Recognise and Recover

A guide to help you recognise financial abuse, recover and regain financial control



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How to use this guide

This booklet has been designed to help victims and survivors of domestic and family violence (DFV) to identify and find support when experiencing financial abuse. In it, you will find information about financial abuse, strategies for recognising financial abuse and direction to resources that may be helpful to support your recovery.

These resources are designed to provide guidance if you are currently in a financially abusive relationship, or if you were in one previously and are now seeking to become financially independent.

It may also help you to have a conversation with someone who you think might be experiencing financial abuse.

About financial abuse

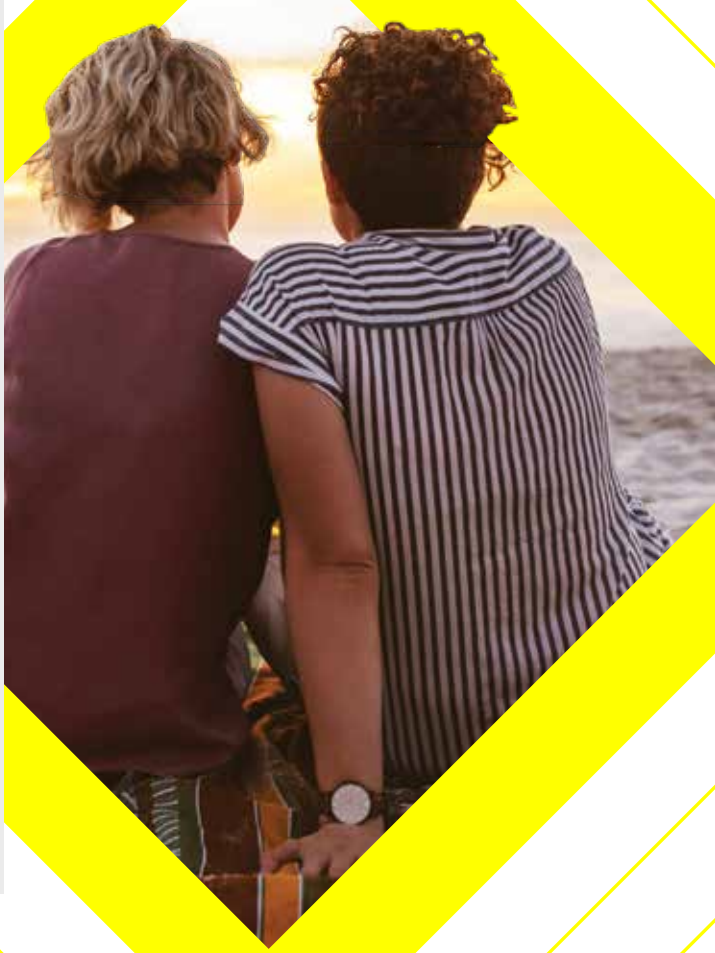
What is financial abuse?

Financial abuse (also called economic abuse) is a serious form of domestic and family violence that occurs when someone uses money to gain power or to control their partner. In this guide, we refer to an abusive partner, but it is important to recognise that abuse can also be perpetrated by individuals other than an intimate partner, such as a family member.

Financial abuse is one of the most powerful ways to keep someone trapped in an abusive relationship, and may also affect that person's ability to stay safe once the relationship is over.

The ways in which an abuser exercises financial control over their partner may differ greatly, but can include when a person:

- Controls access to finances such as cash, bank accounts, benefits or pensions.
- Refuses to grant their partner access to sufficient funds.
- Refuses to allow their partner to view bills or financial statements.
- Requires a partner's wages to be used to pay for household expenses, while spending their own money only on themselves.
- Refuses to contribute financially to their partner or the family.
- Coerces or forces their partner into taking out loans, debts and/or credit cards in their name – including business or taxation debts.
- Stops their partner from working or studying, either by forbidding it or by sabotaging their work or employment opportunities.
- Forces their partner to work in a family business without being paid.
- Withholds money for medication, hormones or other forms of gender affirmation.
- Destroys, damages or steals their partner's property.



How common is it?

Approximately 1 in 4 women and 1 in 14 men have experienced violence by an intimate partner since the age of 15.[1] In fact, up to 90% of people who seek help for domestic and family violence are also affected by financial abuse.[2]

Financial abuse affects people from all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. All genders can be victims and perpetrators of financial abuse.

Financial abuse doesn't just occur in heterosexual relationships, it can also occur in abusive LGBTQIA+ relationships. Financial abuse is a significant issue within LGBTQIA+ communities, accounting for 16.1% of intimate partner violence and 9.2% of family violence.[3]

Women with disabilities or long-term health conditions are significantly more likely than the general population to experience financial abuse.[4]

Identifying financial abuse

Despite its frequency, financial abuse can be difficult to recognise and identify because it is often hidden. Many people find it difficult to see that they are in a financially abusive relationship, and as with other forms of abuse, financial abuse may begin subtly and get worse over time. Cultural backgrounds, family traditions, and the expectation that couples will share their financial resources for the good of the family can make some people feel that it is normal for their partner to control their financial affairs, spend their money and make all financial decisions.

People in multicultural communities can face unique challenges, including social isolation from family or community networks. Cultural factors may also play a role, as some people may not identify with the term 'financial abuse' or feel comfortable accessing mainstream support services due to language barriers or lack of familiarity.

Sometimes, money is seen as family business and not openly discussed.

For these reasons, it is common for people to feel embarrassed and overwhelmed when talking about financial abuse and acknowledging it to themselves and others.

Despite the frequency of financial abuse, it can be difficult to recognise:



Many people may not see that they are in a financially abusive relationship.



Financial abuse may begin subtly and progress over time.



Sometimes, money is seen as family business and not openly discussed.



In some cultures, it may be considered acceptable for one person to control all of the household finances.

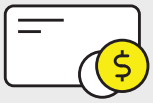
[1] Intimate Partner Violence, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024.
[2] Adams et al (2008), Development of the Scale of Economic Abuse, Violence Against Women, vol. 14, No. 5; Evans, I. (2007), Battle-scars: Long-term effects of prior domestic violence, Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research, Monash University; Sharp, N. (2008), What's yours is mine: The different forms of economic abuse and its impact on women and children experiencing domestic violence, Refuge
[3] Understanding Financial Abuse, Rainbow Door, 2024, https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au/understanding-financial-abuse
[4] Understanding Economic and Financial Abuse and Disability in the Context of Domestic and Family Violence, UNSW, 2021, https://www.commbank.com.au/content/dam/commbank-assets/support/2021-09/unsw-disability-report-4.pdf

Some signs of financial abuse

Not sure whether you are experiencing financial abuse?
Ask yourself the following questions:



Have you ever been prevented from getting a job or going to work?



Have you ever been pressured to stop earning or spending your own money?



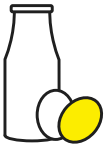
Does your partner refuse to pay child support or help with childcare?



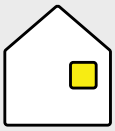
Have you ever been made a director of a company without explicit consent?



Does your partner monitor your spending or ask to see the shopping receipts?



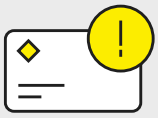
Are you ever denied access to money, or do you have to ask for money for basic expenses for yourself or children?



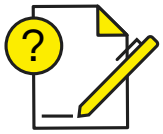
Have you ever been prevented from contributing to the household income?



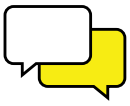
Have you been asked to perform tasks or sexual favours in exchange for money?



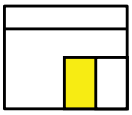
Have you been forced to take out a loan or credit card in your name?



Does your partner keep their finances or the family finances secret?



Has your partner ever withheld money for medication, hormones, or other forms of gender affirmation?



Are you pressured to work in a family business without pay?

Technology-facilitated abuse

Technology-facilitated abuse is a form of controlling behaviour. It occurs when someone uses technology to coerce, stalk or harass another person.

Some examples of technology-facilitated abuse include:

- Forbidding someone from having a phone or limiting who they can contact via phone or internet.
- Sending abusive texts, emails or messages via social media.
- Making continuous controlling or threatening phone calls.
- Making someone prove where they are by sending photos of their location.
- Spying on, monitoring or stalking someone through surveillance devices (such as a tracking system or spyware).
- Misusing banking transaction fields to send abusive messages via low-value transaction descriptions, with the sole purpose of causing distress/harm to the recipient.

