



# My finances

AN E-GUIDE FOR SINGLE PARENTS



**We acknowledge the First Nations people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters throughout Australia.**

This booklet has been produced by WIRE and Sakhi Saheli, as part of the COVID-19, Financial Capability and Intersectionality Project, generously supported by Ecstra Foundation.



WIRE offers free information, support and referral on any issue for all women, nonbinary and gender diverse Victorians.

Contact us (weekdays, 9am to 5pm)

Phone line: 1300 134 130

Web chat: [www.wire.org.au](http://www.wire.org.au)

Email: [support@wire.org.au](mailto:support@wire.org.au)

We would like to thank all the Advisory Team members for their contribution to this project.

This booklet was designed by Nishtha Bali.

# Many of us will go through some unstable times in our financial life, especially when big life changes happen.

Single parents are often great money managers but sometimes there just isn't enough money coming in. This may be because of lack of access to work that pays well or the other parent not sharing the costs of raising a child, and many other reasons.

We recognise all that you are doing to care for yourself and your children. This booklet provides simple tips that may help you improve your financial independence and wellbeing, and information on services that can assist if you are experiencing financial stress.

If you just want to learn more about finances you can explore the resources listed at the end.

We hope you'll enjoy and share the information with your networks.



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# How can I build my financial wellbeing?

Regular, adequate income is the ideal situation. Still, even when that is not the case there are some small actions you can take to improve your financial wellbeing. Here are some tips:

- Keep a spending diary: writing down everything you spend money on will help you see if there is any 'leakage' or something off track. You can use the Moneysmart online free budget planner as a tool. [moneysmart.gov.au/budgeting/budget-planner](https://moneysmart.gov.au/budgeting/budget-planner)
- Check all your bills and organise how and when you are going to pay them. For example, separate money each week to pay your bills, and money for your living expenses.
- Set a small savings goal and put aside a small amount of money each week to reach your goal. Many banks have ways for you to set up saving goals in your saving account and save for each of them separately.
- Avoid 'buy now, pay later' purchases as much as possible. It is very easy to lose sight of how much you've already spent and owe in the future.
- Compare offers from different companies and switch to the one with the best deal for your circumstances. For example, for energy: visit the Victorian Energy Compare website for free, independent energy price comparison. [compare.energy.vic.gov.au/](https://compare.energy.vic.gov.au/). For mobile phone plans: compare mobile plans and data deals. [moneysmart.gov.au/student-life-and-money/choosing-a-mobile-phone-plan](https://moneysmart.gov.au/student-life-and-money/choosing-a-mobile-phone-plan)
- Have money chats with your friends. Sharing tips and experiences is a nice way to learn more about money management. You can share with a friend saving goals, and support each other to reach those goals.
- Ask for help as soon as you notice a money problem. The early you act and get help, the better.

# Who can I contact for help?

**You deserve to be treated with respect, no matter what the circumstance is.** The services and websites listed below can be helpful. Also, if you are a member of a particular community or religious group they may have services set up to assist you with emergency aid.

Issue	Free support
Various issues	Check <b>Ask Izzy</b> to locate support near you by category (e.g. food aid, housing, Centrelink, legal, etc). <a href="http://www.askizzy.org.au">www.askizzy.org.au</a>
Financial difficulties paying your bills or fines, a debt problem or financial hardship	Contact the <b>National Debt Helpline</b> for free, confidential financial counselling service with professional financial counsellors. <a href="http://www.ndh.org.au">www.ndh.org.au</a>   Phone: 1800 007 007  Find a financial counsellor near you at the Moneysmart website. <a href="http://moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling">moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling</a>
Family violence (including financial abuse), ex-partner is not paying child support, a current or ex-family member has left you with their debts in your name	Call <b>WIRE</b> for support, information and referral to support services in your area. <a href="http://www.wire.org.au">www.wire.org.au</a> Phone: 1300 134 130 Email: <a href="mailto:support@wire.org.au">support@wire.org.au</a> Web chat: <a href="http://www.wire.org.au/chat-with-wire">www.wire.org.au/chat-with-wire</a> (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4.30pm)
Consumer problems with products and services, banking, insurance, utility bills, or credit	Contact the <b>Consumer Action Law Centre</b> for legal information and referral. Depending on your eligibility you may be able to access free legal advice. <a href="http://consumeraction.org.au/i-need-help/">consumeraction.org.au/i-need-help/</a>
Rental problems with your landlord	Contact <b>Tenants Victoria</b> for free and confidential legal advice. <a href="http://www.tenantsvic.org.au">www.tenantsvic.org.au</a>  Phone (tenants advice line): (03) 9416 2577 (Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm)  Phone (social housing tenants): 1800 068 860 (Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm)

