

Dear _____,

Thank you for your email, it has been passed on to the Cancer Information and Support Service here at Cancer Council Victoria. I am sorry to hear that you have been diagnosed with breast cancer, I can only imagine what a shock this must have been for you and your family. I hope that you have all been receiving some support during this difficult time. I am glad that you thought to contact us regarding financial support available to you.

Firstly, I will include a link to our booklet, 'Cancer and Your Finances' in case you have not seen it. The booklet has been designed to help manage your finances after a cancer diagnosis. As you are aware, cancer and its treatment affect many aspects of a person's life. Depending on your individual circumstances, you may need to find ways to deal with reduced income and extra costs, and you may have to change your financial plans and goals. The booklet does not need to be read from cover to cover, just read the parts that are relevant at the time. The link to the booklet is here: <https://www.cancervic.org.au/downloads/resources/booklets/Cancer-and-Your-Finances.pdf>

_____, in order to ensure that you are receiving any benefits that you might be eligible for, I would encourage you to contact the social worker at your treating hospital. The social worker should be able to help access financial support from the Australian Government, as well as offer emotional support. Through Centrelink and the Department of Human Services, the Government provides financial assistance to people going through financial hardship during treatment/illness. This can be in the form of rental or mortgage payment assistance, sickness benefits and assistance to pay utility bills. It may also be of benefit to contact Centrelink as even if you are already receiving one form of Centrelink support, you may be eligible for others.

Centrelink also have social workers that people can meet or talk to over the phone if a hospital social worker is not an option. More information about Centrelink is available via the below link.

<http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/index.htm>

Occasionally people can organise a plan with their utility providers for subsidised bills by claiming financial hardship due to their treatment for a medical condition. It is worth contacting some of the utility companies to see if this is something they can provide. Additionally, the 'Utility Relief Grant' scheme and the 'Non-Mains Utility Relief Grant' scheme aids with customers who are unable to pay their utility bills due to a temporary financial crisis. More information about these schemes is available via the following link: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/financial-support/concessions/hardship/utility-relief-and-non-mains-utility-grant-scheme>.

The other organisation that you may find of assistance is the National Debt Helpline. This offers free and confidential advice from professional financial counsellors. The phone number to contact this organisation is 1800 007 007

I also wanted to let you know about the other sorts of programs and services that we offer to people and their families and loved ones who are affected by cancer. Our programs aim to support people practically and emotionally. You can read more about the types of programs we offer for both yourself and your family members here: <http://www.cancervic.org.au/how-we-can-help>

I understand that I have given you a large amount of information in this email, but I hope that it has been of some assistance. If you wish to discuss the information provided above, or have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Cancer Information and Support Service on 13 11 20 (for the cost of a local call). Our lines are open from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and we are all experienced cancer nurses on the line. We would warmly welcome your call.

Kind regards,