Being constantly harassed or monitored can, like any other form of abuse, leave you feeling powerless and justifiably fearful for your safety. While people of all genders can experience technology-facilitated abuse, there are some people who are at a greater risk. These include:

- Women and girls
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Women living with disability
- LGBTQIA+ people



Some signs of technology-facilitated abuse:

Not sure whether you're being digitally abused? Ask yourself these questions:

Using children to track, control or threaten

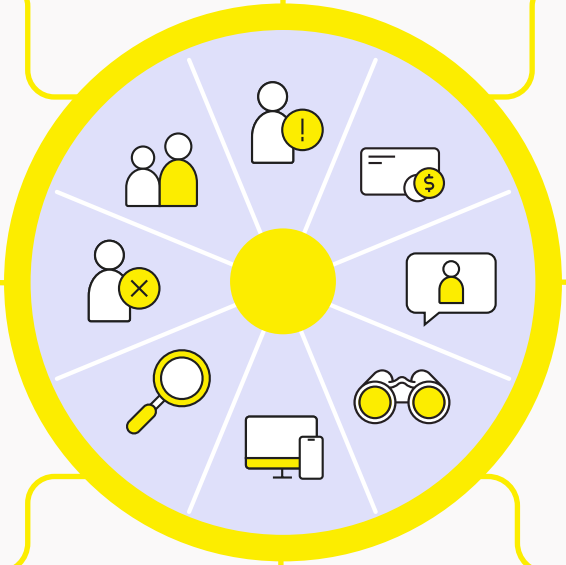
Has anyone purchased your child a device and set it up to share the location?

Gaslighting or undermining behaviour

Does anyone create self-doubt and claim their controlling behaviours such as monitoring you are normal?

Financial abuse

Does anyone take money out of your account without consent, limit your access to money, or send you abuse in transaction descriptions?



Digital coercion

Are you being forced to share your passwords on your device or online accounts? e.g. MyGov, social media.

Using religious beliefs to cause harm

Has anyone posted an image of you without your religious or cultural clothing that you would usually wear in public?

Monitoring behaviour

Is anyone constantly calling or tracking you via:

Your phone

Your smart watch

Fitness apps

A pet's microchip

Geo-tags on social media posts

Restricting privacy

Does anyone restrict who you talk to or limit your access to devices by damaging or destroying them?

Harassing or threatening behaviour

Does anyone in your life repeatedly message you to know:

Where you are?

Who you are with?

What you are doing?

Staying safe online:

Manage your security online

Create new accounts with strong passwords and passcodes. If possible, unlink all shared accounts.

Do not link or sync any new accounts to existing ones, especially new bank accounts the abusive person has access to.

Protect your devices

Use biometric login and regularly update your passwords and passcodes on your device.

Install anti-malware protection and cover all device cameras.

Limit ways of being tracked

Prevent or limit location tracking on devices and apps e.g. review location settings on social media, fitness apps and gaming services.

Clear stored location data connected to maps on your phone and your child's devices.



Keep things private

Use 'private' or 'incognito' mode to browse the internet and log out of social media and bank accounts after using them. Do not save your passwords or passphrases in the browser and change toll accounts such as eToll and eTag that log trips made in your vehicle.

Manage your social media settings

Lock or restrict social media profiles from public access and limit geotagging posts.

Regularly review friend and follower lists on social media and avoid accepting requests from people you don't know.

Take control of your home security

Regularly update passwords and passcodes for all online accounts that control your household smart technologies.

Apply to Australia Post for free 12-month mail redirection. Check if you can provide a phone number without an address for your pet's microchip.

[i] www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/domestic-family-violence/coercive-control

[ii] www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/domestic-family-violence/online-safety-checklist

Abuse in transaction descriptions

If you are receiving abusive, harassing or coercive messages attached to payments, your bank may be able to help you to secure your banking. They may be able to also provide referrals to external support organisations.

Technology-facilitated abuse can also occur through banking services. It involves people sending transactions with abusive, harassing, or coercive messages in the transaction description field. Often these are low-value transactions with the sole purpose of delivering an abusive message to cause distress or harm.

This form of abuse frequently involves multiple transactions over a short period of time in an attempt to extend communication.

While this activity is often related to domestic and family violence or a relationship breakdown, it is not limited to these circumstances. Unlike traditional communication methods, it is very difficult to block this form of messaging.

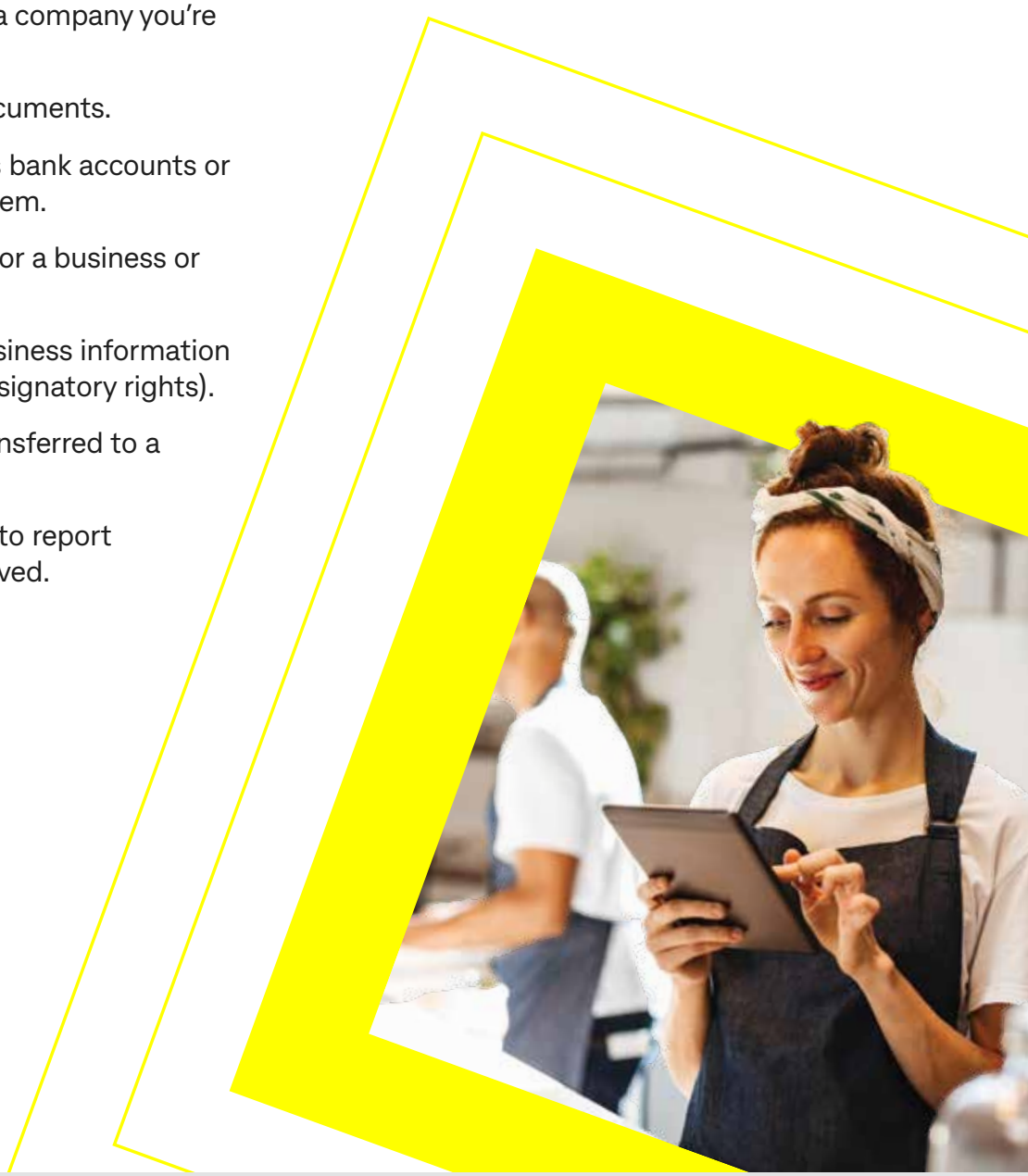


Financial abuse in business

How to recognise the signs and seek help

Some examples of financial abuse in business:

- Being made a company director under duress or without your knowledge.
- Held liable for tax debts of a company you're not involved in.
- Forced to sign business documents.
- Pressured to open business bank accounts or change who can operate them.
- Coerced to borrow money for a business or acting as a loan guarantor.
- Blocked from accessing business information (e.g. banking passwords or signatory rights).
- Business assets unfairly transferred to a particular partner or entity.
- Your Tax File Number used to report payments you haven't received.





