

FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS' ASSOCIATION OF WA WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SUICIDE FRAMEWORK SUBMISSION

2026-2031



FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS' ASSOCIATION
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Influential Advocate • Effective Peak Body • Best Practice Profession

Contents

1

Executive
Summary

2-4

Summary of
Recommendations

5

About FCAWA &
Financial Counselling

6

Introduction

7-9

Financial Counselling
in Suicide Prevention

10-11

FDSV, Coercive Control
& Economic Abuse

12-15

Financial Counselling
Alignment with the
Framework Streams

16-17

Workforce Wellbeing
Resourcing &
Sustainability

18

Data and Evaluation

19

Conclusion

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which FCAWA's Head Office is located, the Whadjuk people of Noongar Boodjar.

We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters of this beautiful place, and acknowledge that they never ceded sovereignty. We respect all Whadjuk Elders and their Ancestors, and all First Nations peoples.

Executive Summary

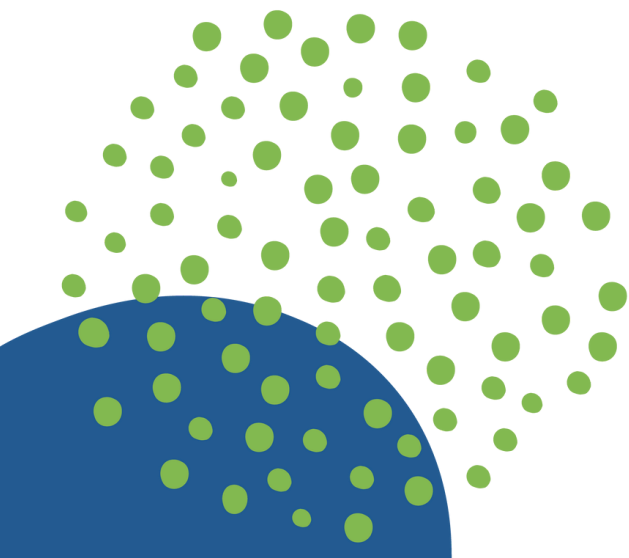
Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia (FCAWA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2026 - 2031 (The Framework).

Financial counsellors are a critical, though currently under-recognised, component of the suicide-prevention workforce. They provide free, confidential, and trauma-informed support to individuals experiencing financial distress arising from unemployment, housing insecurity, Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (FDSV), gambling harm, and other economic pressures. These circumstances are well-established social determinants of suicide risk, identified within the National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025–2035.

FCAWA recommends that financial counselling be formally integrated within the Framework across prevention, intervention, and postvention streams. This includes cross-sector commissioning, structured referral pathways with mental health services, and recognition of economic safety as a key protective factor.

Alignment with the Commonwealth Inquiry into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Suicide (2025) and the Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG) Submission to the Inquiry into Financial Services Regulatory Frameworks in Relation to Financial Abuse (2024) would ensure national consistency and improve the State's capacity to address coercive control, economic abuse, and systemic financial stressors.

The Framework should also embed recurrent funding, data linkage, and workforce development mechanisms that enable Financial Counsellors to participate fully in suicide-prevention networks. Strengthening the connection between financial wellbeing and mental health will improve early identification of risk, enhance recovery outcomes, and reduce service fragmentation across Western Australia.



Recommendations

1

Integrate financial counselling within the WA Suicide Prevention Framework 2026–2031 as part of a coordinated, whole-of-system approach that aligns with the National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025–2035 and the Commonwealth Inquiry into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Suicide (2025).

2

Explicitly recognise financial distress, economic abuse and coercive control as social determinants of suicide risk and incorporate economic safety as a protective factor across all prevention streams.

3

Adopt co-commissioned funding and service arrangements between the Mental Health Commission, Department of Communities and Treasury to embed financial counselling within mental health, FDSV and community-service networks.

4

Implement a cross-sector workforce strategy encompassing Financial Counsellors, FDSV specialists, community legal services and peer workers, supported by ongoing supervision, wellbeing initiatives and professional development.

Our Recommendations

5

Prioritise access to financial counselling and related community supports in Regional, Rural and Remote areas where economic distress and suicide rates intersect most sharply.

6

Strengthen early-intervention capacity through structured referral pathways between Financial Counsellors, mental health clinicians and crisis-response services.

7

Include Financial Counsellors in crisis-response and postvention protocols to address financial instability, debt management and economic recovery following a suicide or critical event.

8

Embed lived-experience participation in the governance, design and evaluation of suicide-prevention initiatives to ensure relevance and accountability.

Our Recommendations

9

Expand suicide-prevention data systems to capture economic indicators such as debt, income insecurity, housing stress and gambling harm, and ensure consistent evaluation and annual reporting against Framework objectives.

10

Develop a clear five-year implementation plan outlining actions, lead agencies, funding mechanisms and performance indicators to support delivery of the Framework.

About FCAWA and Financial Counselling

FCAWA

FCAWA is the peak body and voice of financial counselling in WA. We advocate for financial wellbeing and promote excellence in the sector to achieve our goals of financially resilient communities and reduced hardship for all.

We provide Financial Counsellors with training, resources, events and professional support so they can deliver free, independent and confidential help to people facing financial hardship. We also advocate for systemic change, working with government, regulators, and agencies to make financial systems fairer and more compassionate.

