



HARNESS RACING VICTORIA

## FINANCIAL HARDSHIP POLICY

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# Financial Hardship Policy

**FA-PO-025  
(25 MAY 2021)**

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## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to guide on the arrangements that Harness Racing Victoria (HRV) has adopted for providing support to participants experiencing financial hardship.

## 2. SCOPE

HRV is committed to finding solutions to assist participants affected by financial hardship by working with participants with genuine hardships to find a solution that can be tailored to their circumstances.

Hardship may be experienced because of factors like:

- Death in the family;
- Household illness;
- Family and domestic violence;
- Unemployment;
- Reduced income;
- Unexpected major natural disasters e.g. Major floods, drought, fire, etc.

## 3. WHAT IS HARSHIP OR PAYMENT DIFFICULTY?

HRV considers participants to be in a position of hardship, or payment difficulty when the participant is willing to pay their account, but their financial circumstance makes it difficult for them to do so.

These participants might be facing or anticipating a short-term setback, or something ongoing. In either case, we understand that payment difficulties can come in many ways, and we aim to work with our participants to ease the burden.

## 4. PARTICIPANT ASSISTANCE

### 4.1. Early response

Although HRV wants participants to feel comfortable approaching us, we understand that starting a conversation about money troubles can be tough. For this reason, we may lookout for early warning signs or triggers that could indicate that participants may need financial support.

### 4.2. Flexible payment options

HRV understands that some participants may require extra flexibility to pay their accounts, and we could support them by providing the following assistance options:

- Instalment payments (payment plan);



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- Delayed or extended payment terms.

HRV asks that participants contact us to discuss their options if at any point they fail to make a payment by the date on which it was payable and they're having difficulty keeping up with their payments. We may be able to renegotiate a payment plan by varying the instalment amount or frequency of instalment amounts. If we don't hear from our participants, we will contact them to discuss a revised payment proposal. We will continue to provide our customers with assistance, provided they remain engaged with us. That is why it is important to contact us should circumstances change at any time.

### 4.2.1. Payment Arrangement

A payment arrangement is a schedule of payments that is negotiated with HRV to establish an agreed amount and a payment frequency. These arrangements are made with the following in mind:

- a) A participant has demonstrated a genuine effort to meet obligations in the past;
- b) A payment arrangement should be set with a known end date that clears the debt within an agreed timeframe;
- c) Repeated payment defaults may result in the cancellation of the arrangement and the initiation of placing the participants on the Unpaid Forfeits List.

### 4.3. Assessment Criteria

Several factors may be considered when assessing participants claim of financial hardship, including, but not limited to:

- A sudden change of circumstances adversely affecting participant's financial capacity to pay;
- Referral from a financial counselling agency or community organisation;
- Self-identified affordability issues;
- Any instance where a participant or their advocate identifies as being affected by family violence;
- Experience of health and mental health issues;
- The current level of income;
- Current unemployment status;
- Past payment history and sticking to easy payment arrangements;
- Any other matters of relevance, including, but not limited to; illness, family bereavement, or natural disasters.

## 5. OPERATING PROTOCOLS: RESPECT AND ENGAGEMENT

The operating protocols that are established under the Hardship policy define how all customer service staff, interact with participants to provide assistance in a respectful manner.



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HRV recognises that participants may have a range of concerns and at times this may limit their ability to engage in open dialogue regarding their circumstances. HRV approaches these discussions with sensitivity and compassion.

HRV endeavours to identify participants who may require additional support early in the collection process and create an environment where customers are more comfortable to indicate their needs. HRV understands that proactive and empathetic communication is required when dealing with participants in financial difficulty. HRV supports its participants by:

- a) Assisting participants experiencing financial hardship;
- b) Providing a mechanism that enables Persons and Bodies to feel comfortable approaching HRV about current hardship circumstances;
- c) Providing participants with an assurance that they will be treated in a consistent, equitable, and confidential manner;
- d) Providing participants with clearly defined options when applying for a deferment or waiver of fees and charges;
- e) Providing a transparent decision-making framework for HRV employees when assessing hardship claims;
- f) Ensuring this policy is fair to all participants;
- g) Ensuring HRV's debt collection practices are sensitive and responsive to financial hardship issues.

## 6. HOW TO APPLY

A request for assistance from HRV can be made in writing by completing the Financial Hardship Application Form (FA-FO-001) located on [www.thetrots.com.au](http://www.thetrots.com.au) or by calling (03) 8378 0200.

HRV will consider the request for financial hardship within 3 days of receiving an application.

Depending on the complexity of applications received, HRV may utilise external organisations that employ qualified financial counsellors to assist with financial hardship assessments.

## 7. ACCESS TO OTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

If you find yourself needing confidential support, there are several free services available that can help, such as:

- HRV Industry Assistance Program  
Phone: 1300 360 364      Website: [www.benestar.com](http://www.benestar.com)
- National Debt Helpline  
Phone: 1800 077 007      Website: [www.ndhd.org.au](http://www.ndhd.org.au)



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### 8. COMPLAINTS

HRV is committed to effective and efficient complaint handling as we recognise that complaints allow all stakeholders to contribute to the improvement of HRV's services and processes.

All complaints must be lodged in writing and contain full contact details of the complainant – name, address, and phone contact details so we can contact you. We cannot accept your complaint unless you include your name and address. Complaints without contact details will not be processed or further addressed.

The complaint must also include sufficient details to identify the person or issue that is the subject of the complaint and a statement of facts giving rise to the complaint.

Complaints can be lodged by:

- Internet – Refer to the Contact Us page on our website [www.thetrots.com.au](http://www.thetrots.com.au)
- Mail - Letter addressed to CEO, Harness Racing Victoria, PO Box 184, Moonee Ponds, Vic 3039
- Facsimile transmission addressed to CEO at 03 9214 0697

### 9. CONTACT US

If you have any questions about the Hardship Policy, call us on (03) 8378 0200 (Monday to Friday 08:30 to 5:00 pm) and we'll be happy to help.