Business-related financial abuse can significantly affect individuals causing personal financial loss impacts to credit reporting, unexpected debts, and can even force the shutdown of a business.

Money and relationships

Talking about money with your partner

It can be difficult to talk about money with your partner, regardless of your financial position, background and experiences.



Talking about money in relationships is necessary and important.

If you are experiencing domestic and family violence, it may not be safe to have a conversation with your partner about money. Seek advice and support from a family violence service before deciding if a money conversation is appropriate for you. A good place to start is **1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732**, chat online via **1800RESPECT.org.au** or text **0458 737 732**. This is a free and confidential service you can contact 24/7.

If you need an interpreter or translator, you can use the telephone Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on **131 450**, specify your required language and ask them to contact **1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732**. TIS National is available free of charge.

The National Relay Service (NRS) can help you if you're deaf or find it hard to hear or speak to people on the phone. You can use the National Relay Service on **1800 555 660**.

Every relationship is different, and there is no single right way to manage your money when you are part of a couple. Different people bring different financial skills, attitudes, values, money management strategies and goals to a relationship. You cannot assume that you and your partner will automatically be on the same page. For this reason, it is important to have regular, open, and respectful conversations about money in relationships. Doing so can reduce conflicts and misunderstandings, and protect your financial wellbeing.

Healthy and respectful money relationships

While different couples may choose to manage their money differently, healthy money relationships have three things in common.

The three principles of healthy money relationships:

1. **Sharing**
   Financial decisions and responsibilities are shared. No one person bears responsibility for decisions (even if one person manages the money).
2. **Transparency**
   Both partners have a right to get information, to ask questions and to understand the couple's financial position.
3. **Having a voice**
   The opinions, goals, and needs of both partners matter when making financial decisions.

Although a healthy money relationship will look different from couple to couple, the absence of these three principles can lead to problems and even financial abuse. Unhealthy money relationships can occur when one person takes all the responsibility for money in the relationship, or when one person has no control or influence over money decisions that affect them.

Importantly, in a healthy relationship, the expression of love and trust does not require a person to give up sharing, transparency or having a voice when it comes to money management and decision-making.



Top tips:

- **Be proactive**
  Don't wait to get angry, or for an issue to arise before you talk.
- **Make time**
  Schedule time for conversations and don't rush them. Pick a time when you can focus on the conversation and not be interrupted by children or household distractions. Give yourselves time to prepare for the conversation.
- **Pick one thing**
  Agree on one topic up front and try to keep your talk from jumping between too many issues at once.
- **Manage emotions**
  Understand that emotions may come up on both sides in conversations. If necessary, take a break and agree to continue the conversation at another time.

My money, your money, our money

To start your money conversation:

1. Agree on some ground rules, such as taking turns to speak and listen, communicating with respect, and not interrupting.
2. Discuss what money means to each of you and how you prefer to manage money. What are your long-term goals? Are you more of a spender or a saver?

These activities will provide insight into each person's financial attitudes, values, goals and backgrounds, and highlight areas of difference. This is a great starting point for deciding how you will manage money and make financial decisions.

Combining money with your partner

Getting a joint bank account might seem like an easy solution to managing shared expenses, but it's not a decision that should be taken lightly. There are many risks to consider when opening a joint bank account.

Joint accounts

Joint accounts are accounts owned jointly by two or more people. If you open a joint account, you will be asked to select a method of operation. There are two available methods of operation, namely:

- **Both parties to sign:** this requires both people's signatures to transact, make changes and/or close the account.
- **Either party to sign:** this allows either person to transact, make changes and/or close the account.

When you and your partner sit down to talk about money, make sure you're both comfortable with having a shared account, and that you're on the same page money-wise. Only get a joint bank account with someone you trust will not use your joint money on things you don't agree to, or generate debt that you'll be responsible for.

If you do decide to open a joint account, it's a good idea to still keep your own separate bank account in case something does happen. That way you'll always have your own money to spend on what you want, and have a safety net if things go wrong.

Make sure you each agree on how much money you will contribute to your joint account and what it will be used for. Keep in mind that if you need to close the joint account, both parties may need to provide approval.

Here are some of the advantages and disadvantages of having joint accounts:

Advantages

- Useful for day to day spending.
- Possibility of earning more interest on some accounts.
- May pay less in fees.
- Easier to meet banks' bonus interest requirements.
- Easier to manage bills.

Disadvantages

- There is a risk of opening yourself up to financial abuse as your partner has access to your money.
- Your partner using joint funds on purchases you haven't agreed to.
- Your partner emptying the account of all funds.
- Difficult to have funds refunded if your partner removes money without your knowledge.
- Your partner accruing debt on the account that will show up on your credit report.
- You will be legally responsible for paying back any debt on the account even if you didn't incur it.
- Feeling guilty spending your partner's money.
- Differences or disagreements on how money should be spent.
- Your partner seeing exactly what you are spending money on.



If your partner is pressuring you into getting a joint account, it might be a good idea to think about why. If you feel like your partner is trying to control your money, they could be financially abusive.

Co-borrowing and guarantors

Taking out a loan is a big decision, especially if it's a joint loan or if you're being a guarantor on a loan. The process of co-borrowing (taking out a loan in joint names) or being a guarantor on a loan puts you in a position where financial abuse could take place.

Different types of borrowing

If you are a co-borrower, you and your partner are both signing the loan. This means you are both responsible for repaying it (even if one person can't afford to).

If you are the guarantor for a loan, you are still responsible for paying back the loan (including fees and interest) if the other borrower/s can't make their repayments.

If your partner asks you to take out a loan with them, whether as a co-borrower or guarantor, make sure you have all the facts before you agree. Check out Moneysmart's guide to loans involving family and friends: **www.moneysmart.gov.au/loans/going-guarantor-on-a-loan** for more information.



If your partner is pressuring you to take out a loan when you don't want to, they could be financially abusing you.

Taking out a joint loan

Before you take out a joint loan it's important that you both agree to the loan and the purpose of the loan.

Before granting you a joint loan, your lender should outline the risks and responsibilities of being a co-borrower to ensure that you are both aware of – and comfortable with – what the loan means for you.

To reduce the possibility of financial abuse and to ensure you stay in control, your lender may ask you questions such as:

- Are you comfortable completing this application today?
- What are these funds being used for?
- Is there anything you would like me to explain?
- If something were to happen to either of you, would you be able to keep paying the bills and have access to your funds?



If you are experiencing coercion and feel that it is not safe for you to tell your lender during the application process, it's important that you contact them as soon as possible - when it is safe to do so.

Many lenders have processes in place to protect you. For example, some banks can decline a joint loan where financial abuse is suspected or disclosed, without providing a specific reason to either party in order to protect the safety of the person being abused.

Separating money from your partner

Separation and divorce

It is important to take some steps to safeguard your financial security and wellbeing during a separation or divorce.

When a relationship ends, you are likely to be experiencing many emotions. The number of things you have to deal with and think about can feel overwhelming, so work out who can provide you with emotional support and how you can support yourself.

During a separation or divorce, even previously loving, functional and trusting relationships can deteriorate.

Assess your living situation

- If you or your partner move out, make sure that you update your utilities and lease. If your name is on bills or the lease, you are liable for rent and damages even if you are not living there.
- Consider closing joint accounts if it is safe to do so, and changing your PINs and passwords. Make sure that you have money in an account that your partner does not have access to, and that your pay or any other income is going into this account.
- If you are unable to close a joint account and you change your address on the account, make sure that these details are not disclosed by the bank to your partner.
- Put a hold on or cancel secondary cards or credit card accounts in your name.
- If you have a joint mortgage or loan, notify your financial institution immediately and consider cancelling any redraw facilities so that your partner cannot withdraw money that has already been paid off.
- If you are experiencing financial stress or difficulty, talk to a financial counsellor. Financial counsellors provide free, independent and confidential support, and options. They help people to understand which debts are priorities, develop budgets and money plans, access grants or concessions, negotiate with creditors, explain your financial rights, connect you with legal help and more.



Some states and territories allow you to break a lease if domestic and family violence has occurred. Check with your local Community Legal Centre or Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service for more information.



Anyone can speak with a financial counsellor through the National Debt Helpline on **1800 007 007**.