As a not-for-profit organisation, FCAWA:

- Provides continuous professional development, resources, and support for Financial Counsellors.
- Advocates for a fair and equitable marketplace.
- Works to raise the profile of Financial Counsellors.
- Advocates to increase access to financial counselling.
- Works to improve hardship processes for people in financial difficulty.

Financial Counselling

Financial counselling is a free, independent and confidential service provided by qualified professionals to people experiencing financial hardship. Financial counsellors support individuals, families and small businesses to stabilise their financial situation through:

- Budgeting and money planning.
- Understanding rights and negotiating with creditors.
- Exploring options such as bankruptcy.
- Accessing grants or concessions.
- Connecting to other support services (mental health, legal, family violence).

Research in 2014, found that every \$1 invested in financial counselling provides a \$5 return, and that four in five clients had experienced at least one financial Crisis.¹ This research has now been reinforced by the recently released Victorian report, which estimates the return on investment to be between \$3.70 and \$5.30 rising to as high as \$8.10 for clients affected by family violence, \$7.40 for small business owners and \$5.90 for clients with a disability. The researchers noted that the cost-benefit analysis did not include other benefits that are more difficult to quantify, such as improvements in financial literacy, or mental health issues, stabilised housing, or avoidance of legal action. In other words, the 1:5 cost benefit is a highly understated and conservative measure of the true economic impact of financial counselling.²

[1] Mahmoudi, P., Hordacre, A-L., & Spoehr, J. (2014). Paying it forward: Cost-benefit analysis of The Wyatt Trust funded financial counselling services. Adelaide: Australian Workplace Innovation and Social Research Centre, The University of Adelaide.

[2] Financial Counselling Victoria Inc. (FCVic). (2025). Growing financial counselling in Victoria: The next 10 years – Victorian workforce strategy. Melbourne: FcVic. Retrieved from <https://fcvic.org.au/victorian-workforce-strategy/>

Introduction

Financial counsellors, despite being an under-recognised service, play a critical role in suicide prevention. They support individuals facing financial distress arising from unemployment, housing insecurity, FDSV, gambling harm, and other forms of economic hardship, all of which are identified by the National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025–2035 (The National Framework) as key social determinants of suicide risk.³

This submission builds on the Financial Counselling Victoria (FCVic) Submission to the Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy (2023), which called for financial counselling to be embedded as both an intervention and postvention service⁴, and the Financial Counselling Australia (FCA) Submission to the Inquiry into Online Gambling (2023), which documented alarming rates of suicidal distress among clients affected by gambling-related financial harm.⁵

Despite growing recognition of financial distress as a suicide-risk factor, the current funding for financial counselling in Western Australia remains limited and fragmented, constraining its contribution to early-intervention and postvention initiatives.⁶

This submission also draws on emerging insights from the Commonwealth Inquiry into the Relationship Between Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Suicide (2025), which highlights the urgent need to recognise coercive control, financial abuse, and systems-based economic stressors as key drivers of suicidal distress. FCAWA's evidence indicates that Financial Counsellors are frequently the first professionals to identify both economic abuse and associated suicidal ideation, positioning the sector as an untapped protective workforce across both suicide prevention and family violence reform agendas.

EARG Submission to the Inquiry into Financial Services Regulatory Frameworks in Relation to Financial Abuse (June 2024) identifies persistent systemic failures across banking, credit and superannuation systems that enable or ignore financial abuse⁷. Although the submission focus is regulatory, its evidence highlights structural conditions, such as debt entrapment, financial exclusion and prolonged economic insecurity that mirror well-established risk factors for suicidal distress. These insights reinforce the need to treat economic safety not merely as financial capability, but as a protective factor within suicide-prevention policy.

[[3] Australian Government. (2025). *National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025–2035*. Canberra: Department of Health and Aged Care.

[4] Financial Counselling Victoria (FCVic). (2023). *Submission to the Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy*. Melbourne: FCVic.

[5] Financial Counselling Australia (FCA). (2023). *Submission to the inquiry into online gambling and its impacts*. Melbourne: FCA

[6] Mental Health Commission WA. (2025). *Draft Western Australian suicide prevention framework 2026–2031*. Perth: Government of Western Australia.

[7] Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG). (2024, June). *Submission to the inquiry into financial services regulatory framework in relation to financial abuse*. Melbourne: EARG. Available at <https://earg.org.au/our-publications/submission-to-the-inquiry-into-financial-services-regulatory-framework-in-relation-to-financial-abuse-june-2024/>

Financial Counselling in Suicide Prevention

Financial counsellors provide free, confidential, and trauma-informed support to people in financial hardship. They help stabilise circumstances that often precede suicidal distress, such as debt spirals, eviction threats, utility disconnection, or coercive financial control, allowing individuals to regain a sense of safety and agency. Financial Counsellors also give hope to those with suicide ideation thoughts due to their financial situation and can refer to appropriate supports.

Data shows that economic insecurity, including unemployment, low income, and income volatility, significantly increases suicide risk.⁸ Nearly 20% of suicide deaths in Australia are directly linked to unemployment and underemployment. Financial distress is one of the most frequently occurring psychosocial factors in suicide deaths, identified in 7.3% of cases nationally.⁹

In September 2025, Suicide Prevention Australia reported through their Community Tracker that cost-of-living has remained the top stressor for Australians over the past 3 years¹⁰ (see Table 1).

