

2018–2019 Annual Report summary

Community Information
& Support Victoria



INFORMING
VICTORIANS
FOR 50 YEARS

About Us

Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic) is the peak body representing local community information and support services

Our local services assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support services including Emergency Relief.

We direct people who need help to local centres for services.

We liaise with local, state and federal governments on behalf of local centres for funding and support.

We undertake research and training.

CISVic and its members are committed to volunteering and offer a range of opportunities for people to work with us.



Contact Us

Community Information and Support Victoria
Suite 907, level 9
343 Little Collins St,
Melbourne, Australia

call 9672 2000
email admin@cisvic.org.au
visit www.cisvic.org.au

Key achievements

A stronger advocate

Our new Research, Advocacy & Policy Manager has been pivotal in regenerating our work in this area. Central to this, we've formed an Advocacy Working Group which aims to create systemic change on issues that people in the community are struggling with. Following consultation with members, we identified three advocacy priorities for the next 12 months and developed specific plans to address each. They are:

- Inadequacy of Newstart and other payments
- The lack of safe and affordable housing
- The rising cost of education

We've produced media releases, had letters published in newspapers, and sent numerous letters to politicians. In addition to this, through the appointment of a Communications & Media intern we've significantly enhanced our social media presence. Our intern has also delivered benefit to our members by providing expert advice to local centres.

Evaluating outcomes

Our local centres provide a range of services to support people in personal and financial hardship. While we have processes to measure the outputs of this work we've lacked the framework to measure the outcomes of those support services. To this end, we've convened a Data Evaluation Working Group with members and RMIT University to further develop & implement a new evaluation framework. This framework, building on our Theory of Change, aims to describe the social & economic benefit of our work helping people in need. Our framework has university level ethics approval and will be tested via a pilot in the next reporting period. Further, the framework will assist to improve service design and delivery, drive innovation and stakeholder engagement.

Promoting a fairer society

Enshrined in our mission is a commitment to promoting social justice and by making social policy submissions we aim to promote a just and fair society. During this reporting period we've made four (4) submissions to government (state & federal) where our experience with particular issues can be used to evidence the need for change and inform new policy directions. This year our submissions have focused on the social security system, energy hardship framework and the state's mental health system.

Going back to where it all began

In late 2018 our Executive Officer conducted a study tour to the UK visiting our founders and counterpart Citizens Advice. The purpose of this study tour was to investigate the workings of the sector with a view to enhancing the role of CISVic and its member agencies to deliver effective and sustainable services to the most-needy in a time of increasing demand, reduced funding and welfare reforms.

Key findings:

- The UK Citizens Advice sector is trusted and respected with a strong profile
- The national office, with its 600 staff across 6 sites, is well resourced, delivering a comprehensive range of services and funding programs for local centres
- The membership comprises 280 independent local centres who deliver services from 2,400 sites. The membership is diverse in size and scope. Core funding for local centres is from local government and funding models are inconsistent. Over the last 10 years, the membership has shrunk by 35% and they are investigating the branch model to ameliorate further losses
- The workforce of local centres comprises 6,100 paid staff and 19,000 volunteers
- Comprehensive membership agreements and accreditation process, coupled with a Performance & Quality Framework outline the roles and responsibilities of both parties and promote best practice
- Demand for services continues to increase. Emergency relief isn't traditionally a part of their service suite but there is a shift toward it.

This was a fascinating opportunity to understand common challenges and learn from the UK experiences and key recommendations to enhance our sector are being considered by the Board.

Volunteers are VITAL. So is our engagement with them

The demand for our services continues to increase every year, as does the complexity of issues facing our clients. It is critical therefore that our professional development programs respond to new and emerging issues while being regionally-based, free and engaging. We've continued to deliver a range of stand-alone training sessions across the year while introducing a new format; VITAL. This new program, VITAL (Volunteers Information, Talking & Listening) aims to inspire and motivate, deepen empathy and understanding, provide practical information, resources and linkages while fostering communities of practice and peer support. It's a one-day, regionally based, free training solution that has been highly successful in engaging high numbers of volunteers in professional development. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive and there is strong endorsement to continue delivering this format.

