

State Budget 2008/09 Information Sheet

Financial Support

OVERVIEW

For many people, the cost of living in Western Australia has increased at a rate that has not been met either by wage rises, or increases to vital government income support. Financial crisis can be described as a situation in which an individual or family does not have the material, social or emotional resources to cover essential items such as food, shelter, essential services, medication, clothing and transportation.

The non-government sector provides vital support to people facing financial hardship through providing emergency relief services and financial counselling.

Together, Financial Counsellors and Emergency Relief outlets provide assistance to meet immediate needs of those in financial crisis, as well as addressing longer-term issues of financial sustainability through information provision, advice, referral and advocacy to address the underlying causes of financial crisis.

Currently, Financial Counsellors have identified poor levels of funding for wages and significant increases to demand for services as being major problems for the sector. A review of the efficacy and structure of WA Government concessions is also required to ensure that they meet the needs of people in Western Australia living on lower incomes or facing hardship.

WACOSS' Recommendations	Budget Outcome & Comments
<p>A Cost of Living (COL) Index</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Cost of Living Index considering factors beyond those determining the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Use the COL index to inform monetary and social policy. 	<p>No funding commitment.</p>
<p>Financial Counsellors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase funding to Financial Counselling service providers. Increase funding to enable the Financial Counsellors to collect information regarding increases to demand for services, recruitment, retention and training issues. 	<p>\$2.2 million Increase to funding to Financial Counsellors as a part of \$3.9 million commitment for 08/09 to Hardship Utility Grants Scheme.</p> <p>No additional funding for data collection.</p>
<p>Co-ordination Unit for Emergency Relief Providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the Government provide funding for a Co-ordination Unit for Emergency Relief Providers in WA. 	<p>No commitment to funding.</p>
<p>Review of State Government Concessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a comprehensive review of State concessions to examine the accessibility, equity and adequacy of state concessions. 	<p>No commitment to funding.</p>