In May 2025, Suicide Prevention Australia released the West Australian Community Tracker findings¹¹ (see Table 2), which show that:

- Cost-of-living and personal debt distress remained the top stressor for 11 consecutive quarters.
- Over the past 11 quarters, close 7 in 10 (69%) residents of Western Australia experienced increased distress compared to the same time last year, reportedly as a result of social and economic circumstances.

Suicide Prevention Australia go on to state that the data emphasises an urgent need for comprehensive economic and social support measures as part of suicide prevention efforts.

According to the WA Council of Social Service, a model two-parent family's income was insufficient to cover essential living costs, with weekly expenses exceeding income by \$60.77.¹²

[8] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2024). *Suicide and self-harm monitoring: Social determinants data*. Canberra: AIHW.

[9] *Financial stress and suicide: The hidden crisis*. (2025). Journal of Public Mental Health. SAGE Publications

[10] Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA). (2025, September). *The Suicide Prevention Australia Community Tracker – National Report*. Sydney: Suicide Prevention Australia. Available at <https://www.suicidepreventionaust.org>

[11] Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA). (2025, May). *Western Australia Community Tracker Report*. Sydney: Suicide Prevention Australia. Available at <https://www.suicidepreventionaust.org>

[12] Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS). (2024). *Cost of living report 2024*. Perth: WACOSS. Available at <https://www.wacoss.org.au/library/2024-cost-of-living-report/>

Despite this data and research, the current draft WA Framework does not recognise financial counselling as part of the suicide prevention workforce.

FCAWA urges the inclusion of financial counselling across all prevention streams, in line with national policy direction under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy (Objective 3.2d), which explicitly calls for stronger connections between financial counselling, mental health, and suicide prevention supports.³

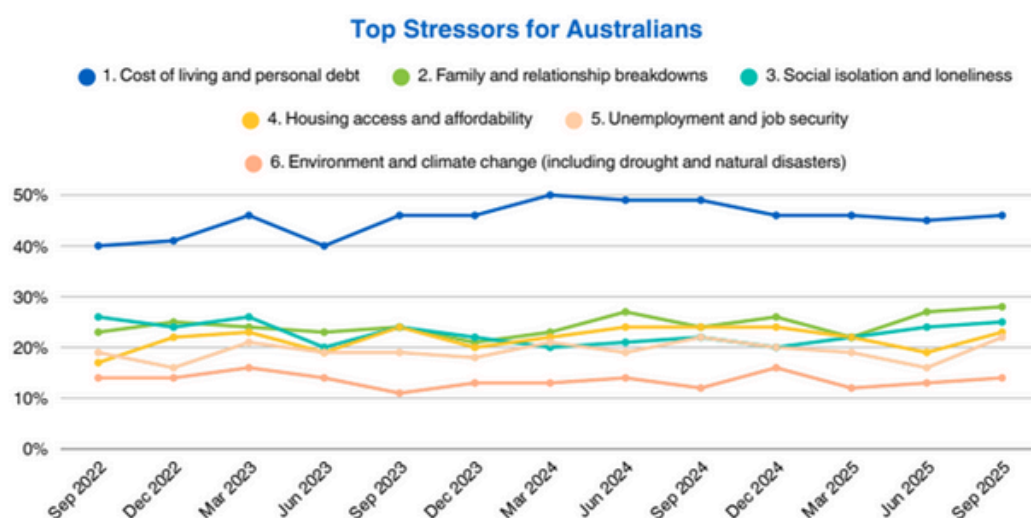


Table 1
Top Stressors for Australians Over the Past 3 Years.
Note. Reproduced from Suicide Prevention Australia, *Community Tracker Report (2025)*.¹⁰

