

MEDIA RELEASE

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More families seek help to pay school expenses

Many Victorian families are doing it tough and finding it hard to meet basic education costs such as books, uniforms and excursions.

'In these cases, it is the children who suffer, forcing parents to seek financial and material assistance from services', says Kate Wheller, Executive Officer of Community Information and Support Victoria (CISVic). Increasingly, CISVic agencies help with immediate education expenses and support families to find a way out of ongoing hardship and disadvantage.

State Schools' Relief presented at CISVic's conference in Melbourne: 'The poverty problem: whose fault is it anyway?' as part of Anti-poverty Week. As a not for profit organisation supporting underprivileged Victorian government school students it has already provided this year: more than 20,000 pairs of shoes, 20,308 pairs of pants, 20,977 jumpers and jackets, 4,800 pairs of socks, 4,000 pairs of briefs, and 1,000 singlets. In the year 2017/2018 it assisted over 56,000 students and provided more than 177,000 uniform and footwear items.

Ardoch Youth Foundation also revealed high levels of student hardship and a novel approach to addressing this at CISVic's conference. Through its Education Volunteer Program 1,500 trained volunteers have been brought into the classroom to support teachers. According to Adele Stowe-Linder from Ardoch, 'education is the key to breaking the cycle of disadvantage'.

In 2017 Equity Economics completed an evaluation of Ardoch's Education Volunteer Program. It found 79% of students had greater confidence in their ability to learn and 67% of students who worked with volunteers showed greater improvement in their academic competence than expected. Social skills also improved. Student behavior improved for 57% of students, and 62% made and sustained friendships.

CISVic is the peak body representing local community information and support services. CISVic local services assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support services, including emergency relief.

For more information or for media comment please contact Kate Wheller, Executive Officer, Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic) at kate@cisvic.org.au, or phone 9672 2000 0407 670 125.