Funded programs

Three programs are funded by Federal Department of Social Services; Emergency Relief, Financial Counselling and Volunteer Management Program. We were successful in our 2018 bid to continue delivery of the Emergency Relief consortia with a small increase in funding. We submitted a tender for new funding for Financial Counselling as a consortium but were only successful in one region. Finally, we continue to deliver the Volunteer Management program in the City of Banyule.

Our Telstra Bill Assistance Program continues to enable connectivity for disadvantaged people through the provision of phone vouchers and cards.

Powering People

We have partnered with Consumer Policy & Research Centre & Ellis Jones to develop a new information and training program to support vulnerable people to take control of their energy costs. This project is funded by State Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning. We have recruited Energy Mentors, who will be based in local centres to deliver specialised energy support to individual clients, and in the next reporting period, the project will roll out training to hundreds of volunteers.

Branching out. Again

As reported in our annual report last year, we piloted a new sustainability solution – the branch model, whereby an under-threat local centre in City of Glen Eira integrated with CISVic. With funding from R E Ross Trust, we were able to conduct a formal evaluation of the pilot which demonstrated its success. The evaluation process also assisted us to outline the key principles of a 'good' branch and a clear process for future intervention. In late 2018 we took on our second branch in City of Moreland, once again saving a local centre for the community.

Connecting the branches

We were grateful recipients of philanthropic funding from Jack Brockhoff Foundation to build the organisational capability of the branches through new technology. We upgraded hardware and installed new, integrated software solutions to create connection and efficiencies across the sites. Additionally, we've installed public access computers to promote digital inclusion for our service users.

A snapshot

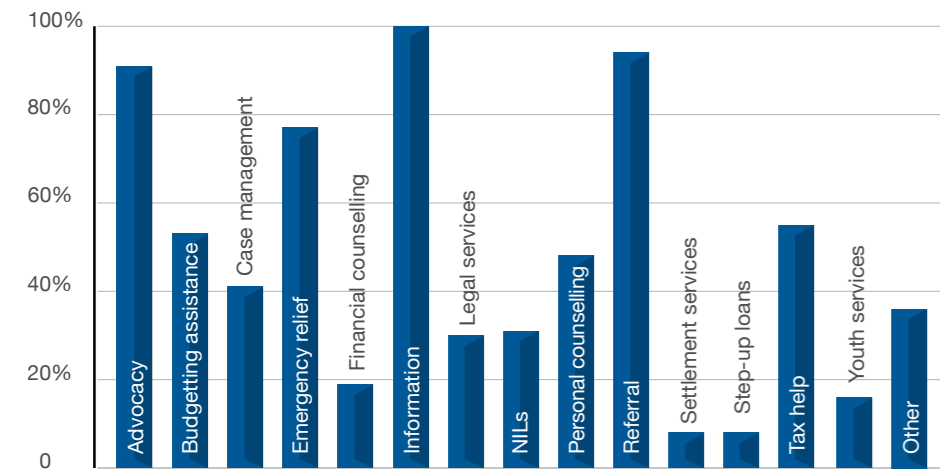
CISVic members



Our collective workforce



Services members offer



Volunteer census

We conducted our inaugural bi-annual census with responses from 624 volunteers and 34 agencies. Key findings:

- Volunteering positively influences volunteer's wellbeing
- Our volunteers feel supported
- Policies and practices are aligned with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
- More training needs to be delivered regionally

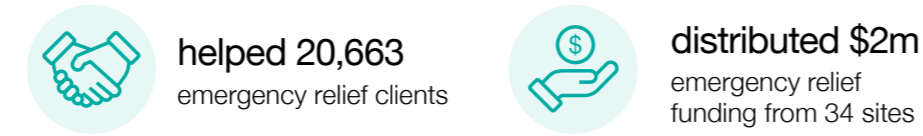


*Our associate member Ardoch alone has 1,700 volunteers who are involved in a range of activities that sit outside traditional CISVic volunteer roles.