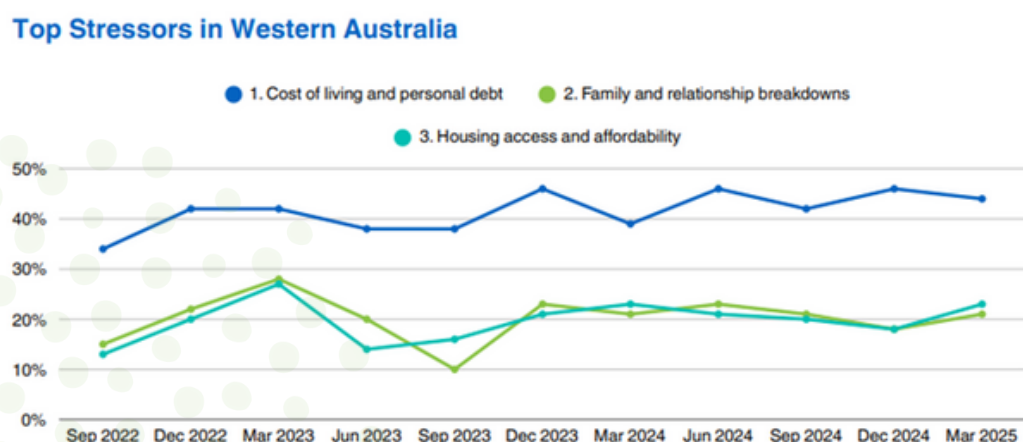


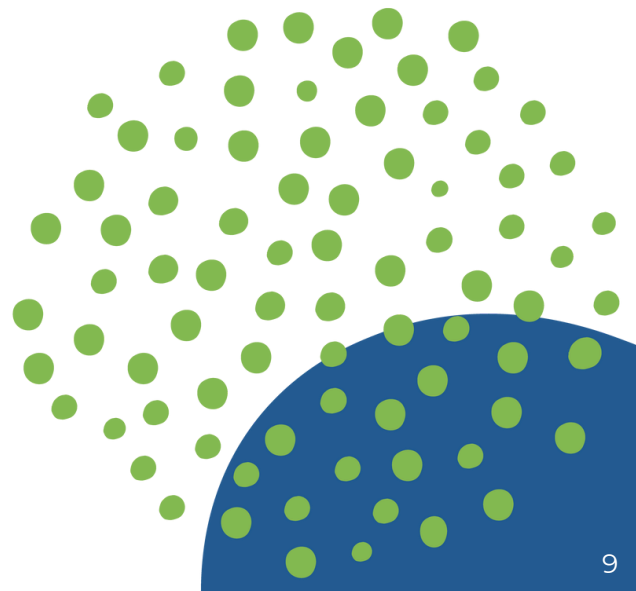
Table 2
West Australian Community Tracker Findings.
Note. Reproduced from Suicide Prevention Australia, *West Australian Community Tracker Report (2025)*.¹¹

In his address at the FCAWA annual conference, Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA) Chief Ombudsman and CEO Mr. David Locke referred to the recent Shield and First Guardian collapse.

Mr. Locke affirmed that when someone's retirement investment is wiped out as a result of a financial firm becoming insolvent, it's not just a financial blow – it can be a devastating emotional trauma.

The shame and hopelessness that follows can push people toward suicidal thoughts.

AFCA supports the provision of free and confidential financial counselling under the WA Suicide Prevention Framework. Financial counselling is a vital early intervention, empowering people to recover from financial losses, minimising harm and creating connections with wrap-around support services.



Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence, Coercive Control & Economic Abuse

FDSV, particularly coercive control and economic abuse, are significant pathways to suicidal distress. Coercive control undermines autonomy, isolates victim-survivors, and creates financial dependency, while economic abuse operates as a pervasive mechanism of entrapment, encompassing behaviours such as forced debt, restriction of access to money or assets, and employment sabotage.^{13 14}

Financial counsellors routinely identify these patterns through trauma-informed practice¹³. Their unique position allows them to recognise warning signs of both economic abuse and suicidal ideation. Despite this, financial counselling remains under-recognised within suicide prevention systems.

Victim-survivors experiencing economic abuse frequently face severe distress, housing and income instability, and systemic barriers to safety and recovery increasing suicide risk.^{12 15}

Integrating financial counselling into suicide-prevention strategies would strengthen protective factors and improve early intervention for those impacted by coercive control and economic abuse.

EARG's 2024 analysis further demonstrates that victims of economic abuse are frequently retraumatised by the very financial systems designed to provide support. Inconsistent identification of financial abuse, lack of trauma-informed responses and limited accountability between regulators and service providers perpetuate a sense of powerlessness and entrapment.^{7 13} These dynamics contribute directly to hopelessness and psychological distress among victim-survivors, both of which are recognised precursors to suicidality.

[13] Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG). (2022, November). *Submission on national coercive control principles*. Melbourne: EARG. Available at <https://earg.org.au/our-publications/submission-on-national-coercive-control-principles-nov-2022/>

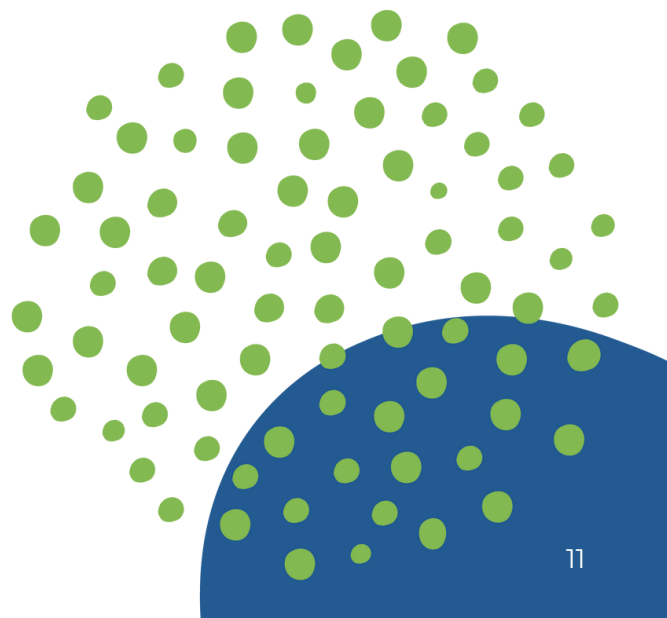
[14] Financial Counselling Australia (FCA). (2020, August). *Submission to the inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence*. Melbourne: FCA. Available at <https://www.financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au/fca-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-08-05-FCA-submission-to-Inquiry-into-Family-Domestic-and-Sexual-Violence-Final1.pdf>