Work rights or abuse in the workplace	<p>The <b>Fair Work Ombudsman</b> website has detailed information about employment entitlements. <a href="http://www.fairwork.gov.au">www.fairwork.gov.au</a></p> <p>The Migrant Workers Centre provides information about work rights for migrants. <a href="http://www.migrantworkers.org.au/get_help">www.migrantworkers.org.au/get_help</a></p>
Small, affordable loan	<p><b>Good Money</b> is a not for profit community lender. It offers various types of safe, affordable and responsible small loans for people on low incomes, under certain eligibility criteria. For more information and to find a store near you, visit <a href="http://www.goodmoney.com.au">www.goodmoney.com.au</a></p>
Emergency relief (e.g. food parcels, pantry food, material aid etc)	<p>Your <b>local council</b> can help you connect with assistance near you.</p> <p>Many charities provide aid. Check <b>Ask Izzy</b> to find one near you. <a href="http://www.askizzy.org.au">www.askizzy.org.au</a></p> <p><b>Citizens Advice Bureaus</b> may also offer food, toiletries, food vouchers, Metro cards and Telstra vouchers. Search online for 'citizens advice bureau Melbourne' to locate a bureau near you.</p>
Parenting arrangements and COVID-19	<p><b>Northern Community Legal Centre</b> has developed fact sheets about parenting arrangements and COVID-19 in Arabic, Hindi, Nepali and Punjabi. Visit <a href="http://www.mcwh.com.au/parenting-arrangements-and-covid-19-fact-sheets-in-arabic-hindi-nepali-and-punjabi/">www.mcwh.com.au/parenting-arrangements-and-covid-19-fact-sheets-in-arabic-hindi-nepali-and-punjabi/</a></p>
Money management skills, knowledge and confidence	<p><b>Good Shepherd</b> runs the Wellbeing and Financial Capability Program VIC, a free, non-judgmental, confidential service for people to build their money management skills, knowledge and confidence. <a href="http://www.goodshep.org.au/services/financial-counselling-financial-capability-and-wellbeing_">www.goodshep.org.au/services/financial-counselling-financial-capability-and-wellbeing_</a></p>

# General support & information

## THE COUNCIL OF SINGLE MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN (CSMC)

A not for profit, membership-based community organisation run by and for single mothers. Since 1969 it has dedicated to support and empower single mothers, and advocate for their rights in various areas. CSMC provides information and referrals tailored to single mothers, and has a newsletter. [www.csmc.org.au](http://www.csmc.org.au) | Phone support line: 03 9654 0622 (metro Melbourne) or 1300 552 511 (outside metro Melbourne), weekdays, 9.30am-3.00pm | Email: [csmc@csmc.org.au](mailto:csmc@csmc.org.au)

## SAKHI SAHELI

A women's organisation based in Melbourne's west region. It supports migrant victim survivors of family violence to become financially independent through guidance on how to start their finance journey and gain employment.

[www.sakhisaheliinc.org](http://www.sakhisaheliinc.org) | Email: [sakhisaheli16@gmail.com](mailto:sakhisaheli16@gmail.com)

## WIRE

Free information, support and referral on any issue for all women, nonbinary and gender diverse Victorians. WIRE can provide information about financial supports in your local area, and offers a range of programs and services such as job coaching, employment workshops, and financial and legal clinic.