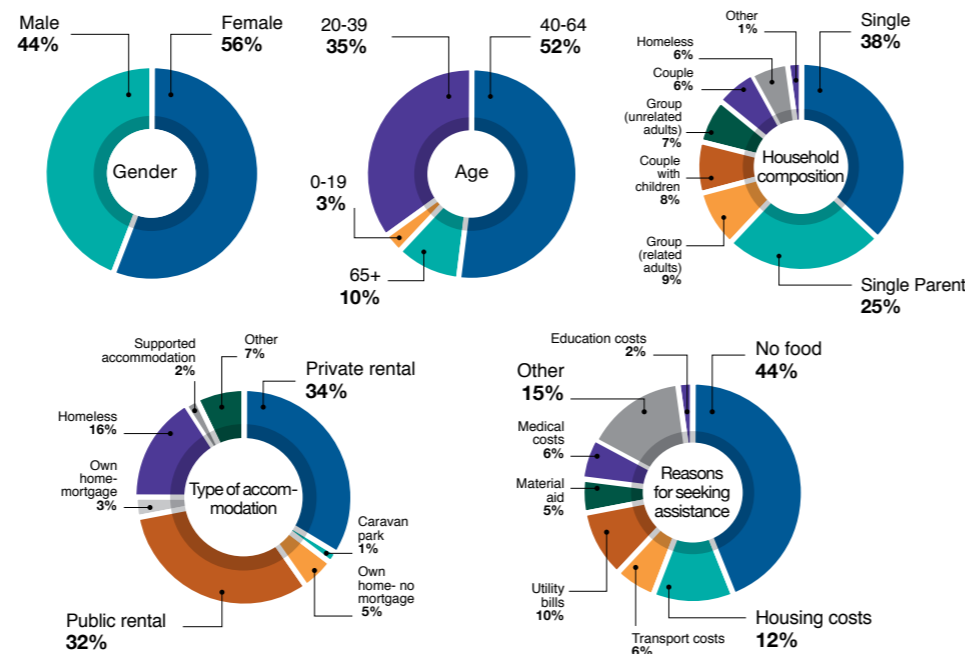
Programs

Emergency Relief Consortia

We successfully retendered for ER funding from federal Department of Social Services.

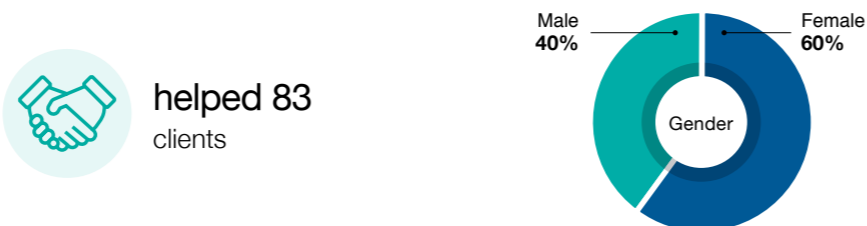


About our emergency relief clients



Federal Financial Counselling program

Program delivered in Bendigo to provide intensive support & advocacy to people in financial hardship.



Volunteer management program



Telstra Bill Assistance Program

Distributed \$225,000 in vouchers & \$45,000 in phone cards to disadvantaged people to help them stay connected.