[15] Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG). (2024, September). *Economic abuse and the Corporations Act*. Melbourne: EARG. Available at <https://earg.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/EARG-Economic-Abuse-and-the-Corporations-Act-September-2024.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS

(linked to overarching [#2](#), [#3](#), [#4](#), [#9](#))

- Recognise economic abuse and coercive control as discrete suicide-risk factors within the WA Suicide Prevention Framework, consistent with national definitions and the EARG National Coercive Control Principles ([Rec #2](#)).
- Formally integrate financial counselling into FDSV and suicide-prevention networks through co-commissioned service models with mental health, FDSV and financial-capability sectors ([Rec #3](#)).
- Develop cross-sector protocols enabling trauma-informed financial counselling in FDSV contexts, including safe-disclosure pathways, joint referrals, and shared workforce training ([Rec #4](#)).
- Strengthen professional development for Financial Counsellors on FDSV-related suicide risk, including coercive control, economic abuse and high-risk presentations ([Rec #4](#)).
- Align WA policy and data systems with national reforms emerging through the Commonwealth Inquiry into the Relationship Between Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Suicide (2025), ensuring consistent concepts, definitions and data capture of economic abuse ([Rec #2](#) & [#9](#)).



Alignment to the Framework

Stream 1 - Wellbeing

Financial wellbeing is a critical component of population-level wellbeing. Economic insecurity undermines mental health, physical health, social participation, and resilience.

Consistent with emerging national practice, the Framework should move beyond valuing lived experience to embedding it in design, implementation and evaluation processes. This includes participation in governance structures, workforce training and data review mechanisms to ensure lived experience informs both policy and service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(linked to overarching [#1](#), [#2](#), [#8](#))

- Recognise financial counselling as a universal wellbeing intervention ([Rec #1](#)).
- Embed economic safety and lived-experience governance mechanisms ([Rec #2](#) & [#8](#)).
- Incorporate financial wellbeing into population-level initiatives ([Rec #2](#)).

Alignment to the Framework Stream 2 - Early Intervention

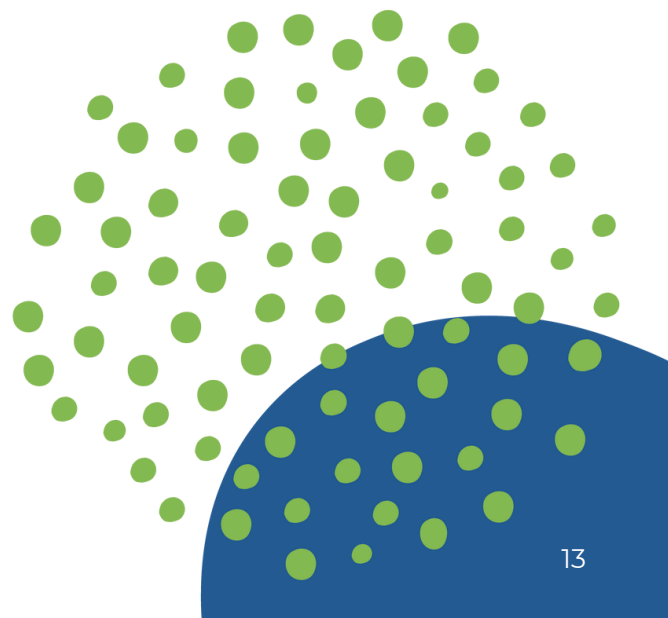
Financial distress is a key social determinant of suicide. Early intervention through financial counselling can prevent escalation to crisis, yet many people fall through service gaps due to fragmentation between financial and mental health supports.

Suicide prevention should be operationalised through cross-sector and cross-government investment that reflects the social determinants of suicide. Early-intervention models must be funded jointly across mental health, community and financial-wellbeing portfolios to ensure continuity and coordination of support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(linked to overarching [#1](#), [#3](#), [#5](#) & [#6](#))

- Integrate financial counselling within multidisciplinary early-intervention systems ([Rec #1 & #3](#)).
- Establish structured referral pathways between financial counselling and mental health crisis supports ([Rec #6](#)).
- Co-commission early-intervention models across government portfolios ([Rec #3](#)).
- Prioritise regional and remote access to early-intervention financial counselling ([Rec #5](#)).



Alignment to the Framework

Stream 3 - Crisis Response

Financial counsellors frequently encounter clients experiencing suicidal ideation in the context of financial distress due to a wide range of crisis factors including FDSV, gambling harm or the collapse of a small business.

FCA's 2022 sector survey found that 80% of gambling-specialist Financial Counsellors had clients expressing suicidal thoughts, and nearly half had clients who had attempted suicide.³ Similar patterns are seen among clients facing business failure or insolvency, highlighting the need for coordinated crisis responses that integrate financial counselling and mental health supports.^{6 7}

The forthcoming Commonwealth Inquiry into the Relationship Between Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Suicide is expected to examine how coercive control, economic abuse and financial stressors contribute to suicidal distress. Anticipating these national policy directions, Western Australia has an opportunity to lead by integrating Financial Counsellors into crisis-response protocols ensuring that economic safety and suicide prevention are addressed simultaneously.