Rebuilding your financial independence

Untangling your money from your partner's, and rebuilding your financial independence can feel daunting, particularly if your partner did most, or all of the money management while you were together. These three things can help to make the transition easier:

1. **Trust yourself**
   Although you might need to get help or build some skills, know that you can manage your money and your situation. Remember, it's never too late to build your financial independence.
2. **Start small**
   Tackle the manageable and important tasks first, and celebrate small victories. Remember you don't need to do everything overnight.
3. **Get help**
   You might want to speak with a trusted friend or family member. It can also help to get independent and specialist support. If necessary, speak to a financial counsellor or get legal advice. Remember, you don't have to do this alone.

Considerations

- If you have experienced domestic and family violence and lost confidence with money or dealing with debt, contact **Good Shepherd's Financial Independence Hub**. This is a free, confidential service to help you regain control over your finances and move forward, regardless of who you bank with.
- If the separation results in you breaking a lease, check the implications of this with the consumer affairs or fair trading agency in your state or territory.
- Get legal advice. You may be eligible for free legal help. Visit: **www.moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/free-legal-advice**.
- If applicable, agree on child support. You can come to your own agreement or can apply for a child support assessment from Services Australia.



The Family Court

If you separate from a partner and can agree on a financial settlement and/or custody arrangements, then you can often end the relationship without the need of family court. However, for many people finalising a separation or divorce, family court is an important step.

The family court can help you to finalise a divorce with mediation and formalise a parenting and financial arrangement. This process can often be lengthy and expensive.

Be aware that in an abusive relationship, one party may deliberately drag out legal processes to increase the financial and psychological costs. Tactics used can include repeatedly dismissing solicitors, missing appointments or opting for self-representation to extend the proceedings. The additional financial costs associated with this behaviour could see you in further financial difficulty or hardship.

If you are struggling with utility bills, credit card or loan repayments, talk to your credit or service provider. Many companies have hardship teams and specialists who can assess your situation and work out what help is available.

Resources for this section
MoneySmart 'Divorce and separation checklist' **www.moneysmart.gov.au/family-and-relationships/divorce-and-separation-financial-checklist.** Services Australia 'Guide for newly separated parents' **www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/guide-for-newly-separated-parents**. Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia 'Separation and Stress' **www.fcfcoa.gov.au/fl/pubs/separation-stress**. WIRE 'Separation and Property Division' **www.wire.org.au/resources/separation-and-property/.** Find a women's legal service near you, visit Women's Legal Services Australia at **www.wlsa.org.au.**



CommBank support

We're here to help

If you are impacted by domestic and family violence, you can speak to our specialist CommBank Next Chapter team who provide tailored solutions to help rebuild financial independence.

The CommBank Next Chapter team provides specialist support to help ensure the financial safety and wellbeing of people impacted by domestic and family violence, financial abuse or problem gambling. The team can provide free and confidential support, and referrals by connecting you with a range of specialist services.

CommBank Next Chapter specialists aren't trauma counsellors, they're bank staff specifically trained to help people experiencing domestic and family violence and financial abuse. They can assist anyone who needs support, no matter who you bank with.

You can contact the CommBank Next Chapter team on **1800 222 387,** 9am-6pm, AEST, Monday – Friday, excluding public holidays. If you need an interpreter, you can ask for one and the CommBank Next Chapter team will make the arrangements.

If it is difficult to talk on the phone, CommBank customers can contact the Next Chapter team through our online chat (CEBA) in the CommBank app.



CommBank domestic and family violence credit product support

Home loans and housing assistance	If you are a home owner, and wish to move, CommBank may consider appropriate: • Providing support options for relocation based on individual circumstances.	For CommBank customers who wish to stay in their home, CommBank may consider offering one or more of the following: • A payment deferral, reduced repayments or lower interest rates. • A loan restructure, for instance by extending the loan term or reducing the amount owing. • CommBank will ensure that these measures are not recorded by credit companies, which track people's credit history.
Other debts	If you have CommBank personal loans, we may consider offering: • Longer term assistance with repayments, such as the option to defer, or reduce repayments for up to a few months.	For those with CommBank credit cards, we may consider offering: • A reduced interest rate. • Reduced repayments. • Longer term assistance with repayments.



Helpful contacts and resources

If you or someone you know is experiencing financial abuse, or remain unsure, there are free services you can access. If it's an emergency or you're not feeling safe, always call 000.

There are several services that provide help and support to people who decide to leave financially abusive relationships:

Financial support

Commonwealth Bank

General banking enquiries.

Contact

13 22 21 or message us in the CommBank app anytime.

Commonwealth Bank Financial Assist

Financial hardship assistance, including debt relief where appropriate.

Contact

1300 720 814 or message us in the CommBank app anytime.

CommBank Benefits Finder

Answer a few simple questions and we'll help find government benefits, rebates and concessions you may be eligible to claim.

Contact

Accessible through NetBank or CommBank app.

National Debt Helpline

Free financial counselling hotline.

Contact

1800 007 007

www.ndh.org.au

Moneysmart

Australian Government resources to help manage money, reduce debt and plan for the future.

Contact

www.moneysmart.gov.au

Small Business Debt Helpline

Free and confidential financial counselling support to small business owners and sole traders in financial difficulty.

Contact

1800 413 828

sbdh.org.au/

Domestic and family violence support

1800RESPECT

A national confidential counselling and support service for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

Contact

1800 737 732 – phone, online chat or text 0458 737 732.
www.1800respect.org.au

Financial Independence Hub

Delivered by Good Shepherd and funded by CommBank, the Financial Independence Hub helps people who have experienced financial abuse in their journey to long-term financial recovery - regardless of who they bank with.

Contact

Good Shepherd on 1300 050 150
goodshep.org.au/services/fih/

National Elder Abuse Helpline (1800 ELDERHelp)

A free call phone number that connects callers seeking information and advice on elder abuse with support in their state or territory.

Contact

1800 353 374

Kids Helpline

A free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

Contact

1800 55 1800
www.kidshelpline.com.au

National Legal Aid

For legal advice, contact the legal aid agency in your state or territory.

Contact

www.nationallegalaid.org

Lifeline

24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention service.

Contact

13 11 14
www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/get-help-home

MensLine Australia

A telephone and online counselling service for men with emotional health and relationship concerns.

Contact

1300 78 99 78
www.mensline.org.au

No to Violence

A free family violence phone counselling referral service for people taking responsibility for their violent behaviour.

Contact

1300 766 491
ntv.org.au/get-help/

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS)

The national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

Contact

www.natsils.org.au

Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline

Professional trauma counselling for anyone in the LGBTQIA+ community who has experienced sexual, domestic and family violence.

Contact

1800 497 212

Q Life

Confidential telephone and online counselling for LGBTQIA+ individuals impacted by domestic and family violence.

Contact

1800 184 527
www.qlife.org.au

Relationships Australia

A leading provider of relationship support services for individuals, families and communities.

Contact

1300 364 277
www.relationships.org.au

Women's Legal Services Australia

A national network of services specialising in women's legal issues and advocating for improving gender equity and justice.

Contact

www.wlsa.org.au

Resources

Introduction

The following resources are intended to support people affected by financial abuse. Financial abuse can manifest in many ways, but there are steps you can take to protect your finances and to plan for your financial future.

Section one: Protecting finances provides resources to help you take control of your finances after financial abuse.

This process can be overwhelming, so these resources are designed to break this process into manageable steps.

You can use these resources when you are planning to leave or when you have already left a financially abusive relationship, if you need to protect yourself from financial abuse, or when you are establishing or re-establishing financial independence.

Section two: Achieving financial independence contains activities that may be useful if you have left a financially abusive relationship and are establishing or re-establishing your financial independence. These resources are designed to help you get back on your feet and build your financial confidence. It includes information on budgeting, paying bills and saving.



Section one:

Protecting finances



Before leaving a relationship

If you decide to leave an abusive relationship, there are things that you can do before you make your intention to leave, known to your partner.

It is important that you seek support from a service, as well as trusted family and friends, to assist with your safety planning.

If you're not sure which service can help, call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732), chat online via 1800RESPECT.org.au or text 0458 737 732. If you are in danger always call police on 000.

To help secure your finances for the future, the following may be useful:

- Having an email account that your partner is not aware of is an important step to receiving communication from financial and other institutions that can be kept private.
- If you do not have a private email address, consider setting one up to receive communications from the bank and other organisations.
- This email account should not be created on a device that other people have access to. You may also need to make sure that your online interactions are not being monitored.

Before leaving a relationship – checklists

The following checklists provide guidance on what you should consider doing to protect your finances.