[www.wire.org.au](http://www.wire.org.au) | Phone: 1300 134 130 (weekdays, 9am-5pm) | Email: [support@wire.org.au](mailto:support@wire.org.au) | Web chat: [www.wire.org.au/chat-with-wire](http://www.wire.org.au/chat-with-wire) | Walk-In Centre (interpreting service available)

## RAISINGCHILDREN.NET.AU

A website supported by the Department of Social Services, which provides up-to-date information, free articles, videos and apps for parents, covering various topics related to raising children.

[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)





# Government payments

## SERVICES AUSTRALIA

A Commonwealth Government agency and your main door for information and online access to **Centrelink** (social security), **Medicare** (health), and **Child Support**.

Main webpage: [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/)

Phone numbers of different services:

[www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/contact-us/phone-us#ces](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/contact-us/phone-us#ces)

Videos about how to access phone services in languages other than English:

[V https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/information-in-your-language/products/multilingual-phone-service](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/information-in-your-language/products/multilingual-phone-service)

Centrelink information in various languages: Phone: 131 202 (Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm)

To speak with a Centrelink social worker:

[www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/social-work-services/how-contact-social-worker](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/social-work-services/how-contact-social-worker)



## Family violence-related payments

### CENTRELINK

Centrelink has a one-off crisis payment if you have experienced a family or domestic violence incident. You must contact a Centrelink social worker within 7 days from the change in your living arrangements. For eligibility and details visit

[www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/crisis-payment-extreme-circumstances-family-and-domestic-violence](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/crisis-payment-extreme-circumstances-family-and-domestic-violence)

The **Victorian Government** has '**Flexible Support Packages**' managed through family violence services.

[providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/program-requirements-delivery-family-violence-flexible-support-packages](http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/program-requirements-delivery-family-violence-flexible-support-packages)

For more information, contact WIRE.

### Child support

For Commonwealth Government's child support payment and services, visit

[www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/child-support](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/child-support)

Under Australian law both parents have a duty to support their children financially (child support).

When you separate, regardless of whether you are married or not, It is important to come to a fair arrangement regarding paying for the children's needs. There are several ways of doing this, from a private arrangement to having the government collect child support payments. You can get legal information from **Victorian Legal Aid** to decide what method best meets your needs and of your children, and what a fair arrangement may look like.

<https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/child-support/get-help>

### Child care subsidy

You may be eligible for the child care subsidy, which is a financial assistance paid by **Centrelink** to help with costs of child care. To check eligibility and for more details

visit [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy)

# Money matters with your children

**Moneysmart** has a specific webpage on teaching kids about money, including fun online activities appropriate to different age groups. Visit [moneysmart.gov.au/teaching-kids-about-money](https://moneysmart.gov.au/teaching-kids-about-money)

Raising children in Australia is expensive. When the income is limited, and if you are managing it alone, that can become both financially and emotionally hard.

**Having money conversations with your children** can be a good way to introduce them to money issues and to bring them on board as a team. They can learn skills they will use for life, such as what a budget is, needs vs wants, and saving goals.

No one has all the answers to money questions. If you don't know the answer to a question your children raise, it's ok, you can always find it out.



Money conversations with your children can include:

- How money comes into the house (income)
- How you make decisions about what to prioritise and spend money on
- Difference between needs and wants
- Saving to reach a goal

### A few ideas to consider

- Think about what you do well around money management (skill, strength) and share with your children.
- Congratulate your children every time they save money or make a good spending choice.
- Set a fun teamwork challenge around an agreed saving goal. For example: If your child saves 'X' amount by a certain date, then you will contribute with a specific amount of money too, so the goal can be reached.
- Check toys to borrow from toy libraries ([www.toylibraries.org.au](http://www.toylibraries.org.au)). That can also be a fun way for your children to work out which toys they are more interested in.
- Compare prices and depending on the age of your children, engage them in the search too.
- Explore options for cheaper toys (eBay, Gumtree, and op shops, amongst others).



## Support for children's cost at school

There are many different services and support programs to help families pay for extra costs at school. It is worth **asking your child's school** about what financial assistance is available for your child. You can also talk to a Financial Counsellor.

### SCHOLARSHIPS

Check what scholarships are available at the school or through the Victorian Department of Education and Training. These can include Academic, Sports, Arts and Hardship scholarships.