At a systemic level, prevention must also acknowledge the role of financial institutions and regulatory frameworks in either mitigating or compounding risk. As outlined in the EARG Submission to the Inquiry into Financial Services Regulatory Frameworks in Relation to Financial Abuse (June 2024), inconsistent identification of financial abuse, lack of trauma-informed practice and limited accountability between regulators and service providers can entrench financial distress and feelings of entrapment ⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS

(linked to overarching [#2](#), [#7](#) & [#6](#))

- Include Financial Counsellors in crisis-response protocols ([Rec #7](#)).
- Ensure referral pathways between crisis supports and Financial Counsellors ([Rec #6](#)).
- Acknowledge economic abuse and financial stress as crisis-level determinants ([Rec #2](#)).

Alignment to the Framework Stream 4 - Postvention

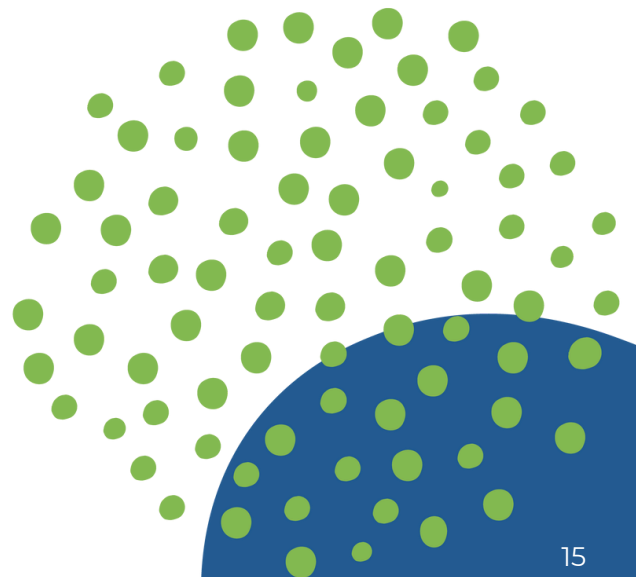
Families and carers often face financial strain following a suicide loss, which can compound trauma and risk of further suicidality.

Emerging submissions to the federal DFSV and Suicide Inquiry have highlighted the intersection between economic harm, coercive control and suicide bereavement. Postvention responses should therefore address both the psychological and economic aftermath of violence-related suicides. Survivors and bereaved families often face income loss, unresolved debts or ongoing financial abuse, compounding grief and distress. Embedding financial counselling within postvention frameworks ensures holistic recovery and financial stabilisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(linked to overarching [#2](#) & [#7](#))

- Embed financial counselling into postvention services for bereaved families (Rec [#7](#)).
- Address economic determinants within postvention planning (Rec [#2](#)).



Workforce Wellbeing, Resourcing and Sustainability

A comprehensive workforce strategy underpinning the Framework should extend beyond the suicide-prevention sector to encompass the broader community-services workforce. This includes Financial Counsellors, community legal practitioners, family-violence specialists and mental-health peer workers, each contributing to early risk identification and integrated support.

Financial counsellors are already operating at or beyond capacity, with current funding directed primarily toward debt resolution and financial hardship assistance rather than wellbeing or suicide-prevention outcomes. This fragmented, short-term funding model limits the sector's ability to participate in coordinated prevention and postvention activities, particularly in regional and remote Western Australia, where services are sparse and caseloads are highest.⁴

The Framework's workforce strategy should recognise that suicide prevention is delivered through a broad ecosystem of community services, including but not limited to financial counselling. Integrating Financial Counsellors within this wider workforce context will promote shared capability, consistent referrals, and sector-wide accountability.

Financial Counsellors frequently support clients in acute distress, including those expressing suicidal thoughts, without access to clinical supervision or formal referral pathways. This presents both professional risk and indicates there were earlier missed opportunities for intervention.

To realise the Framework's Pillar 5 goal of a skilled and supported workforce, financial counselling should be formally recognised and resourced within suicide-prevention funding streams, rather than treated as an adjunct social service.⁴

Although financial counselling is currently funded through social-services portfolios, there is a clear precedent for cross-agency commissioning where social determinants of suicide are concerned. The National Suicide Prevention Strategy (Action 3.2d) provides a policy mandate for the Mental Health Commission to collaborate with Communities and Treasury to co-fund integrated financial-counselling pilots under this Framework. Such joint investment would align Western Australia with national objectives, build workforce capability, and address a major service gap in early intervention, particularly across regional and remote communities where financial distress and suicide rates intersect most sharply.

These workforce investments must also sit within broader efforts to reduce economic insecurity, consistent with Prevention Objective 3.2 of the National Strategy. Structural reforms addressing income adequacy, social safety nets, and consumer protection are essential to reduce the financial stressors that contribute to suicidal distress. This aligns with FCVic’s recommendations for systemic approaches that integrate financial wellbeing with suicide prevention, ensuring both workforce sustainability and population-level impact.²

