

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **New Year Financial Survival**

With the festive season behind us for another year, many people will shortly be coming to terms with the reality of paying for their Christmas spending. Care Inc, the ACT's main provider of financial counselling and related services, has become used to frantic calls as the December credit card bills arrive early in the following year. According to Care's Director David Tennant the worst possible response for consumers facing a Christmas credit hangover is to panic. "Not having enough money to meet your commitments when they fall due can be terrifying – but taking the time to understand your options and act in an informed way can prevent a looming crisis becoming a disaster."

Care suggests a number of strategies for people who have received or are expecting a rude shock when the bills eventually arrive:

- If you expect to experience problems making payments it is often useful to communicate those problems to creditors clearly and early.
- Don't be pushed into offers or payment agreements you know you cannot make.
- Prioritising is not only ok it is essential. If you go without food or medicine for example, that may ease the initial pressure but can often exacerbate financial difficulty in the longer term.
- If you need help, ask for it. For example, making contact with a financial counselling agency can assist you to understand your options, or communicate with creditors.

With the financial impacts of Christmas well recognised, a number of prominent commentators including the Australian Securities and Investments Commission have already urged Canberrans to start planning for Christmas 2006 now. David Tennant agrees with this advice but urges people to be realistic in their expectations. "For many people, particularly those on lower or fixed incomes, just keeping a family budget ticking over is an achievement. Not having shares, or being able to save every week or fortnight does not mean you are a failure."

Care offers a variety of free services. Care's info line (6257 1788) operates every weekday morning between 9 am and 12 pm.

**Further Comments: David Tennant**

**Phone: 6257 1788, 0409 772 349 or email: [david.tennant@carefcs.org](mailto:david.tennant@carefcs.org)**