Open a bank account in your name only

Checklist

- ☐ If safe to do so, open a new bank account online or visit a bank branch to enquire about setting up a new account.
- ☐ If it is safe to do so, transfer or deposit money into this new account.
- ☐ Request the bank to send any correspondence to your safe email or a safe postal address.

Information and resources

Opening an account with a bank where you are already a customer:

Typically, if you are already a customer of a bank, you will not need to provide as much identification to open a new account. Call your bank, apply online, or visit a branch to set up the new account.

If opening an account with a new bank, make sure you have adequate ID. Depending on the bank you choose, you may need to visit a branch in person to verify you are who you say you are. When opening a bank account as a new customer, you must provide certain documents to verify your identity. In the case of CommBank, where this is not possible, we will do our best to work with you using alternative methods to verify your identity.

Acceptable identity documents include:

Either a passport or Australian or New Zealand driver's licence (which must be current) OR two items from this list:

- Australian or foreign birth certificate or extract.
- Australian or foreign citizenship certificate.
- Centrelink pension or health card.

OR one item from the non-photographic documents listed above AND one from the following list (i.e. total two items):

- A notice from the Commonwealth/state or territory government issued to you with your name and residential address.
- Australian Tax Office (ATO) notice with your name and residential address.
- A utilities notice from a local government body or utility provider showing your name and residential address, and that they provide services to you.
- An overseas driver's licence.

If you can, it is also helpful to give the bank your Tax File Number (TFN). If you don't, any interest your account earns will be taxed by your financial institution.

Additional resources

ASIC's Moneysmart website has information about different types of bank accounts, and a guide on switching bank accounts, including transferring direct debits and credits.

This information can be found at: **www.moneysmart.gov.au/banking.**

Prepare an escape fund

Checklist

- ☐ If you are able to, put aside small amounts of money over time and keep it in a safe place.
- ☐ Consider family/friends who might be able to look after money or copies of important documents and/or assist financially.

Information and resources

There are specialist domestic and family violence services that can help you prepare for leaving an abusive relationship. They can assist you to make a plan to leave safely, find alternative accommodation and set up a new home.

Centrelink also offers a crisis payment for eligible people who have experienced domestic violence and left their home, or whose partner has left or been removed from the home because of the violence. This payment must be claimed within 7 days of the person or their partner leaving the home.

A crisis payment can be claimed by calling Centrelink on 132 850, attending a service centre, or by applying online. More information about eligibility and applying for the payment can be found on the Centrelink website: **www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/crisis-payment-for-extreme-circumstances-family-and-domestic-violence.**

Centrelink may also be able to offer advance payment options on income support payments. Information about eligibility and applying for this assistance can be found here: **www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/advance-payment.**

CommBank assistance: In exceptional circumstances only, CommBank may provide a one-off breathing space payment to help our customers get to safety.

If it is difficult to talk over the phone, CommBank customers can contact the CommBank Next Chapter team through our online chat (Ceba) in the CommBank app.

Gather important documents (or copies or photographs)

These documents should be placed in a secure location, such as a safe custody box or left with someone you trust.

If you have digital copies or photographs of these documents, you can store them in the cloud to ensure you always have back-up copies. Consider a free cloud storage service like Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive, but make sure it is secure and password protected.

Useful financial document checklist

- ☐ Bank statements and cheque books
- ☐ Title deeds
- ☐ Payslips
- ☐ Centrelink correspondence
- ☐ Credit card statements
- ☐ Tax returns
- ☐ Any loan contracts, statements or mortgages
- ☐ Correspondence with any creditors
- ☐ Superannuation statements

Legal documents checklist

- ☐ Identification (including for children)
- ☐ Birth certificates (including those of any children)
- ☐ Passports
- ☐ Marriage certificate
- ☐ Immigration documents
- ☐ Medicare card
- ☐ Driver's licence
- ☐ Will
- ☐ Prenuptial agreement
- ☐ Any court orders or court documents

Information and resources

If it is not safe to access originals of these documents, it may be possible to access copies.

- **Financial documents:** Talk to your financial services provider (e.g. your bank) for copies.
- **Tax returns:** You can request copies of prior tax returns from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). The request form can be found at: **www.ato.gov.au/forms/copies-of-tax-documents-request/#Individualsandsoletraders.**
- **Legal documents:** Copies of some legal documents can be accessed from your state or territory based Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the Australian Passport Office by calling 131 232 or on their website at: **www.passports.gov.au.**

After leaving a relationship

Many people in abusive relationships want to escape and may not think about recovering their share of the money. It is important to realise however, that securing finances now is likely to help maintain independence in the future. It is also important to be aware that you may have financial liabilities as a result of the relationship.

The following checklists outline what you should consider doing once you have left a relationship.

Set up a new bank account (if this hasn't already been done)

Checklist

- ☐ Open a bank account online or visit a bank branch to enquire about setting up a new account (not in joint names).
- ☐ Transfer any money available to you into this new account.
- ☐ Transfer any direct debits you are responsible for to your new account (e.g. mobile phone plan).
- ☐ Inform relevant people or organisations, such as Centrelink or your employer, of the new account details and ensure money is deposited into it.

Information and resources

See the Open a Bank Account section on page 26 for information you might need to open a new bank account.

Additional resources

ASIC's Moneysmart website has information about how to transfer direct debits and credits. This can be found at **www.moneysmart.gov.au/banking.**



If you've had to leave an abusive relationship quickly and don't have access to standard ID documents, speak with your bank. Many banks can offer flexibility for opening an account until you can safely access or replace your ID documents.

Freeze joint bank accounts and credit cards (when it is safe to do so)

Joint bank accounts checklist

- ☐ Withdraw money you need.
- ☐ Freeze or "stop" joint bank accounts and credit cards (when it is safe to do so).
- ☐ Inform the bank of your separation and explain why if you are comfortable to do so.
- ☐ Cancel direct debits.
- ☐ Direct Centrelink, or any other government payments, to a new account.

  Note: Youthsaver accounts – even if opened by one parent, can be operated by the other parent, as each have parental responsibility unless it is removed by court order. The victim-survivor may want to put a stop on or close these accounts to prevent an abusive partner removing the funds.

Credit cards checklist

- ☐ Cancel additional/supplementary cards.

Information and resources

ASIC's Moneysmart has information on:

- Joint bank accounts, including how to close them at: www.moneysmart.gov.au/banking/joint-accounts.
- How to cancel a joint credit card at: www.moneysmart.gov.au/borrowing-and-credit/credit-cards/how-to-cancel-a-credit-card.
- How to transfer your credit card balance to a new card at: www.moneysmart.gov.au/credit-cards/credit-card-balance-transfers.

If you are a CommBank customer, call the Financial Assist team on 1300 720 814 for help with managing personal loans and credit card debt. Financial Assist may be able to arrange support, such as reduced interest repayments.

Change how your account operates

Checklist

- ☐ If your mortgage has a redraw facility (a redraw is any money paid into the loan over and above your minimum repayments), a line of credit (loan), or a linked offset account (an everyday bank account that's linked to your home loan to offset against the amount owing on your home), you can access these funds when you need them. Change the account authority so both signatures are needed to withdraw money.

Information and resources

To change how your account operates, call your financial institution, or visit a branch. Please note that any updated contact details may be visible to joint account holders.

Change security numbers/passwords

Checklist

- ☐ Change PINs, passwords and security questions for all mobile phone, bank and credit card accounts. Change passwords and PINs on online shopping, email and social media accounts.
- ☐ If you are using a mobile banking app, consider deregistering your partner's device(s) from your accounts so they cannot access personal banking accounts.
- ☐ Contact your financial institution to deregister your payID.

Information and resources

For assistance, call or visit a branch of your financial services provider(s), such as your bank or credit card provider.

Find alternative accommodation and housing

Checklist

- ☐ Contact a local support service to get help with finding safe accommodation.
- ☐ If moving out of a rental property, have your name removed from the lease. Some states and territories now allow you to break a lease without penalty if domestic violence has occurred.
- ☐ Call your state or territory Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service for advice and support.
- ☐ Consider taking your name off utility accounts if you are the primary account holder.

