

What is MoneyHelp?



MoneyHelp is a not-for-profit service supported by the Victorian Government to provide free, confidential and independent information and financial advice to Victorians who have experienced or are facing job loss or reduced working hours because of the global economic downturn.

Victorians who satisfy the above criteria can access MoneyHelp's free phone and email financial counselling service Monday to Friday 9.30am – 5pm on 1800 149 689 or by email through the MoneyHelp website www.moneyhelp.org.au

These people are encouraged to contact MoneyHelp for assistance with their money or debt. If they seek advice early they will have more options for managing their finances through what may be a period of limited income.

What does MoneyHelp comprise?

MoneyHelp is a suite of products and services comprising:

- a free phone financial counselling service (including an interpreter service)
- a website with information, contacts, sample letters and guides, and email access to financial counsellors
- a series of fact sheets
- a range of promotional products (including posters, flyers and wallet cards)

- an industry liaison position to promote and disseminate MoneyHelp services and products.

Who funds and manages MoneyHelp?

The Victorian Government has used funds from the Consumer Credit Fund and the Victorian Property Fund (on the approval of the Minister of Consumer Affairs) to establish MoneyHelp.

The Consumer Action Law Centre, a Melbourne-based community legal centre that provides free legal advice and representation to vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers, manages MoneyHelp's products and services.

When to contact a MoneyHelp financial counsellor

There is a lot to understand about the implications of job loss or reduced income on the management of finances and debt in particular. MoneyHelp's website and publications help explain many of the issues. However, eligible Victorians are encouraged to contact

Need more information?
Visit www.moneyhelp.org.au
Or call 1800 149 689

MoneyHelp's financial counselling service if they:

- have more debt than they can manage
- are receiving threatening letters from or being harassed by creditors or debt collectors
- have been taken to court for the recovery of outstanding debts
- are facing eviction or have been evicted from rented premises due to rent arrears
- are not able to pay their gas, electricity, water or phone bills and are being threatened with disconnection
- are being pursued for uninsured car accident debt, tax debt and unpaid fines.

MoneyHelp's financial counsellors do not judge or chastise people about how they manage their money. Financial counsellors will reassure them they are not alone experiencing financial hardship, confirm that managing on a limited income can be very challenging, and demonstrate how a person's efforts to resolve their debt issues can make a big difference.

How does the MoneyHelp website work?

The MoneyHelp website offers multi-entry points for people who want information, tools and tips regarding the management of their finances and debts due to unexpected changed circumstances.

The website can be used to prepare a budget, prioritise debts, learn about hardship programs and compare available debt payment options. The site is designed so a user can access information relevant to their particular circumstances directly from the home page, whether it's their mortgage, credit card, utility bill, child support payments or another debt.

Alternatively, the site can be toured to get an overview of how to manage on a limited income, stay positive, become aware of available help, and begin to look for a new job in a much changed jobs market.

The website provides tool and tips, including step-by-step guides on how to speak to creditors and sample letters to use when requesting consideration for condition of financial hardship.

What is the role of the Industry Liason Officer?

MoneyHelp's Industry Liason Officer works with government and key stakeholders – including unions and peak employer bodies – to promote

awareness of MoneyHelp, disseminate MoneyHelp information, and encourage Victorians whose income is reduced due to the economic downturn to access the service before they make financial decisions.

How can people get copies of MoneyHelp's fact sheets?

MoneyHelp's fact sheets can be downloaded from the MoneyHelp website www.moneyhelp.org.au Alternatively they can be obtained from the Industry Liason Officer or MoneyHelp's financial counsellors.

Who can obtain the MoneyHelp promotional products?

MoneyHelp flyers, posters and wallet cards can be ordered through the MoneyHelp website or from the Industry Liason Officer. These products are intended for use by organisations, businesses and government-funded services to promote MoneyHelp's financial counselling service to employers, employees, unions and other people whose income has been affected by the economic downturn.

Sources

Eastern Access Community Health brochure: Financial counselling

Fido website
www.fido.gov.au

Key messages

- MoneyHelp provides a free phone financial counselling service (1800 149 689) to Victorians who have reduced income because of the economic downturn
- MoneyHelp's Industry Liason Officer works with government and key stakeholders to raise awareness of the MoneyHelp suite of products and services
- MoneyHelp's website www.moneyhelp.org.au contains comprehensive information about job loss and living with reduced income, as well as details about where to go for further help

The information on this fact sheet is general and does not constitute legal advice.

MoneyHelp's products and services have been prepared for the information of Victorians who have experienced or are facing job loss or reduced working hours because of the economic downturn. These people can phone 1800 149 689 to speak to a MoneyHelp financial counsellor. A financial counsellor will discuss a range of debt payment options based on an individual's circumstances.