

Financial hardship and managing money

Edition 2 – July 2018

If you are worried about your finances, or struggling with debt, get help as soon as possible. Seeking advice early means you may have more options available.

MoneySmart

The MoneySmart website provides information on managing debt, paying rates or making mortgage payments, financial hardship, debt agreements, superannuation (super) and retirement, free legal advice and online budget planners and calculators.

Visit the website and select a topic in the top menu or call their Infoline.

Website

moneysmart.gov.au

Phone

1300 300 630 or (03) 5177 3988

Department of Human Services (DHS)

The DHS website provides information in different languages about budgeting, borrowing, credit and managing debt.

Website

humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/managing-your-money

Phone

Information on financial issues
132 300
Monday to Friday, 8am - 5pm

National Debt Helpline

The National Debt Helpline has professional financial counsellors who can offer a free, independent and confidential service. You can also visit their website for information and resources.

Website

ndh.org.au

Phone

Free call 1800 007 007 (please be aware that calls from mobile phones may incur a fee)

Monday to Friday, 9:30am - 4:30pm

Early access to your super

There are certain circumstances where you can access some of your super early. For information on whether you meet the criteria and how to start the process, visit the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) website or call their superannuation enquiry line.

Website

ato.gov.au/super

Phone

13 10 20

Mortgage payment difficulty

If you are experiencing difficulty paying off a loan or mortgage you may be able to postpone your mortgage repayments for up to 12 months. Contact your financial institution or bank directly to find out more.

If you are not happy with the response from your bank and are experiencing financial difficulty, you can speak with their complaints area.

You can also call the Financial Ombudsman Service or the Credit Ombudsman.

Phone

Financial Ombudsman Service on 1300 780 808
Credit Ombudsman on 1800 138 422

Financial hardship and managing money

Loans and no interest loans options

Low Income Loans Australia provides information on their website about loan options and benefits available for low income earners who are in need of cash or financial assistance.

Website

lowincomeloansaustralia.com.au

Free legal advice about debt and financial issues

Legal Aid Victoria provides free legal advice in different languages about debt or financial issues. Visit their website or call their Legal help line.

Website

legalaid.vic.gov.au

Phone

1300 792 387

Monday to Friday, 8:45am - 5:15pm

No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)

The NILS service provides individuals and families on low incomes access to safe, fair and affordable credit. The loans available can vary between \$300 and \$1200 for essential goods and services. There are no credit checks and this program is based on trust and respect.

Loans are generally available to purchase essential goods and services such as:

- household items like fridges, washing machines, stoves, dryers, freezers and some furniture
- some medical and dental services
- educational essentials like computers and books.

To be eligible for NILS you must:

- have a health care or pensioner concession card or be on a low income
- reside in your current premises for more than three months
- show a willingness and capacity to repay.

Visit their website and select a topic in the top menu or call their Infoline for more information.

Website

nils.com.au

Phone

13 64 57

Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria

In Victoria, all energy and water companies must have a hardship program to assist people who are struggling to pay their bills. They can help with:

- an affordable payment plan to help break bills into smaller payments
- energy and water efficiency information to help lower usage
- applying for the Victorian Government's Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URGS), which provides up to \$500 each for electricity, gas and water (subject to eligibility criteria)
- a cheaper energy plan
- ensuring concessions are applied to your account
- referrals to support services, including financial counselling.

Visit the Ombudsman's website or call their phone line for further information.

Website

ewov.com.au/resources/hot-topics/having-trouble-paying-your-energy-or-water-bill-help-is-available-april-2017

Phone

1800 500 509

Emergency relief

If you urgently need help with living expenses, there are charities and community organisations that can assist you with:

- one-off food, transport or chemist vouchers
- rent or accommodation
- part-payment of electricity, gas or water bills
- food parcels or clothing
- budgeting or referrals to other programs.

Financial hardship and managing money

Find the closest emergency relief service by calling the Department of Social Services and asking to be put through to your local emergency relief service.

Phone

1300 653 227 (local call cost only)

Visit the Salvation Army website or call their phone line.

Website

salvos.org.au

Phone

13 72 58

Visit the St Vincent De Paul website or call their phone line.

Website

vinnies.org.au

Phone

(02) 6282 2722

You can also contact your local church, community centre or community organisation and find out where emergency relief is provided in your area.