

Small Business Bushfire Financial Counselling

Support Line **1800 413 828**

Is your small business suffering? Free financial counselling is available.

We are here to help. Just call us.

Financial Counselling Australia is excited to announce the launch of Australia's first financial counselling service for small business.

The Small Business Bushfire Financial Counselling Support Line (1800 413 828) and website (www.smallbusinessbushfire.org.au) fills a much-needed gap: financial counselling for small businesses affected by the bushfires and experiencing financial difficulties.

In mid-January, the Federal Government announced funding of \$3.5 million over two years to set up the new service.

"Small business owners commonly have their business and personal finances intermingled. They may have guaranteed a business loan with a personal asset such as their house, for example," said Fiona Guthrie.

"And as soon as a crisis hits, not only is the business at risk, but so are their personal assets," Ms Guthrie said. "And many small businesses impacted by the bushfires are now experiencing a double whammy as a result of Covid-19."

"That's why this financial counselling support line is so important. It is going to play a critical role in helping small business owners get through these really difficult times."

The new service has come about as a direct response from the Federal Government to the devastating bushfires that swept large parts of Australia in recent months.

The financial counselling sector has long advocated for funding to establish a specialist telephone support line for small business owners. In the UK, [Business Debtline](#) has been running for a number of years.

Small business financial counsellors help sole traders and people who run small businesses in many ways. They provide advice on among other things:

- options for managing business debts as well as personal debts
- the implications for directors who have guaranteed a business loan or other service/supply
- how to dispute business debts in external dispute resolution schemes
- how to negotiate repayment arrangements on tax debts, leases, utility bills, with suppliers or any other business debt
- what government services and grants may be available to help small businesses.

They are also trained in negotiation and counselling and to offer emotional support.

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