Information and resources

- If moving out of a rental property, consider contacting the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service in your state or territory for information on your rights and responsibilities.
- Centrelink offers rent assistance for eligible people. For information on eligibility and on how to inform Centrelink about a change of circumstances, visit: **www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/rent-assistance.**
- If it's safe to do so, you may be able to remain in the family home. Support is available from Safe at Home support services which exist in most states and territories.
- ASIC's Moneysmart website has resources for people struggling with their mortgage. These resources can be found at: **www.moneysmart.gov.au/home-loans/problems-paying- your-mortgage.**
- If you are a CommBank customer, call Financial Assist on 1300 720 814 between 8am – 9pm Monday – Friday and 9am – 2pm Saturday, AEST, to seek assistance with managing your mortgage. The bank may be able to offer support, such as payment deferral, reduced repayments and lower interest rates.
- Consider applying for an apprehended violence order (ADVO), exclusion or ouster provision or a protection order if you fear for your safety. These can help protect you from further violence, intimidation or harassment.
- National Legal Aid can connect you with specialist legal support in each state and territory by calling 1800 737 732.
- QLife supports members of the LGBTQIA+ community who are experiencing domestic violence with advocacy and information by calling 1800 184 527 or webchat (3pm – 12am every day).

If relevant, inform Centrelink of changes in circumstances

Checklist

- ☐ Let Centrelink know of any changes in your circumstances.
- ☐ Inquire about eligibility for any other support payments.

Information and resources

Centrelink must be informed of a change in circumstances within 14 days to ensure continuation of your benefits. To be eligible for a crisis payment, a claim must be submitted within 7 days of you or your partner leaving the home. Support services can assist with this. Centrelink may be able to offer a number of support payments, such as income support payments for people affected by financial abuse and/or if you have children under 8 years old:

- An application can be made for a crisis payment where people have experienced domestic violence and left their home, or their partner has left or been removed from the home because of violence. A crisis payment can be claimed by calling Centrelink on 132 850, lodging a claim online or attending a service centre. More information is available on the Centrelink website: **www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/crisis-payment-for-extreme-circumstances-family-and-domestic-violence.**
- Call Centrelink on 136 150 for a referral to a Family Assistance Officer who can give further information.
- Call Centrelink for advice about applying for child support on 131 272 or visit: **www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/managing-child-support.**



QR Cardless

If you are without your cards, you can still access cash with QR Cardless. This feature requires location services to be turned on, and if you have multiple devices registered to your CommBank account, notifications may be sent to all listed devices.

Using the CommBank app, you can withdraw cash or deposit notes, coins, and cheques by scanning a QR code at CommBank ATMs.

Download the latest version of the CommBank app to use QR Cardless. If you're not a CommBank customer, you'll need to register and provide at least one form of identification.

Next steps

After leaving an abusive relationship, there are a number of steps that will need to be completed to regain control of your finances. These steps can be taken once you have some breathing space and feel ready. A support service may also be able to help if you feel overwhelmed during this period.

During this time, it's important to be aware of technology-facilitated abuse. This form of domestic and family violence uses technology to control, intimidate, or humiliate, and can seriously impact your safety and wellbeing. Tactics may include monitoring your online activity, using tracking devices, or sending abusive transaction descriptions. Like any form of abuse, this constant harassment and monitoring can leave you feeling powerless and fearful for your safety.

The following checklists set out what you should consider doing once you have left a relationship.

Mobile phones and computers

Checklist

- ☐ Change mobile phone/SIM card(s) and create new accounts with strong passwords.
- ☐ Install anti-malware protection and cover device cameras.

Location tracking

Checklist

- ☐ Review location settings on social media, fitness apps, and gaming services to prevent or limit tracking.
- ☐ Clear stored location data connected to maps on your phone and any child's device.

Information and resources

- ASIC's Moneysmart website has information on mobile phone plans at: **www.moneysmart.gov.au/student-life-and-money/choosing-a-mobile-phone-plan.**
- WESNET has information and resources to help you use technology safely: **www.techsafety.org.au/resources.**
- The eSafety Commissioner's online safety checklist provides steps to improve your safety online: **www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/domestic-family-violence/online-safety-checklist.**

Financial counselling

Checklist

- ☐ Prepare a budget (a friend, family member or a financial counsellor can help you with this).
- ☐ Consider making an appointment with a financial counsellor if you have debts and need assistance with making repayment arrangements.
- ☐ Consider contacting Good Shepherd's Financial Independence Hub if you have been impacted by domestic violence and have lost confidence or control over your finances.

Information and resources

See Section two: Achieving financial independence for information on preparing a budget. Financial counselling and information is available:

- National Debt Helpline: A free hotline open between 9:30am and 4:30pm AEST, Monday to Friday which provides financial counselling support for managing money and debts. There is also information on their website. Call 1800 007 007 or visit **www.ndh.org.au**.
- ASIC's Moneysmart: Provides financial management resources, tools and information. Visit **www.moneysmart.gov.au**.
- Good Shepherd Financial Independence Hub: A free, confidential service to help you recover from financial abuse and get back on track. If you are struggling with debt, have a poor credit score or just find it hard to deal with money, call 1300 050 150 Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm, AEST.

Update contact information with service providers

Checklist

- ☐ Phone company, internet and streaming services
- ☐ Australia Post
- ☐ Insurance companies
- ☐ Utility accounts
- ☐ Children's schools/ preschools
- ☐ Health provider
- ☐ Australian Taxation Office (ATO)
- ☐ Medicare
- ☐ Roads service and transport
- ☐ Police (if police have applied for a protection order for you)
- ☐ Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)
- ☐ Your employer

Information and resources

It may be helpful to make a list of companies and service providers that you need to contact. You might want to arrange to have your mail redirected to ensure that important mail doesn't get missed. Information on Australia Post's mail redirection service can be found at **www.auspost.com.au/receiving/manage-your-mail/redirect-hold-mail/redirection.**

Contact your state or territory's road services and notify them of your change of name or address within 14 days. Check their website for instructions on how to inform them of the change. If you change address, you are eligible to enrol to vote in that location once you've been there for one month. You can apply to the AEC to register as a silent elector if you believe you or your family's safety is at risk. This will ensure only your name not your address is recorded on the Electoral Roll. For more information, visit: **www.aec.gov.au/Enrolling_to_vote/Special_Category/Silent_Electors.htm**.

Superannuation/insurances

Checklist

- ☐ Consider if your current policies are right, given your change in circumstances.
- ☐ Update the beneficiary of any existing policies (superannuation nominee for example).

Information and resources

If you don't know who your superannuation provider(s) is, visit: **www.moneysmart.gov.au/how-super-works/find-lost-super.**

Credit reporting

Checklist

- ☐ Check your credit rating by obtaining a credit report.
- ☐ Contact any creditors to obtain a copy of any documents, such as loan agreements and statements.
- ☐ Regularly keep track of your credit rating.

Information and resources

You are entitled to a free copy of your credit report every three months through each of the three main credit reporting bodies:

- Equifax: 13 83 32 or **www.equifax.com.au**.
- Experian: **www.experian.com.au/order-credit-report.**
- Illion: 13 23 33 or **www.creditcheck.illion.com.au.**

For information about protecting yourself from relationship debt, and dealing with it if you have incurred it, contact the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007.

It is strongly encouraged that you seek legal advice if you have debts, or you think your name may have been used to get a loan, or to borrow money.

You can learn more about credit reports at the Credit Smart website: **www.creditsmart.org.au/learn-about-credit/credit-report-summary/.**

Rent

Checklist

- ☐ Remove your partner's name from any rental agreements. Some states and territories will allow you to break a lease without penalty – ask your Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service if this is available.
- ☐ Centrelink offers rent assistance for eligible people. For information on eligibility and on how to inform Centrelink about a change of circumstances, visit: **www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/rent-assistance.**

Rent

Information and resources

For information on changing a tenancy due to domestic violence (both if you want to stay in the rented premises or leave), visit National Shelter **www.shelter.org.au/shelter-network/** and select your state or territory to connect with agencies who may be able to help you.

Vehicle

Checklist

- ☐ If it is safe to do so, transfer ownership and registration of vehicles (to either partner so that only the person who has control over the vehicle is responsible for any fines). If relevant, update details with your e-toll or e-tag provider to ensure your partner cannot track your movements through your toll account.

Information and resources

Vehicle registration can be transferred online or in person. Information about transferring registration can be found on the government road services website for your state or territory.



Powers of Attorney and Advance Care Planning

A Power of Attorney is a legal document that gives a person (or people) of your choice, the authority to manage your personal and financial affairs if you are unable to do so. A Power of Attorney can make decisions on your behalf if you are unable due to illness, absence or injury.