Student Placement Program – partnership with RMIT



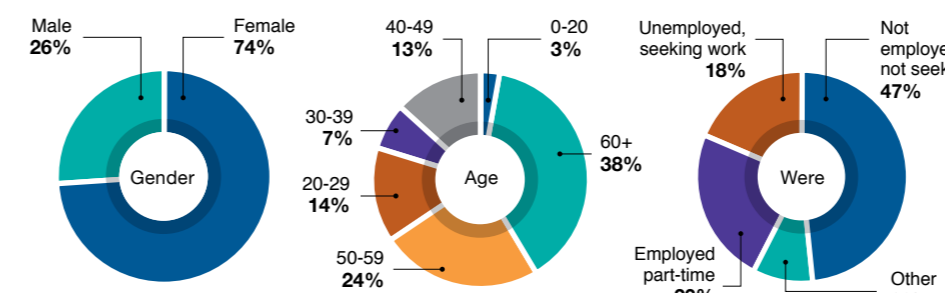
About the training we delivered

We delivered a range of accredited and non-accredited training programs to enhance the professional knowledge and skill of our workforce.

Training was delivered both independently and in partnership with experts (Tenants Victoria, Mental Health Victoria, 360 Edge).

| Course | Sessions | Participants |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| Community Support Workers Course | 9 | 97 |
| Vital – Volunteer's Talking, Information & Learning | 4 | 179 |
| Recognising & Responding to Family Violence | 1 | 14 |
| Mental Health Awareness | 1 | 21 |
| Ice Training | 3 | 69 |
| Tenancy Rights & Responsibilities | 3 | 45 |
| CSW Mentors – Introduction | 1 | 5 |
| CSW Mentors – Refresher | 2 | 20 |
| LGBTIQ+ Awareness | 1 | 11 |
| Working with Interpreters | 2 | 27 |
| Case Worker Discussion | 1 | 12 |
| Media Training | 2 | 16 |
| Total | 30 | 516 |

About the new volunteers we trained in the last 12 months



Feedback from volunteers (who attended training)

70% of participants reported a very high level of satisfaction with CISVic's training.

About CSW Course

"The course has been very interesting. The trainer is a great educator. She made all sessions very enjoyable and relevant. Her easy and warm manners and skills were wonderful and made us all feel comfortable and valued. She was very knowledgeable and an amazing source of information and help"

About VITAL

"Great opportunity to learn from other services – guest speaker was fantastic, great representatives, loved the small groups and moving around"
 "The entire session was interesting, presenters were excellent, and it was such a good day"

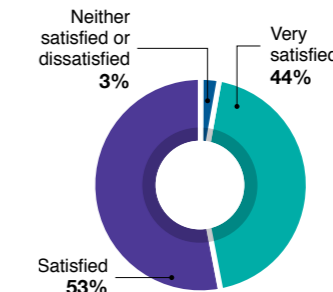
E-bulletin

Keeping members informed and up-to-date with current activities, events, developments and trends.

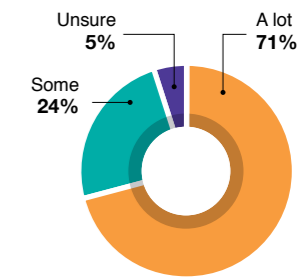


Annual member satisfaction survey

Member satisfaction:



How much value does membership add to your organisation:



How we add value to our members:

"Provides opportunities to promote grass roots organisations to a wider audience"
 "Opportunity to leverage the broader membership in terms of consortium bids. Provision of high quality training, Access to template policies. Linking us with other like minded organisations"

What we did well in last 12 months:

"Represent us as peak body with relevant stakeholders. Organise clear consultations for members – all network meetings and follow up are extremely well run, fosters and nurtures and inclusive and transparent culture within the membership. Trustworthy and reliable"
 "Expanded the training schedule"
 "Obtaining (consortia) funding for services through the tender process"

General comments about our performance:

"Very pleased with the advocacy component and the establishment of the working groups"
 "Kudos to all the hardworking staff at CISVic. You do a very professional job. Thank you"

What we could improve on:

"There needs to be a greater emphasis on a common identification for the membership and marketing this for the benefit of all members"
 "Sometimes communication can be a bit slow or unclear"

Resources



Advocacy, Research & Data

Consulted with members to develop advocacy framework and prioritised 3 key focus areas;

