

Financial Counselling and Disaster Recovery

FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF DISASTERS

Disasters have significant financial impacts on those who have been affected. Those impacts can be experienced in a range of ways – some more obvious than others.

Common experiences may include:

- › dealing with the cost to rebuild or repair lost or damaged property
- › reduced income due to loss or disruption of work
- › struggling to manage the household finances while trying to cope with trauma
- › vulnerability to financial abuse by a relative or close contact

Disasters create financial stress and hardship that can affect anyone, including people who have not previously needed assistance.

Underlying or unaddressed financial issues may have been present prior to the disaster, and financial impacts can be experienced for many years after the event.

HOW A FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR CAN HELP FOLLOWING A DISASTER

Financial counselling is a free and confidential service available for anyone affected by a disaster.

A financial counsellor can help someone:

- › access relief for utility bills and other payments
- › understand their government income and other entitlements
- › negotiate with their bank on debt issues
- › review and understand their insurance options
- › explore their options and can advocate on their behalf.

Speaking to a financial counsellor early can help stabilise a person's finances, reduce stress and allow them to focus on other areas of recovery.

Financial counselling is not a time-limited service – it is never too late to speak to a financial counsellor.

REFERRING A CLIENT TO A FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR

Financial counsellors combine a mix of technical skills – requiring familiarity with key legal frameworks – with general counselling skills.

Financial counsellors are professionals, working under a specific ASIC legislative instrument that exempts them from holding a credit licence or Australian Financial Services Licence (AFSL). They are required to undertake continuing professional development and professional supervision each year to maintain their membership of their professional body. They must maintain eligibility for membership under the terms of the ASIC instrument.

Financial counsellors are required to work without conflicts, and provide confidential services to people in or at risk of financial hardship. The service must be provided to their clients free of charge, and cannot be funded on a fee-for-service basis. This means financial counsellors are typically employed by community organisations, and cannot hang out a shingle as an individual practitioner. Funding for these services is typically from government or philanthropic sources.

Financial counsellors are not financial planners or advisors, accountants or lawyers, and they will make appropriate referrals to those types of professional services, including therapeutic counselling, where assistance is needed beyond their scope of practice.

YOUR LOCAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE

As part of the 2022 Flood Recovery Support Program, the Victorian Government has provided funding to increase financial counselling service capacity in the regions most severely impacted by the disaster. Contact your local financial counselling service for assistance.

CAMPASPE/LODDON:

Anglicare Victoria 1800 244 323 financial.counselling@anglicarevic.org.au

GOULBURN:

Primary Care Connect 03 5823 3200 intake@primarycareconnect.com.au

MALLEE:

Mallee Family Care 1800 623 263 fincounselling@malleefamilycare.com.au

WESTERN MELBOURNE:

Anglicare Victoria 03 9731 2500 fcwest@anglicarevic.org.au

YARRA RANGES AND MURRINDINDI:

EACH 03 9871 1817 fcintake@each.com.au

HEPBURN/CENTRAL HIGHLANDS:

CAFS Ballarat 1800 692 237 welcome@cafs.org.au

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Financial Counselling Empowerment Model in the Disaster Recovery Cycle



FCVic

Financial Counselling
Victoria Inc.