### CAMPS SPORTS AND EXCURSION FUND

Helps with the cost of school camps, excursions, swimming, school sport, and some uniforms. <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/csef.aspx>

### STUDENT PASS

Access to a cheaper Myki from Public Transport Victoria.

<https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/myki/concessions-and-free-travel/>

### THE SMITH FAMILY LEARNING FOR LIFE PROGRAM

Offers financial help that covers education costs for children facing hardship.

[www.thesmithfamily.com.au/programs/learning-for-life](http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/programs/learning-for-life)

### SAVER PLUS

A free ten-month program that provides financial education to help build essential skills for managing money and becoming a regular saver. Upon completion of the program ANZ will match your savings up to \$500, which you can put toward education costs for you or your children. The program is delivered by community organisations. For more information, visit [www.anz.com.au/about-us/esg-priorities/financial-wellbeing/saver-plus/](http://www.anz.com.au/about-us/esg-priorities/financial-wellbeing/saver-plus/)

### A START IN LIFE

Helps with many different school costs for full time students in significant hardship who are citizens and are receiving Centrelink support.

[www.astartinlife.org.au](http://www.astartinlife.org.au)

# Legal information & legal advice

If you are going through a dispute with your previous partner, e.g. they are not paying child support, it is important to understand your rights and responsibilities.



## COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

Community Legal Centres can help with legal information and advice. Some centres also provide advice and representation at court. Most services are free. To locate your nearest CLC, including many in the **Western region** visit [www.fclc.org.au/find\\_a\\_community\\_legal\\_centre](http://www.fclc.org.au/find_a_community_legal_centre)

## VICTORIA LEGAL AID

Free legal advice on various issues. Depending on your financial circumstances and eligibility it can also help you to arrange a lawyer to run a case. Through its Family Dispute Resolution Service, Victoria Legal Aid helps people resolve their family law disputes.

[www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/)

### Short videos about common legal issues



Victoria Legal Aid has a series of short educational videos about Australian law, including issues such as rental agreements, separation and parenting arrangements, child protection and parenting, and Centrelink debt, among many others:

[www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/videos-about-the-law](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/videos-about-the-law)

# Where can I learn more?

The resources below can be useful if you want to expand your knowledge around finances and financial wellbeing.

## MONEYSMART

Moneysmart is a website developed by the Australian government to help people learn more about how to manage their finances. It has free, easy to follow information on various topics, videos, and online tools, such as calculators that can help you create a budget.

[www.moneysmart.gov.au](http://www.moneysmart.gov.au)

## THE FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE HUB

Run by Good Shepherd, the Financial Independence Hub supports people who have experienced financial abuse as result of family and domestic violence to build their financial independence. To be eligible, you must have experienced family or domestic violence in the past, cannot be in a crisis situation, be over 18 years old and live in Australia. Permanent residents and temporary visa holders are also eligible.

[goodshep.org.au/services/financial-independence-fih/](http://goodshep.org.au/services/financial-independence-fih/) | Phone: 1300 050 150

## MONEY MINDED

A free financial education program online, developed by ANZ, in partnership with community organisations. You can choose amongst a range of activities including goal setting and saving, debt reduction, and planning for the future.

[www.moneyminded.com.au](http://www.moneyminded.com.au)

## THE SUPER GURU

A website with information on superannuation tailored to women.

[www.superguru.com.au/about-super/women-and-super](http://www.superguru.com.au/about-super/women-and-super)

## THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE

The Brotherhood of St Laurence runs Stepping Stones to Small Business, a program tailored for women from refugee, migrant and asylum seeking backgrounds. It provides opportunities for women to achieve financial wellbeing through starting a small business, finding employment, training pathways, mentoring and support. For more information and to apply, contact **Emma Gale** at 0491 152 906 or email

[steppingstones@bsl.org.au](mailto:steppingstones@bsl.org.au) | [www.bsl.org.au/services/consulting-and-training/stepping-stones/](http://www.bsl.org.au/services/consulting-and-training/stepping-stones/)

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