

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING AND RELATED SERVICES: this information is for the assistance of Members who may be experiencing financial difficulty.

From the Australian Security and Investments Commission (ASIC) website www.fido.gov.au -

Financial counselling services help people who are in financial difficulty. They are available in every state and territory and provide a free, independent and confidential service. They can help you manage a short-term crisis and plan to prevent a future one. Financial counsellors can help you remain independent and take full control of your own financial affairs.

Some businesses also provide a service to help people struggling with debt – for a fee. Make sure you know what service you are getting from these businesses, how much it is going to cost you and whether you can get the same service for free from a financial counsellor.

What financial counsellors do: help you organise your financial information, design a personal budget and suggest ways to change and improve your financial situation * assess your eligibility for government assistance * negotiate with your creditors * explain debt recovery procedures, bankruptcy and other alternatives * refer you to other services, for example, gambling, family support, personal counselling or community legal aid.

Typical problems counsellors can assist with include: financial over-commitment – having more debt than you can deal with * threatening letters, harassment by debt collectors * debt recovery through the courts * house eviction, disconnection of gas, electricity, phone etc * uninsured car accidents, taxation debts and unpaid fines.

Rural financial counselling for primary producers, fishers and small rural businesses in rural areas: The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) supports the AAA Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Program. It provides funding to organisations to deliver rural financial counselling throughout rural Australia by employing rural financial counsellors to assist clients in need of financial assistance. The Program has been established with the primary role of supporting primary producers, fishermen and small rural businesses who are suffering financial hardship, and who have no alternative sources of impartial support, to manage the challenges of industry change and adjustment. It funds free and impartial rural financial counselling services throughout Australia. To view a directory of rural financial counselling service locations visit www.rfcs.gov.au. Alternatively, call 1800 686 175 (Freecall) and speak to a Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry staff member who has contact details.

Financial Counsellors Association of NSW

1300 914 408

www.fcan.com.au

CreditLine Helpline

1300 781 767

From the website of Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/drought/rfcs

Rural Financial Counselling Service: provides grants to state and regional organisations to provide free and impartial rural financial counselling to primary producers, fishers and small rural businesses who are suffering financial hardship and who have no alternative sources of impartial support.

'Small rural business' for the purposes of the Rural Financial Counselling Service Program is defined as a rural business that employs no more than ten full-time-equivalent (38 hours per week) employees and provides the majority of its services to primary producers and is directly involved in primary production (eg. fencing, harvesting, spraying or stock management contractor).

What is rural financial counselling? Rural financial counselling is: free * impartial * independent of financial institutions, welfare agencies and government.

The client makes the decisions: It is up to the client to choose which option is right for them. The rural financial counsellor will help clients develop some options and will provide support with their decision making.

What can rural financial counsellors do? help clients identify financial and business options * help clients negotiate with their lenders help clients adjust to climate change through the [Climate Change Adjustment Program](#), identify any advice and training needed and develop an action plan * help clients meet their mutual obligations under the Transitional Income Support program * give clients information about government and other assistance schemes * refer clients to accountants, agricultural advisers and educational services * refer clients to Centrelink and to professionals for succession planning, family mediation and personal, emotional and social counselling.

To support the client's decision-making process, an Enterprise Action Plan assists Rural Financial Counselling Service clients to gain an improved understanding of their circumstances by reviewing their current financial situation and working through their available options. Further information on the Enterprise Action Plan is available in the Enterprise Action Plan factsheet.

Rural financial counsellors do not provide family, emotional or social counselling, financial advice or succession planning services - but they can provide referrals and information.

Contact a rural financial counsellor: phone 1800 686 175