



Financial
Hardship
Policy

We appreciate there are times when circumstances beyond your control can make it difficult to meet all your financial commitments.

If you're struggling to make payments to us, please let us know as soon as possible by contacting our National Claims team on:

National Claims team

Call 1300 442 676 (Select Option 1)

Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm (AEST)

Or alternatively, download the Financial Hardship Application form located on our website and send it to claims@austagencies.com.au.

Individuals Entitled to Support

Financial Hardship means you have difficulty meeting your financial obligations to us.

You may be entitled to support because you are suffering Financial Hardship if you are:

- (a) an individual Insured or a Third Party Beneficiary who owes us money – including an excess – under an insurance policy we have issued; or
- (b) an individual and we are seeking to recover money from you because we believe you caused damage or loss to either an Insured, or a Third Party Beneficiary who we cover under an insurance policy.

The support that we provide does not include support with paying the premiums under an insurance policy we have issued.

Identifying People Experiencing Financial Hardship

We have internal policies and training appropriate to our Employees' roles to help them to identify if you are experiencing Financial Hardship and decide how they may be able to provide support to you.

We encourage you or your representative, to tell us about your Financial Hardship so that we can work with you to discuss your situation and the options available to support you – otherwise there is a risk that we may not find out about it.

If you tell us, or we identify, that you are experiencing Financial Hardship, we will give you a form for you to apply for Financial Hardship support.

Keeping You Informed

We will communicate with you about your application and where possible, we will use your preferred method of communication.

If we know that you have nominated a representative, then we will keep that person updated about your request for Financial Hardship support, unless you tell us not to.

Assessing Your Request for Financial Hardship Support

When we are assessing your request for Financial Hardship support, we will consider all reasonable evidence – for example:

- (a) evidence of serious illness that prevents you from earning income;
- (b) If you advise us or we suspect you may be impacted by Family Violence.
- (c) evidence of a disability, including a disability caused by mental illness;
- (d) if you are a Centrelink client, your Centrelink statements; and
- (e) evidence of your unemployment.

We will request information from you only if it is reasonably necessary for us to assess your application for Financial Hardship support.

If, after we receive your application for Financial Hardship support, we need more information from you before we can make our decision, then we will:

- tell you the information we need as early as possible; and
- be specific about the information we need.

You have 21 Calendar Days from the date of our request to provide that information to us unless we have agreed to a different timeframe.

Complete and Submit Your Application

Complete the Insurance Investment Solutions Financial Hardship Application Form and gather your supporting documents.

If you need help with the application process, contact our **National Claims** team on **02 9930 9580**. We can take you through the process and help you complete your application, but you may still be required to supply supporting information.

Submit your completed financial hardship application and all supporting information to the **National Claims** unit via email at claims@austagencies.com.au.

Putting Recovery on Hold

If we are taking action to recover an amount from you, we will put that action on hold if we identify that you are experiencing Financial Hardship, or if you ask us for Financial Hardship support in relation to that amount.

When we put the action on hold, we will contact any Collection Agent or solicitor that we have appointed and tell them the action is on hold.

The action will stay on hold until we have assessed your application for Financial Hardship and notified you of our decision about it.

Making Our Decision

We will tell you in writing of our decision about whether to give you Financial Hardship support within 21 Calendar Days after we receive your application, unless we have asked you to provide us with more information.

If we do ask you for more information and:

- (a) you provide all information we requested, then within 21 Calendar Days of receiving it we will tell you in writing, our decision about whether to give you Financial Hardship support; or
- (b) you do not provide all information we requested within 21 Calendar Days (or by a later date we agree to), then within 7 Calendar Days of that deadline passing, we will tell you in writing, our decision about whether to give you Financial Hardship support.

If You are Entitled to Financial Hardship Support

If we decide you are entitled to Financial Hardship support, then we will work with you to implement an arrangement that could include any one or more of the following:

- (a) delaying the date on which the payment must be made;
- (b) paying us in instalments – we will not refuse a reasonable request from you to pay the amount you owe in instalments;
- (c) paying a reduced lump sum amount;
- (d) delaying one or more instalment payments, for an agreed period;
- (e) deducting the excess from the claim amount we pay you.

We will confirm the agreed arrangement with you. Where possible this will be in your preferred method of communication.

If we agree you are entitled to Financial Hardship support, but we are unable to agree about how you can be supported, then we will tell you in writing, about our Complaints process.

Releasing Your Debt

If we decide you are entitled to Financial Hardship support, then you may ask us to release, to discharge, or to waive a debt or obligation. However, you are not automatically entitled to this.

If we agree to release, discharge or waive a debt or obligation, then we will confirm this with you in writing.

You can ask us to notify any financial institution with an interest in your insurance policy that you are entitled to Financial Hardship support and, if applicable, that we have released, discharged or waived a debt or obligation. If you ask us to do this, then we will tell them about this in writing.

If You are Not Entitled to Financial Hardship Support

If we decide that you are not entitled to Financial Hardship support, we will tell you the reasons for our decision and about our Complaints process. Where possible, we will tell you this in your preferred method of communication.

If your circumstances change, then you may re-apply for Financial Hardship support in relation to the amount you owe. However, for any further application you make, it will be at our discretion whether we again put any recovery action on hold.

Standards for Collecting Money

We, as well as any Collection Agent or solicitor collecting money for us, will comply with the Debt Collection Guideline published by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

We, as well as any Collection Agent or solicitor collecting money for us, is required to:

- understand the Financial Hardship requirements in the Code; and
- receive training to help identify whether you might need Financial Hardship support.

When we, our Collection Agent or solicitor, first communicates with you about any money owed, then we will ensure that this communication will provide you with information to show that the amount we are seeking to recover from you is fair and reasonable. This may include:

- (a) information on the relevant loss and/or damage and the claim;
- (b) the actual cost of completed repairs; and
- (c) the evidence we relied on when we calculated the amount.

This communication will also include:

- (a) information about our Financial Hardship process; and
- (b) contact details to enable you to contact us to discuss Financial Hardship support or if you have any questions.

If our Collection Agent or solicitor communicates with you about money owed, then that communication will identify us as the insurer that they are acting on behalf of and will specify the nature of our claim against you.

If you tell our Collection Agent or solicitor that you are experiencing Financial Hardship, then they must notify us and give you information in writing about our Financial Hardship process.

Bankruptcy

If you tell us that you intend to declare bankruptcy, then we will work with you (or your representative) to agree on the amount owed. We will also give you written confirmation of that amount for the purposes of your declaration of bankruptcy.

If we cannot agree on an amount, then we will provide details of our Complaints process in writing.

Financial Counselling

Sometimes you may need extra help to get through a difficult time. For free, confidential, independent financial advice visit [Financial Counselling Australia](#) or call the national financial counselling hotline on **1800 007 007**.

Assistance with Translating and Interpreting

SURA have engaged the services of TIS National (Translating and Interpreting Service) to assist customers or third parties who require additional assistance with language. Customers and third parties can call **1800 131 450** for assistance 24hrs/day 7 days/week.

Financial Hardship Provisions in the Code of Practice

To find out more visit [General Insurance Code of Practice 2020](#).

Our Privacy Policy

The [Austagencies Privacy Policy](#) applies to the operations of Austagencies within Australia and explains how we manage your personal information. We safeguard your privacy and the confidentiality of your personal information and are bound by the Australian Privacy Principles which are set out in the Privacy Act 1988.

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