

Media Release

Gabrielle Williams MP

Minister for Government Services

Minister for Consumer Affairs

Minister for Public and Active Transport



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FREE FINANCIAL COUNSELLING FOR THOUSANDS OF VICTORIANS

The Allan Labor Government is providing free financial counselling to thousands of Victorians who are experiencing financial hardship.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Gabrielle Williams today revealed that the Labor Government's Financial Counselling Program supported almost 19,000 Victorians who needed it most in the 2022-23 financial year, including 3,806 people affected by family violence.

A \$15 million investment in the program in 2023-24 includes an additional \$1.7 million for family violence financial counselling, bringing the total allocation for this area of specialised need to almost \$3.5 million.

The support also includes dedicated financial counselling services to help people and communities in areas affected by the October 2022 floods which saw many Victorians displaced and financially stressed. These services started in January and provided help to 345 flood victims in six months.

A further 9,137 Victorians received financial counselling for renting and consumer issues in the past financial year.

The Financial Counselling Program is funded by the Labor Government through Consumer Affairs Victoria and links a financial counsellor with people facing financial difficulties. The program provides free, confidential and independent advice.

Financial counsellors can offer a range of support, from providing advice about rights and responsibilities to negotiating with a creditor or working out a realistic payment plan for debts.

The Government has invested more than \$39 million over three years to enable 12 community agencies across the state to deliver general and family violence financial counselling to Victorians.

This funding includes more than \$1 million for the National Debt Helpline, a website and phone service that provides a central point of information and referrals for people needing help with financial issues.

Victorians can find their closest financial counselling provider by using the "find a financial counsellor" map on ndh.org.au or calling 1800 007 007.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Gabrielle Williams

"Unexpected financial hardship can come at any time and as a community, it's really important that we stand together to help those in need."

"Making free, confidential financial counselling available during difficult times can help people take stock, get back on their feet and thrive."

Quotes attributable to Financial Counselling Victoria Executive Officer Zyl Hovenga-Wauchope

"Financial counsellors work with people from all walks of life to support and empower them to improve their financial situations – it is an essential service."

"Addressing financial problems has a positive impact on mental health outcomes and creates the space for people to focus on other areas of their lives."

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