



## MEDIA ALERT

Dire financial counsellor shortage hits  
Queensland's most vulnerable

22 April 2024

Queenslanders in financial crisis are being turned away from free and independent financial counselling due to a massive shortage and underfunding of qualified counsellors.

An alarming report released by the **Financial Counsellors' Association of Queensland (FCAQ)** today reveals there are only 29 full-time registered financial counsellors, and 81 part-time positions, to service the entire state in the current cost-of-living crisis.

That is less than half of the numbers available for New South Wales or Victorian residents, despite Queensland having Australia's highest number of bankruptcies and small business failures, and record mortgage stress.

**FCAQ Executive Officer Jon O'Mally** says Queensland is spending less per capita than any other state and territory on registered financial counsellors, who help victims of domestic and family violence, elder abuse and scams, as well as clients in severe financial distress.

FCAQ is part of the Make Queensland Fair campaign, which is calling for ongoing cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders on low incomes, and improved financial counselling services.

“Never has free, qualified and independent financial counselling been so crucial,” Mr O’Mally said. “There are a lot of vulnerable people out there – people who could lose a home, a rental property, or face other heartbreaking circumstances without financial counselling. It can benefit people in the tens of thousands of dollars.”

“I’ve just spoken to an agency that has closed their books and they have 150 clients on their waiting list,” he said. “This is a professional service that people can access to get qualified financial guidance – including financial representation if needed.

“Queensland currently lags behind other states with no state government funding allocated for specialised Domestic and Family Violence financial counsellors. In contrast, Victoria has twenty. Two exclusively DFV financial counsellors practise in Queensland, with both positions funded through federal sources.”

Mr O’Mally said while the Queensland Government had been spending money on financial wellbeing programs, this did not necessarily include registered financial counsellors, which wellbeing programs then referred clients on to, for qualified financial advice.

Registered financial counsellors rely almost solely on government funding to provide free services, which they have been delivering to struggling Queenslanders for decades.

“Cost of living is not going to get better, and it’s important that the Queensland Government turns its attention to better fund financial counsellors to help Queenslanders now, and in the future. We urgently need an extra \$15 million in state funding for financial counselling.”

Mr O’Mally said financial counsellors were also concerned about a rise in clients gambling to pay basic costs of living and debts, senior financial abuse, telecommunication contracts, and people plunging themselves into further, unsustainable debt to pay household bills.

**Aimee McVeigh, CEO of the Queensland Council of Social Service**, which is leading the Make Queensland Fair Campaign, said it was astonishing Queensland had so few financial counsellors and called on the state government, and opposition, for more funding.

“Qualified and free financial counselling services are crucial for vulnerable Queenslanders who face impossible circumstances as the cost-of-living crisis escalates,” Ms McVeigh said. “We call on both sides of politics to properly fund this vital service.”

For media enquiries, or to attain a copy of the report, contact **FCAQ Executive Officer Jon O’Mally** on [0429 061 269](tel:0429061269), or **QCOSS Senior Media Advisor Tony Fabris** on [0481 854 101](tel:0481854101).

**QCOSS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original inhabitants of Australia and recognises these unique cultures as part of the cultural heritage of all Australians. We pay our respects to the Elders of this land; past and present.**

*Copyright © 2024 QCOSS, All rights reserved.*

Queensland Council of Social Service Ltd  
20 Pidgeon Close, WEST END, Queensland 4101  
Phone: 07 3004 6900  
Contact us: [qcross@qcross.org.au](mailto:qcross@qcross.org.au)