An Advance Care Plan lets people know what healthcare treatments you would like to have or refuse, should you be unable to make or communicate decisions about your care and treatment. An Advance Care Plan can only be made if you have decision-making capacity.

Wills and Power of Attorney

Checklist

- ☐ Make or change your will.
- ☐ Cancel any Powers of Attorney in your name that nominate your partner/ex-partner, and nominate someone that you trust.
- ☐ Consider updating or making an Advanced Care Plan. Advanced Care Plans automatically nominate a spouse as the decision-maker according to law, unless an alternative medical decision-maker is nominated.

Wills and Power of Attorney

Information and resources

In each state and territory, different rules apply to cancelling or revoking wills and Powers of Attorney. For information on changing or revoking a will, visit: www.moneysmart.gov.au/manage-your-money-in-retirement/get-help-in-retirement/wills-and-powers-of-attorney.

Business owners

Checklist

- ☐ Contact your bank to change your account method of operation to more than one to sign. This requires more than one person's authorisation to transact, make changes and/or close the account.
- ☐ Review and update digital business banking platform access to more than one to sign e.g. CommBiz.
- ☐ If you have business loans, contact your bank to discuss options suitable to your needs.

Information and resources

Contact your bank to learn more about the support options available for your situation.

Tax

Checklist

- ☐ Contact the ATO to find out how the separation may impact your tax payments.
- ☐ Check that the ATO has your new bank account details.

Information and resources

The ATO can be contacted over the phone or online. Contact information for all ATO services can be found at www.ato.gov.au/About-ATO/contact-us/.



Section two:

Achieving financial independence



This section is intended to be used once you're ready to start thinking about how to be financially safe. Its purpose is to support your financial independence by offering activities that:

- Examine your bills and anticipate when and how to pay them.
- Bring awareness to your spending as an individual/household.
- Assist with planning for future expenses through saving.

The activities refer to worksheets which are included in the following pages.

Consider contacting Good Shepherd's Financial Independence Hub, which helps people who have experienced financial abuse in their journey to long-term financial recovery, regardless of who they bank with. The program provides free specialist one-on-one financial coaching and support to help people build confidence and capability in managing their own finances.

Spending

Spending summary

This activity asks you to track your spending over one to two weeks across your entire household to reflect on your spending habits. This will later be used as a basis for a budget.

We recognise that not all families reside in one household and not all households are families.

Time estimate

30 minutes total +
1-2 weeks of tracking spending

Materials checklist

- ☐ 'Spend tracking' worksheet

Instructions

Find the 'Spend tracking' worksheet.

Over the next one to two weeks, track the money you and your household spend. Start with any money you might have spent today by writing down the costs under today's column.

Discuss with your household or family:

- Was your spending what you expected?
- Are you satisfied with your spending, or is there room to find more savings?
- Which categories were most surprising in terms of how much you spent?

There are also a number of free apps that can help with spend tracking, paying bills and managing a budget.

If there are children in the household you might want to get them to help add up the daily numbers, check receipts and think about how much daily expenses cost, even if they don't spend money themselves.

This will help teach them the value of money.



Spending – Spend tracking worksheet

Week One

Category	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Rent/mortgage								
Groceries								
Transport								
Electricity								
Gas								
Water								
Internet								
Phone								
Clothing								
School fees and uniforms, daycare, after school care								
Gym, fitness, self-care								
Medical, pharmacy								
Loans/credit card repayments								
Other								
Total								

Week Two

Category	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Rent/mortgage								
Groceries								
Transport								
Electricity								
Gas								
Water								
Internet								
Phone								
Clothing								
School fees and uniforms, daycare, after school care								
Gym, fitness, self-care								
Medical, pharmacy								
Loans/credit card repayments								
Other								
Total								

Paying bills/utilities

Summary

This activity aims to raise awareness of your bills, how to plan for them and pay them on time.

Time estimate

30–40 minutes

Materials checklist

- ☐ ‘Calculating bills’ worksheet
- ☐ ‘Bill payment method’ handout

Pre-work

Collect all of your bills and contracts in one place. If they are online, save them all in one place. Work out how many different services you are billed for and make sure you don’t miss anything. Common bills are rent, electricity/gas, internet, phone and subscription services. Your CommBank app can help you with this.

Instructions

Use the ‘Calculating bills’ worksheet.

Alternatively, use an online budget calculator, like the Moneysmart Budget Planner, to do the calculations for you **www.moneysmart.gov.au/budgeting/budget-planner**.

The worksheet is split into different frequencies we might use to pay certain bills. Using the bills you have collected, as well as thinking about possible future expenses, write down each of the bill types in the corresponding frequency (e.g. If gas is $120 and paid every three months, enter it in the ‘Quarterly’ section provided).

Complete the table to ensure every bill is entered into the correct frequency. Include an amount (rounded up where possible) and calculate the total using the formula provided. This is your yearly amount/per bill.

Once all bills have been accounted for, total the yearly amounts and divide by the number of pay cycles in a year (e.g. If paid fortnightly, divide the total by 26).

Include this amount in the budget you create in the next activity.

Just like the separate savings account with automatic payments, you can set up the same for bills if you wish.

Use the ‘Calculating bills’ handout to work out the best method to pay each of your bills. Think about which methods will be easiest for you and whether or not some methods cost more than others.

Note the payment method down and keep this handout somewhere you will see it in your home. Use your phone calendar or an online calendar to send yourself reminders for any un-automated bills at least two days before they are due. This will help you avoid late payment fees.

Paying bills

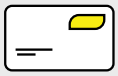
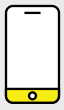
Calculating bills worksheet

How often	Bill	Amount ($)	Calculations	Total ($)
Weekly **Calculations:** (Amount x 52) ÷ No. of pay cycles = Total				
Monthly **Calculations:** (Amount x 12) ÷ No. of pay cycles = Total				
Quarterly **Calculations:** (Amount x 4) ÷ No. of pay cycles = Total				
Yearly **Calculations:** Amount ÷ No. of pay cycles = Total				
Total				

Paying bills

Bill payment method

The following table outlines some of the advantages and disadvantages of different bill payment methods. To determine what works best for you, think about which kind of access is easiest (i.e. phone, internet, post office).

Payment method	Advantages	Disadvantages	How to use
 **Direct debit** This option automatically withdraws the amount of your bill from your bank account. It must be set up with your service provider, not your bank.	• Only needs to be set up once. • Automatic and no need to remember the date a bill is due. • No fees. • Some providers will offer discounts for using this option.	• If you don't have enough money in your account when the bill is due to be paid, you can be charged a fee or your bill won't be paid on time.	• Call your service provider, or if you have an online account with them, log in online. • Provide your bank account details, including BSB, account number and account name. • Your owed amount will be deducted on the due date.
 **In-person**	• You can use cash/ EFTPOS/credit card to pay your bills.	• You must make time to go to the biller or to a post office during opening hours. • Some providers will charge a fee for paying in-person.	• Take your bill and payment to a post office.
 **Over the phone**	• You can call to pay from anywhere.	• You may be waiting in a call queue. • You may need a credit card to pay which will result in a fee.	• Call the phone number listed on the back of your bill.

Payment method	Advantages	Disadvantages	How to use
BPAY An online and phone service which is accessed through your bank to pay your service provider directly from your account.	• Easy process which can be done at any time of the day. • Uses the money in your nominated account. • You can pay from your bank account online or over the phone. • Offered by most services.	• You may pay fees depending on your provider or if you pay with a credit card. • High fee to recall funds if you make a mistake.	• Find your Biller Code and reference number on your bill. • Log into your banking system or call your phone banking service. • Select the bill payment or BPAY option and follow the prompts.
Centrepay Centrelink will deduct money from your regular income support payments so you can pay your bills.	• A reliable way to save for your bills. • Free. • You can control the size of your deductions by setting a target amount, pausing deductions and choosing the order your bills are paid.	• Not all providers will accept Centrepay.	• Visit: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/centrepay



Budgeting

Summary

This activity helps you to create a budget based on your previous spend tracking. We recognise that not all families reside in one household and not all households are families.

Time estimate	Materials checklist
30 minutes	☐ 'Creating a budget' worksheet

Instructions

Now that you know how much you spend and what bills you need to pay, use the 'Creating a budget' worksheet to set a budget for the next three weeks by allocating an amount to spend for each category.

ASIC's Moneysmart has a free, online Budget Planner that makes budget calculations easy. Visit www.moneysmart.gov.au/budgeting/budget-planner.

Discuss the budget with your household or family, so they know what the limits are and agree that they're realistic. Challenge them to stick with it and check in with them at the end of each day.

