

## FINANCIAL HELP

Information sheet | September 2016

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*This information sheet describes some of the loans, bill help and rent help available to people in Victoria who are on low incomes.*

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### Low and no-interest loans

You may be able to borrow up to \$1,200 through the **No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)**. You aren't charged any interest and you can make affordable repayments over 12 to 18 months.

**StepUP** is a low-interest loan of up to \$3,000. You have up to three years to repay the loan in affordable payments.

NILS and StepUP loans can be used to pay for essential things like:

- household furniture
- computers
- second-hand cars or car repairs
- whitegoods
- medical expenses
- vocational education.

### Who is eligible?

To be eligible for NILS, you need to:

- have a Health Care Card **or** Pension Concession Card **or** be on a low income
- have lived in your current home for more than three months
- show that you're willing and able to repay the loan.

To be eligible for a StepUP loan, you need to:

- have a Health Care Card **or** receive Family Tax Benefit Part A

- have lived in your current home for more than three months.

### How do I apply?

To apply for either NILS or StepUP, call Good Shepherd Microfinance on **13 64 57**.

### Help with energy and water bills

If you can't pay an electricity, gas or water bill because of a temporary financial crisis, you may be able to get a Utility Relief Grant of up to \$500 towards your bills.

There is also a Non-Mains Utility Relief Grant for people who use LPG, diesel or petrol (for a generator), heating oil, firewood, metered electricity from an embedded network, or carted water.

### Who is eligible?

Usually, you will need to have one of the following concession cards:

- Pensioner Concession Card
- Health Care Card
- DVA Gold Card.

You will need to show that you can't pay your utility bills because of unexpected hardship. You also need to meet one of these criteria:

- a significant increase in usage
- a recent decrease in income, for example, because you lost your job

- high unexpected costs for essential items
- the cost of shelter is more than 30% of your household income
- the cost of utilities is more than 10% of your household income.

### How do I apply?

To apply for a **mains Utility Relief Grant**, call your energy or water company, explain your circumstances, and ask for an application form.

To apply for the **Non-Mains Utility Relief Grant**, call the Department of Human Services on **1800 658 521**.

### Help with rental bonds

If you are renting privately but can't afford to pay the bond, you may be eligible for an interest-free bond loan from the **Department of Housing bond loan scheme**.

### Who is eligible?

To be eligible, you need to:

- be a permanent resident of Australia
- meet the income and asset tests
- pay rent that is no more than 55% of your gross (before tax) weekly income
- not own or part-own a house, flat or unit
- have repaid any previous bond loans
- not owe any money for previous or current public housing tenancies.

### How do I apply?

Get an application form from [www.housing.vic.gov.au/apply-bond-loan](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/apply-bond-loan) or at your local Department of Human Services office.

Apply after you have found accommodation but before you pay the bond.

### Help with rent

If you are on a low to moderate income, you might also be able to move into a home with discounted rent through the **National Rental Affordability Scheme**.

### How do I apply?

Apply for an NRAS tenancy from one of Victoria's NRAS tenancy managers. The list of tenancy managers is at [www.dss.gov.au/nras](http://www.dss.gov.au/nras).

### Find out more

#### Seniors Information Victoria

For more advice about any of these programs, phone **1300 135 090** or visit:

**Level 4, Block Arcade**

**98 Elizabeth Street**

**Melbourne**

(enter from Elizabeth Street and use lift number 3)

## COTA VICTORIA

*COTA Victoria's Seniors Information Victoria is supported by the Victorian Government.*

*Although we have taken care to provide accurate information, this information sheet is a guideline only. You should seek professional advice if necessary.*