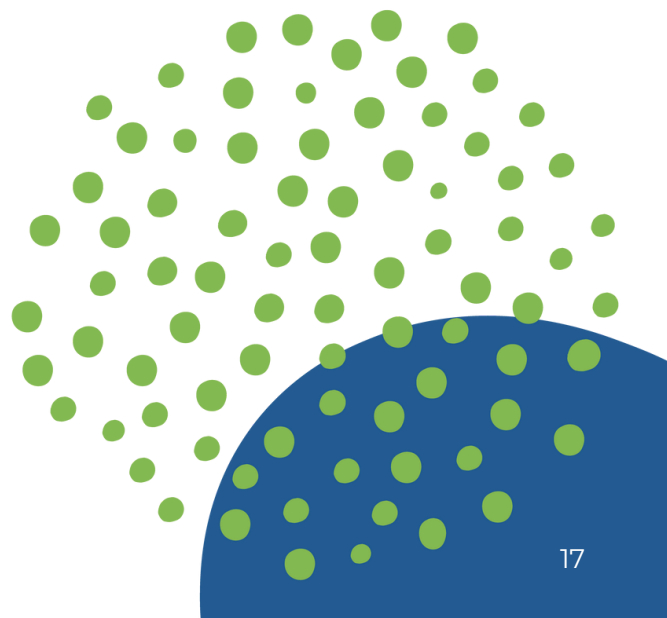
At a structural level, prevention must extend beyond service delivery to include reform of financial systems that currently facilitate abuse. As the EARG (June 2024) submission notes, the absence of “safety-by-design” frameworks in financial products enables ongoing exploitation through joint debts, misuse of credit and access to accounts.⁷

Embedding economic-safety principles into financial-services regulation aligns with Pillar 1 and represents a practical lever for suicide-risk reduction through system accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(linked to overarching [#1](#), [#3](#), [#4](#) & [#5](#))

- Implement a cross-sector workforce strategy ([Rec #4](#)).
- Co-commission financial counselling across government portfolios ([Rec #3](#)).
- Prioritise workforce expansion in regional and remote areas ([Rec #5](#)).
- Integrate Financial Counsellors formally as part of the suicide-prevention workforce ([Rec #1](#)).



Data and Evaluation

Current suicide data systems rarely capture financial stress, debt, or gambling harm as causal or contributing factors. As a result, the scale of economic distress in suicide and self-harm is under-reported, limiting the evidence base for prevention and funding decisions.

Consistent with EARG's (2024) findings, suicide-prevention data systems should capture indicators of economic abuse and financial-service misconduct contributing to client distress.⁷ Including these variables within WA's suicide monitoring and evaluation frameworks would enable more accurate mapping of economic determinants and strengthen cross-sector accountability between financial regulators and mental health agencies.

Improved coronial and administrative data collection, such as linking economic, housing, and debt indicators, would enable more accurate identification of financial risk factors and support the design of targeted, cross-sector responses. Consistent with recommendations by Financial Counselling Australia (FCA) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), financial stress should be recognised as a reportable social determinant within suicide monitoring systems.³

Investment in stronger data and evaluation frameworks would also improve accountability for the Framework's outcomes, ensuring future funding reflects the demonstrated impact of financial counselling and other social-determinant interventions on suicide prevention.

The Framework should be supported by a transparent implementation plan outlining measurable actions, timeframes and responsible agencies across its five-year term. Establishing a clear accountability structure, including annual progress reporting and sector consultation, will strengthen delivery and enable consistent evaluation against objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(linked to overarching [#9](#) & [#10](#))

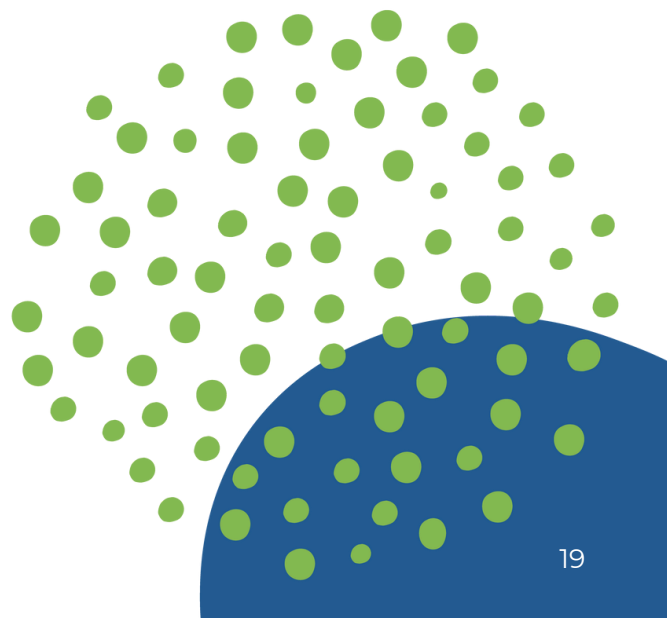
- Expand data systems to include economic indicators ([Rec #9](#)).
- Establish a five-year implementation and reporting plan ([Rec #10](#)).

Conclusion

The Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia (FCAWA) supports a coordinated, whole-of-system approach to suicide prevention that recognises the interaction between financial distress, economic abuse and mental health. Financial counsellors operate at the intersection of these issues, providing early identification of risk, stabilisation of financial circumstances and linkage with appropriate supports.

Embedding financial counselling within the Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2026–2031 would strengthen the State's capacity for early intervention and recovery by addressing the financial and social determinants of suicide alongside clinical responses. This approach aligns with the National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025–2035, the Commonwealth Inquiry into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Suicide (2025) and the EARG Submission to the Inquiry into Financial Services Regulatory Frameworks in Relation to Financial Abuse (2024), each of which emphasises the need for integrated, trauma-informed and evidence-based practice across sectors.

