

MEDIA RELEASE

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Cafs launches new Financial Wellbeing Virtual Helper to support community access to financial counselling

Cafs (Child and Family Services Ballarat) is proud to announce the launch of a new online Financial Wellbeing Virtual Helper, now available on the organisation's Financial Wellbeing webpage ([Financial Wellbeing - Cafs](#)).

This new virtual tool has been designed to make it easier for people across the region to access timely information, ask questions, and connect with Cafs' Financial Counselling Programs.

The Virtual Helper provides an accessible, private and easy way for community members to seek support at any time of day, especially for those who may feel unsure about reaching out, or who need information outside traditional business hours.

Wendy Sturgess, Cafs CEO, said the new Virtual Helper is an important step in making financial wellbeing services easier to access for people experiencing financial stress.

"Cost-of-living pressure continues to affect individuals and families across our community. We want to remove barriers to support. The Virtual Helper helps people get clear, reliable information quickly, and make the first step toward speaking with a financial counsellor if they need it," Ms Sturgess said.

Cafs' Financial Counselling Program provides free, confidential assistance to people experiencing financial hardship. Financial counsellors can help with managing debts, dealing with creditors, budgeting support, understanding rights, and connecting with other services.

Since 1865

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The Virtual Helper guides users to information on topics such as:

- How financial counselling works
- Eligibility and what to expect from the service
- Managing debt and navigating financial difficulty
- How to request an appointment with a Cafs financial counsellor

The tool is designed as an additional access point, not a replacement for human support. Community members can still connect directly with Cafs staff by phone, email or in person.

“The Virtual Helper reflects Cafs’ commitment to innovation and accessibility,” Ms Sturgess said.

“We know that reaching out for help can feel overwhelming. This tool gives people a safe and simple way to ask questions and find the information they need, when they need it. It’s another way we’re supporting financial wellbeing in our region.”

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