cash, cheque, EFTPOS, MasterCard or Visa at the Council Office on Richardson Place Roxby Downs during business opening hours only. Payments will not be received outside of these times.
- Post - cheques to be mailed to Roxby Council, PO Box 124, Roxby Downs SA 5725.
- Online Payments via direct payment into Roxby Council's Bank Account. (only provided to limited customers)
- Payment over the phone with credit card by contacting the Council Office phone 08 8671 0010
- BPay
- Bpoint – Payments via Councils website

3.2. Discretionary Options (only available to Electricity and Water customers).

Direct Debit is an agreement between a customer and Council which allows Council to direct debit a customer's nominated bank account. The terms of any agreement are established by Council. It is the customer's responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient funds in the account to meet the agreed payment plan. Should a customer direct debit default on three consecutive occasions, Council will cancel the customers direct debit and the customer's account will revert to the default payment option. There are two types of Direct Debit options available:

- Monthly (Flexipay) – This option is to have an agreed amount debited from the customers bank account on the 20th of each month (or the following business day should the 20th fall on a non-business day). Customers are to ensure the amount on the quarterly account is paid by the pay by date. This is not a payment arrangement.
- Quarterly (Payment in Full) – This option is to have the full amount owing on a customer's account debited on the pay by date stated on the account issued (if payments have been made between the issue date and the pay by date, the balance will be debited).

An application form is required for these payment options to be nominated.

4. ELECTRICITY

Council's electricity business unit Roxby Power operates in accordance with *National* Electricity *Retail Law (South Australia) Act 2011* (the NERL Act) and the *Electricity Act 1996*. The following payment options are offered.

4.1. Default Option - Quarterly billing in arrears

Power meters are read quarterly. Customers are sent an account requesting payment in full by a specified date. If the account is not paid by the pay by date, a reminder notice is issued, showing the balance outstanding and gives a further pay by date (late fees are applied with this notice). If the amount remains unpaid by the new pay by date, then a disconnection pending notice is hand delivered to the registered property or issued via post. If payment in full is not received by the date stated on the pending disconnection notice, then the properties power is disconnected. Additional fees and charges apply for reconnection.

5. WATER & SEWERAGE

Council's water and sewerage Business Unit Roxby Water operates in accordance with provisions as determined by Council pursuant to the Roxby Downs (Indenture Ratification) Act 1982.

The following payment options are offered.

5.1. Default Option - Quarterly billing in arrears

Water meters are read quarterly. Customers are sent an account requesting payment in full by a specified date. If the account is not paid by the pay by date, a reminder notice is issued, showing the balance outstanding and gives a further pay by date (late fees are applied with this notice). If the amount remains unpaid by the new pay by date, then a final notice is issued specifying that unless an acceptable payment arrangement is entered into prior to the pay by date then Council will be forced to place the matter in the hands of the debt collector and / or issue a restriction warning notice.

Every opportunity to elicit payment is taken prior to referring the matter to a debt collector., All fees and charges associated with debt collection procedures will be passed onto the customer. The debt is to be referred to a debt collector for collection without further notice when the outstanding balance is either the lesser of two (2) quarters or $1,000 or more.

A water restriction device, when installed adjacent to the water meter substantially restricts water flow to a small amount of water, which is adequate to maintain appropriate levels of water for occupants. Additional fees and charges apply for reconnection.

Unlike electricity, water charges can remain a charge on the land and potentially be recovered when a property changes ownership. Accordingly, a water restriction device is not inserted in the first instance until all avenues of debt collection have been exhausted.

6. RATES

Under the Local Government Act 1999, rates are a charge on the land and once declared each year a rate notice is sent out. As specified in Section 181 (8), if an instalment of rates is not paid on or before the date on which it falls due,

a) they will be regarded as being in arrears; and

b) a fine of 2 per cent of the amount of the payment due will be added to the arrears. and

c) upon the expiration of each month from that day, interest of the "prescribed percentage" of the total amount in arrears (including the amount of any previous unpaid fine and interest) will be added to the debt.

If a Council receives or recovers an amount in respect of rates, the amount must be applied in the following manner;

1) in payment of any costs awarded to, or recoverable by, the council in any court proceedings undertaken by the council for the recovery of the rates;

2) in satisfaction of any liability for interest.

3) in payment of any fine.

4) in satisfaction of liabilities for rates in the order in which those liabilities arose.

6.1. Default Option – Payment in Full or Quarterly Rates Billing

When rates are declared, and quarter repayment dates are adopted, rates notices are sent out specifying the payment dates. A ratepayer may elect to pay the entire rates in full or the quarterly instalment. On a monthly basis fines are added to all outstanding arrears with fines applied quarterly. Council has an obligation to apply the provisions of the Act and reminder notices are issued upon application of quarterly fines.

7. DISPUTE HANDLING

Customers with a concern or complaint about decision made regarding payments for electricity, water and rates can request a review of the decision and should refer to the Internal Review of Council Decisions Policy. Dispute resolution with customers shall be handled in line with the requirements of Australian Standard AS4269 1995 Complaints Handling but not restricted to the minimum requirements of the standard. Should a customer be dissatisfied of the outcome of the complaint, the customer may choose to take the matter to the Ombudsman at any time.

8. REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed and evaluated no less than once every 2 (two) years.

9. AVAILABILITY

This Policy is available for inspection at the Council Office, 6 Richardson Place during ordinary business hours and is also available from Council's website https://www.roxbydowns.sa.gov.au/council/about-roxby-council/policies