



# Owing Money - Debt

Do you need help with debts?

Is someone chasing you for money?

## What is debt?



A debt is **when you owe someone money**.  
A debt can be for a loan (of money or an item) or a bill.

If you have a debt, or are late paying your debt, someone may contact you about it. This could be the lender or a debt collector.



It's important to ask for copies of your paperwork to find out how much money you owe and to make sure the debt is for the right amount.

## I have a debt and I'm having trouble paying



If you're having trouble paying back your debt, there are things you can do.



Most of the time, you can pay off the debt in smaller amounts that you can afford - this is called a payment plan. A lender or debt collector may also agree to something else.

## I thought I paid my debt - why are they still chasing me?



Most money loans, credit cards or buy now, pay later programs like Afterpay are not free!

There can be big fees and charges that you have to pay back, on top of the money you get from your loan.

There are rules about debts, including:

- What a lender has to do when giving you a loan.
- Fees you can be charged for your type of debt.

If the lender doesn't follow the rules, there can be consequences, including you not having to pay back big fees or keeping the loan item at a reduced price.

## I have a debt - what if I don't repay it?

If you ignore your debt and don't pay it back, there can be problems:



- Debt collectors might keep chasing you
- The debt can get bigger as more fees add up
- You might get a bad credit report which can make it harder to get a loan in the future
- The lender could go to court to try and get the money paid back.

Some debts can expire after a certain amount of time which means you cannot be made to repay it.



If you think the debt might be old you should get legal help to work out if you still need to pay the debt.

## Who can help me?



**Call for legal help**



**The National Debt Helpline**  
1800 007 007

- Lawyers can help you work out your options for dealing with debt.
- Financial counsellors can help you work out your budget and what you can afford, including paying back a debt.
- They can tell you about other loans with no fees (no interest loans).



Top End  
**Women's**  
Legal Service



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National Indigenous  
Australians Agency

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**Do you need legal advice or assistance?**

**You can contact TEWLS for a free appointment**

**Phone: 1800 234 441  
or (08) 8982 3000**

**Email: [admin@tewls.org.au](mailto:admin@tewls.org.au)**

**Website: [www.tewls.org.au](http://www.tewls.org.au)**

**Address: 17 Lindsay Street, Darwin**