

Assisting primary producers, fishers and small rural businesses with **free, independent and confidential** support and business analysis



Maybe you've heard of our Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS), but you want to know more about how we can help farming families. We've put together a few Q&As that address some of the common inquiries we receive.

Alternatively, you're welcome to give us a call on 1800 836 211.

What is RFCS and who is it for?

RFCS helps eligible farmers, who are in financial difficulty, to develop and implement plans to improve their financial position.

This includes farmers, fishers, forest growers and harvesters and owners of small agriculture related businesses.

Rural Business Support (RBS) delivers the RFCS program in SA and NT with funding from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR), Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) and the Department of Primary Industries and Resources NT.

RBS is one of 12 services delivering the RFCS nationally – Queensland (2), NSW (3), Victoria (4), Tasmania (1) and WA (1).

What will it cost me to use RFCS?

Eligible RFCS clients can access the services of a rural financial counsellor (RFC) at no cost to them. The service is independent and confidential.

How long can a RFC work with me?

Client support is provided for up to three years but is reviewed at least yearly.

Our days are full keeping on top of the farm. I don't have time for a trip to town to see a RFC.

We understand that farm life stops for no-one. Our RFCs covered more than 328,000km last year travelling to meet with clients around their kitchen tables.

If you'd rather catch up with a RFC during a trip into town, we have offices – in Ardrossan, Berri, Clare, Magill, Murray Bridge, Naracoorte and Wudinna.

Four out of five RFCS clients have taken action as a result of their counselling.

2017 RFCS client survey

I've had the same accountant for 20 years. I'm happy with them so why should I see a RFC?

A RFC can sit down with you, take a big picture look at your business and discuss some options to improve your financial sustainability that perhaps you haven't thought about before (because, let's face it, you've had your hands and days full with running the farm!).

A RFC will use a case management framework to help you understand your situation and identify financial and business options so that you feel more confident about the future.

I'm still unclear on how a RFC can help me. What will I get out of it?

Our friendly and professional RFCs can help you with:

- Business analysis including long term cash flow and viability
- Meeting with lenders and financial institutions
- Referrals to other service providers
- Preparing for succession planning
- Identifying government assistance eligibility

After your first appointment the RFC will give you a clear idea of the possible ways they can help.

We've been down and bounced back. Others are worse off than us...

Everyone has access to an initial appointment with RFCS to discuss eligibility for rural financial counselling. Please don't self-assess.

We've worked with hundreds of farming families over 30 years. Many have been where you are now and have unknowingly ruled themselves as ineligible for RFCS help and government financial assistance.

RFCS also has information on government and industry programs

RURAL BUSINESS SUPPORT - FREECALL 1800 836 211

ruralbusinesssupport.org.au



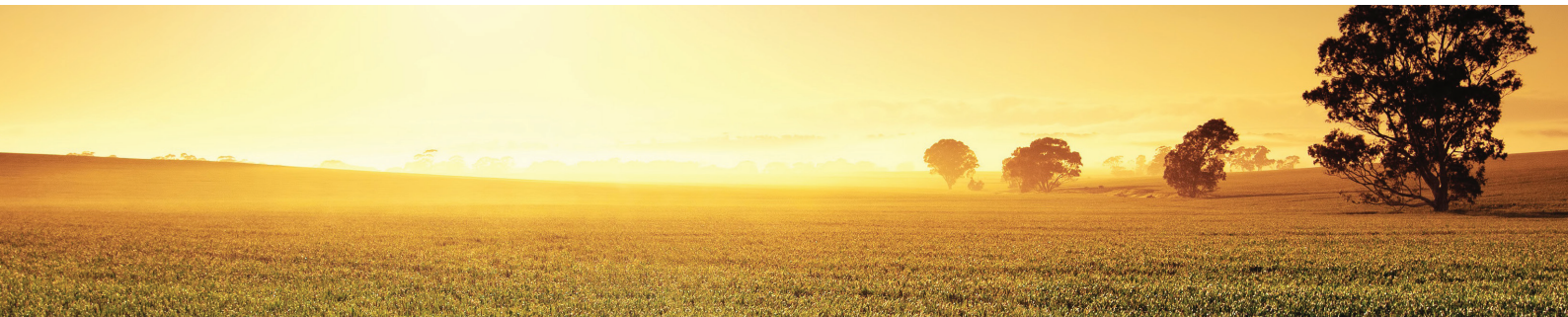
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“The Rural Financial Counsellor was so willing to help and happy to fit in with our farming and family schedules.”



that may be available to you such as Farm Household Allowance (FHA) and low interest loans available through the Rural Investment Corporation (RIC).

A RFC will help you understand your financial position and work with you to develop and implement plans to improve this.

A RFC can help you to deal with lending institutions in relation to applications and contracts and support processes relating to farm debt mediation.

The Farm Debt Mediation Bill 2018 requires mandatory farm debt mediation to support farmers and provide improved protection and financial security. This provides a formal structure for producers who find themselves in a situation where debt on their farm – their livelihood and home – has become unmanageable and all other avenues of negotiation with creditors have been exhausted.

Talk to a RFC to find out more.

I overheard a bloke talking about new low interest loan for farmers. What's this all about?

Our RFCs have up-to-date information from the Federal Government's new central entity, the Regional Investment Corporation (RIC). The RIC provides low interest loans for farmers for farm investment, debt restructuring, operating expenses and drought recovery and preparedness activities.

My family isn't the type to accept handouts – we don't feel right seeking assistance from Centrelink.

Rest assured you're not alone.

Sometimes rural families need an extra hand during tough times. If you've decided to look into Farm Household Allowance (FHA), a RFC can support you to get your application together.

You can apply for FHA at any stage and, if you're eligible, receive the payment for up to four years. It's the same rate as Newstart Allowance and is paid fortnightly.

86% of RFCS clients felt they would be worse off if not for the assistance of RFCS.

2017 RFCS client survey

The easiest way to claim FHA is online at www.humanservices.gov.au/farmhouseholdallowance.

From 1 September 2018, customers receiving FHA will get an FHA supplement.

If you're:

- Single, you may get one or two lump sum payments of \$3600
- Partnered, you may get one or two lump sum payments of \$3000. This will be paid to each member of the couple if both are recipients of FHA.

If you're not currently receiving FHA:

- Claim before 1 December 2018 to get the first payment
- Claim after 1 December and before 1 June 2019 to get the second payment.

The Federal Government has also temporarily increased the farm asset test to \$5 million until 30 June 2019 to allow more farmers to access FHA.

It sounds like seeing a RFC could sort out plenty of our problems. What can't they do?

RFCS can assist with farm business matters, but some areas are best left to other professional services such as lawyers, accountants, agronomists and the Australian Tax Office.

We can't represent you in legal processes, or act as a mediator in farm debt mediation processes.

If a need for emotional counselling is identified, we will refer you to mental health service providers.

We will continue to work with you on your farm business challenges along with other professional service providers.

How do I contact RFCS?

Please call 1800 836 211 and if you're asked to leave a message, one of our team will be in contact within 48 hours.

If you have previously worked with a RFC, please call them direct.

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