For some tips to help you save money, visit:
www.moneysmart.gov.au/saving/simple-ways-to-save-money.



Budgeting

Creating a budget worksheet

Week One income		

Expenses	Amount ($)	Need or want?
Housing		
Groceries		
Transport, car payments, petrol		
Electricity		
Gas		
Water		
Internet, phone		
Clothing		
School fees and uniforms, daycare, after school care		
Gym, fitness, self-care		
Medical, pharmacy		
Weekly total		

Savings (income – weekly total)

Week Two income		

Expenses	Amount ($)	Need or want?
Housing		
Groceries		
Transport, car payments, petrol		
Electricity		
Gas		
Water		
Internet, phone		
Clothing		
School fees and uniforms, daycare, after school care		
Gym, fitness, self-care		
Medical, pharmacy		
Weekly total		

Savings (income – weekly total)

Week Three income		

Expenses	Amount ($)	Need or want?
Housing		
Groceries		
Transport, car payments, petrol		
Electricity		
Gas		
Water		
Internet, phone		
Clothing		
School fees and uniforms, daycare, after school care		
Gym, fitness, self-care		
Medical, pharmacy		
Weekly total		

Savings (income – weekly total)

Savings

Summary

This activity helps to identify a savings goal and calculate how much you will need to regularly contribute to achieve it.



Time estimate

30–40 minutes



Materials checklist

- ☐ ‘Savings goal’ worksheet

Instructions

Refer to the ‘Savings goal’ worksheet.

Think about something you would like to save for in the short-to-mid-term, such as a holiday or building an emergency fund for a rainy day. If you don’t have something in mind, think of a reasonable amount of money you would like to have saved for financial safety.



It’s important to reach your first savings goal rather than to have an ambitious goal, because this will get you in the practice of saving.

Write down the goal and the exact amount it costs. Use the internet to find an exact cost if needed.

Think of a realistic date to achieve the goal by. It could be anywhere from a few weeks to a year, otherwise change your goal to something smaller.

Take the cost of the goal and divide it by the number of payment cycles between today and the nominated date. This is the amount that must be saved to get to that goal.

Check if this amount fits your budget from the previous activity. If not, you must change the date, change your goal, or change your budget. Be realistic!



Once you have settled on an amount to be saved, this should be put in an account that is separate to your everyday transaction account. Contact your bank for help in setting up a savings account, if one is not already in place.

Transfer your savings into this account every time you receive a payment. You may want to set up an automatic transfer instead.

Keep a reminder of your goal somewhere you can reflect on it often, this could be an image in your wallet or sticking your worksheet to the fridge. It will remind you of the purpose of your savings.

Over the coming weeks and months, check in with someone to share how you are progressing with your goal. If you fall behind, let them know and recalculate your savings, budget or date so that you can still achieve your goal.

Savings goal worksheet

1 Name it

2 Price it

3 Time it

4 Calculate it

5 Track it

Time pay cycle (#)	Savings ($)	Fill in arrow as you progress

Further assistance

Need help?

Financial difficulty

Our Financial Assist team is here to support our customers get back on their feet in times of financial difficulty.

Contact

FinancialAssist@cba.com.au
1300 720 814

The Financial Assist support line is open from 8am–9pm, Monday – Friday, and 9am–2pm, Saturday, AEST. Call charges may apply.

CommBank Next Chapter team

The CommBank Next Chapter team provides specialist support to help ensure the financial safety and wellbeing of our customers impacted by domestic and family violence, financial abuse or problem gambling.

The team is available on **1800 222 387** or via our online chat facility (CEBA) in the CommBank app. You can contact the team Monday to Friday from 9am to 6pm AEST, excluding public holidays.

If you need an interpreter, you can ask for one and the CommBank Next Chapter team will arrange one. We can assist anyone who needs support, no matter who you bank with.

Financial Independence Hub

The Financial Independence Hub, delivered by Good Shepherd and funded by CommBank, helps people who have experienced financial abuse in their journey to long-term financial recovery, regardless of who they bank with.

The program provides free specialist one-on-one financial coaching and support to help people build confidence and capability in managing their own finances, with referrals to support services and, in some cases, access to financial solutions like interest-free loans.

Contact

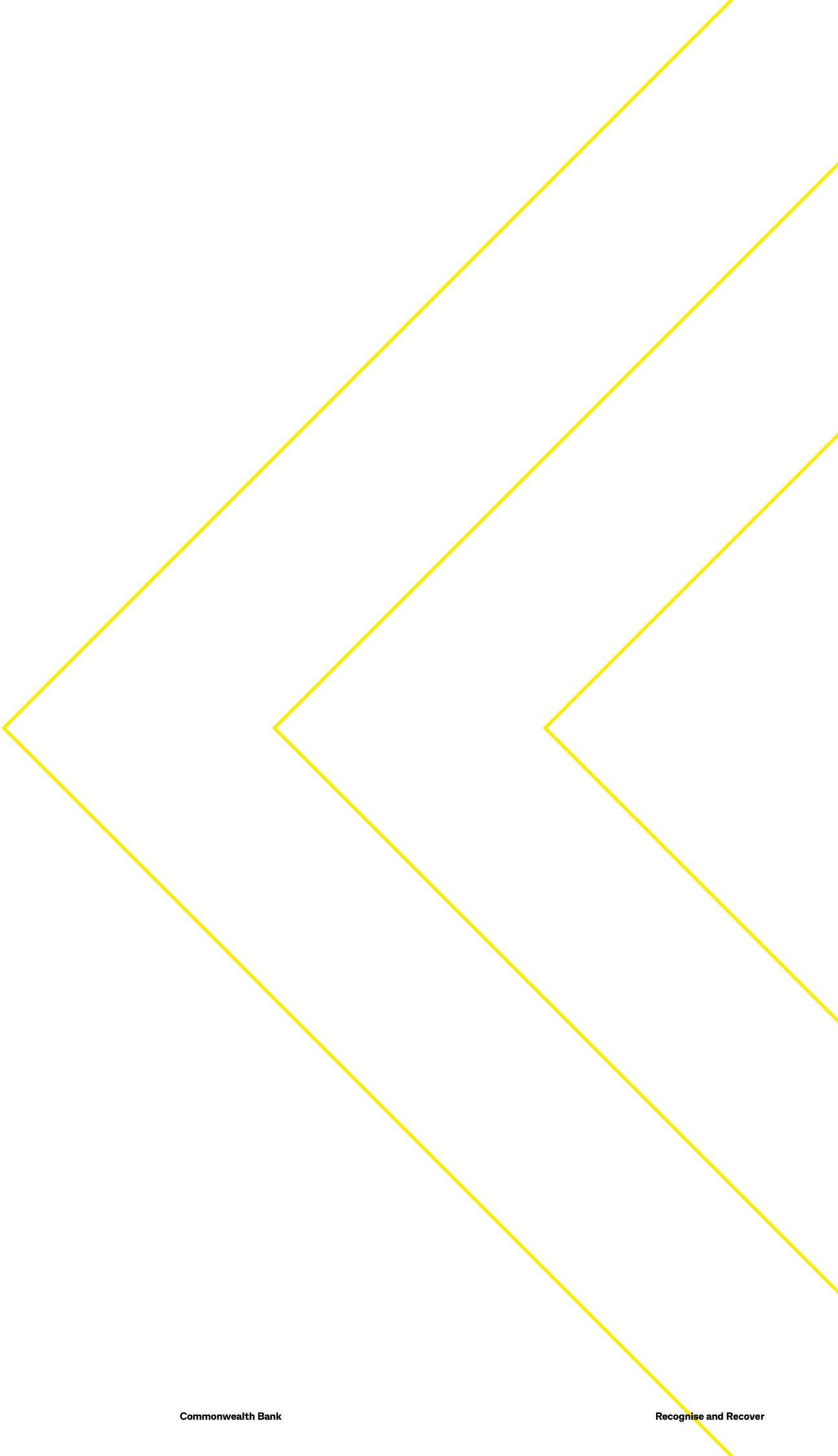
Good Shepherd on 1300 050 150 Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm, AEST,
goodshep.org.au/services/fih/

Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA)

If you're not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can lodge a dispute with the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA). They provide a fair and independent, free complaint resolution service.

Contact

Website: www.afca.org.au
Email: info@afca.org.au
Phone: 1800 931 678 (free call)
Postal Address:
GPO Box 3,
Melbourne, VIC, 3001



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