Formal recognition of financial counselling within the Framework would improve coordination between the mental health, community-services and financial-wellbeing sectors, support workforce sustainability and ensure data systems capture the economic drivers of distress. Such integration would contribute to more effective prevention and postvention outcomes, enabling Western Australia to implement a balanced, evidence-driven model of suicide prevention that is responsive to both individual and systemic risk factors.



References

1. Mahmoudi, P., Hordacre, A-L., & Spoehr, J. (2014). *Paying it forward: Cost-benefit analysis of The Wyatt Trust funded financial counselling services*. Adelaide: Australian Workplace Innovation and Social Research Centre, The University of Adelaide.
2. Financial Counselling Victoria Inc. (FCVic). (2025). *Growing financial counselling in Victoria: The next 10 years – Victorian workforce strategy*. Melbourne: FCVic. Retrieved from <https://fcvic.org.au/victorian-workforce-strategy/>
3. Australian Government. (2025). *National suicide prevention strategy 2025–2035*. Canberra: Department of Health and Aged Care.
4. Financial Counselling Victoria (FCVic). (2023). *Submission to the Victorian suicide prevention and response strategy*. Melbourne: FCVic.
5. Financial Counselling Australia (FCA). (2023). *Submission to the inquiry into online gambling and its impacts*. Melbourne: FCA.
6. Mental Health Commission WA. (2025). *Draft Western Australian suicide prevention framework 2026–2031*. Perth: Government of Western Australia.
7. Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG). (2024, June). *Submission to the inquiry into financial services regulatory framework in relation to financial abuse*. Melbourne: EARG. Available at <https://earg.org.au/our-publications/submission-to-the-inquiry-into-financial-services-regulatory-framework-in-relation-to-financial-abuse-june-2024/>
8. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2024). *Suicide and self-harm monitoring: Social determinants data*. Canberra: AIHW.
9. *Financial stress and suicide: The hidden crisis*. (2025). Journal of Public Mental Health. SAGE Publications.
10. Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA). (2025, September). *The Suicide Prevention Australia Community Tracker – National Report*. Sydney: Suicide Prevention Australia. Available at <https://www.suicidepreventionaust.org>
11. Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA). (2025, May). *The Suicide Prevention Australia Community Tracker – Western Australia Community Report*. Sydney: Suicide Prevention Australia. Available at <https://www.suicidepreventionaust.org>
12. Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS). (2024). *Cost of living report 2024*. Perth: WACOSS. Available at <https://www.wacoss.org.au/library/2024-cost-of-living-report/>
13. Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG). (2022, November). *Submission on national coercive control principles*. Melbourne: EARG. Available at <https://earg.org.au/our-publications/submission-on-national-coercive-control-principles-nov-2022/>
14. Financial Counselling Australia (FCA). (2020, August). *Submission to the inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence*. Melbourne: FCA. Available at <https://www.financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au/fca-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-08-05-FCA-submission-to-Inquiry-into-Family-Domestic-and-Sexual-Violence-Final1.pdf>
15. Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG). (2024, September). *Economic abuse and the Corporations Act*. Melbourne: EARG. Available at <https://earg.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/EARG-Economic-Abuse-and-the-Corporations-Act-September-2024.pdf>

Further Information

For more information or discussion on the content of this submission please contact:

Melanie Hopkinson

Chief Executive Officer

melanie.hopkinson@fcawa.org

Mobile: 0406 740 197

Sarah Holman

Policy and Advocacy Lead

sarah.holman@fcawa.org

**Our
Vision**

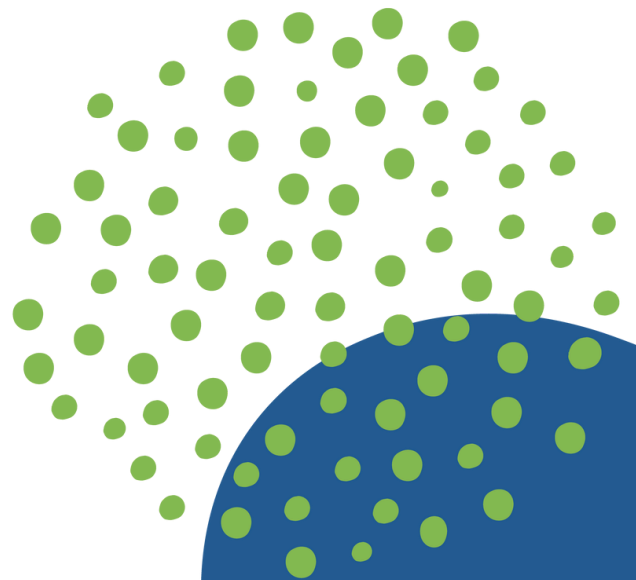
Financially resilient Western Australians with reduced financial hardship.

**Our
Purpose**

- Advocating for financial wellbeing.
- Promoting excellence and compliance in the financial counselling sector.
- Providing the voice of financial counselling in Western Australia.

**Our
Values**

Integrity | Leadership | Support | Innovation





FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS' ASSOCIATION
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

45 Duncan Street, Victoria Park

Phone: 08 9325 1617

Email: enquiries@fcawa.org

www.fcawa.org

Copyright Financial Counsellors' Association of Western Australia Inc.

October 2025

ABN 13 592 166 805