



2022–2023 Annual report



Community Information
& Support Victoria

Helping local communities

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Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic)

CISVic is the peak body for the Community Information and Support sector in Victoria. Member agencies assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support, including Emergency Relief.

CISVic acknowledges the true custodians of Country and pays our respects to Elders past and present.

President's Report

It is with great pleasure that I present my report as President of the Board of Management of Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic) and reflect on the twelve months to July 2023.

First and foremost, thank you to the members of the Board of Management, and to the CISVic staff team for their exceptional work during a year that was – in many ways – more challenging than those during COVID. This financial year saw CISVic and its member agencies come to grips with the challenge of responding to increased demand with stretched resources. It was a year that saw innovative service responses, and new sources of funding, as well as a loss of key staff and programs, that you will see reported on further in our Executive Officer's report, and in our full Annual Report.

On behalf of CISVic, I would like to formally acknowledge the support we receive from our primary funding bodies – the federal Department of Social Services, and the state Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. I would also like to acknowledge the local councils that have provided support to our branches and agencies during this period. This funding, and the meaningful relationships we have with them, ensures we can continue to provide services to their most vulnerable residents. Councils across Melbourne and Victoria are our key partners at the most local and critical level.

Our member agencies continue to support households struggling with the rising costs of housing, food, utilities, education, and transport. Most people who present for support have complex needs and may also be experiencing family violence, relationship breakdown, social isolation, unemployment, housing stress, or homelessness. While a request for food assistance may be what drives so many to our doors, we know that is simply the start of the conversation. Our agencies pride themselves on the fact that the provision of emergency relief is supported by excellent information, referrals, advocacy, and wrap-around supports.

During this reporting period, I had the honour of acting as Executive Officer in Kate's stead for a brief period. This gave me an extended insight into the work of our organisation and its dedicated team. I gained a renewed vigour for advocacy at a time when CISVic was lobbying for funding for Coordination hours and for Emergency Relief. CISVic and our many member agencies are made up of people who are passionate and enthusiastic about the work they do, and who never shy away from difficult conversations about social justice.

CISVic remains committed to speaking out against poverty and inequity to raise awareness and redress the imbalance in some way. We continue to be a strong voice for advocacy across a range of social justice issues, particularly around access to safe, secure housing, access to income that meets basic needs and is above the poverty line, and access to affordable education, dental care, and health care.

Our recently revised Strategic Plan outlines our values of "Connections, Empowerment, Integrity and Equity" and we will be striving to work to those in 2024 and beyond.

Leanne Petrides

Executive Officer's Report

I'm pleased to present this year's Executive Officer Report to you.

This was an unusual year for me, taking the better part of six months off work for medical treatment. It was also a year of staff changes and new projects. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Board and team for providing the space for my extended leave, and to our President Leanne Petrides for stepping down from the Board for the duration and so competently taking the helm to lead and support the team.

After a false start due to COVID-19 in 2019, we completed our new strategic plan in early 2023. This plan facilitates proactive action. Important fundamentals underpinning this plan include the enduring multidimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rising cost of daily living, the inadequacies of welfare payments, the diverse and complex needs of the community and the diversity of funding and other support arrangements for individual member agencies. The core pillars of our plan centre around; leadership and partnership, membership engagement and resourcing, research informing action, and organisational effectiveness.

During this process, we had to make some decisions for the coming financial year which respond to funding constraints while ensuring that our activities deliver value to the broader membership.

One of these decisions was to pause our Student Placement program. The unfortunate consequence of this decision was that Deborah Rosenberg's position as Student Placement Program Coordinator was made redundant. Deborah had diligently and passionately supported students and this program for over a decade. This program commenced as a pilot in 2012 in partnership with RMIT and Victoria University, and since 2013, has operated exclusively with RMIT. During this time, we have supported a staggering 127 Social Work students and built a strong and enduring relationship with the university. We have sent scores of social work graduates out into the broader community with inside knowledge of our sector and its work. We have also retained more than a few across the membership post-graduation, either as volunteers or paid staff. Over the next 12 months, we will be looking at how we can best support student placements across the broader membership with the limited funding available.

On a more positive note, we successfully tendered for two energy support programs from the State Government which we deliver in partnership with member agencies. These Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) programs enable us to deliver targeted support to people with energy hardship by accessing the Power Saving Bonus, rounds 3 & 4, and deeper energy assistance and advocacy through the Energy Assistance Program. They have provided the resources and capacity for us to deliver significant financial support, over 1 million dollars, to vulnerable Victorians. The PSB Round 4 was launched at Banyule Support & Information Centre's site by Premier Daniel Andrews, along with Minister Lily D'Ambrosio, who visited several other sites during the year.

The growing cost of living pressures have continued to drive up the demand for our Emergency Relief and Commonwealth Financial Counselling programs. During this period, the federal government provided an additional 30% of funding and our members succeeded in attracting a further \$2.8 million of additional relief via community donations and philanthropy. Demand for these programs is at an all-time high, and going into the new year, funding levels will return to base levels. We are anxious about the pressure this will place on our local services, and the impact on those in the community who struggle to put food on the table or manage financial crises. We will continue to advocate for increased funding for these important programs.

Other advocacy has focused on achieving coordination funding for all member agencies. Most of our full member agencies receive operational funding from local government, but the level of this funding varies significantly. Coordination funding would sure up the capacity of our local members to operate sustainably. We have persisted with advocacy on other issues, which you can read more about in the body of this report.

We continue to manage three branches (Glen Eira, Merri-bek and Yarra Ranges), and in October 2022, we created a new, self-funded position of Branch Manager to help oversee their operations, strengthen stakeholder relations, and increase funding. Unfortunately, we were not able to attract the funding required to save CIS Yarra Ranges, and so the office and op shop will be closing. Each of the branches has been incredibly busy and teams are to be congratulated for their dedication and passion.

I am pleased to report that we have commenced our organisation's path to reconciliation with First Nations people through the development of our Reconciliation Action Plan. We are committed to strategically taking meaningful action to advance reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Building on the foundations of relationships, respect and opportunities, our Reconciliation Action Plan will provide a firm blueprint for CISVic to increase economic equity and self-determination of First Nations peoples. Our first draft of this plan has been submitted to Reconciliation Australia and we look forward to progressing this work over the next 12 months.

During this year, we undertook a significant brand re-fresh and launched a new website. The new design reflects the evolution of the organisation, with beautiful visual imagery that speaks to our work, the work of our members and the people they work with. This new material includes the introduction of a membership badge and a suite of graphic collateral for our members to use (icons, font, colour schemes). We are thrilled with the new look and hope you like it too.

I was proud to see our staff and sector representatives participate in the Walk Against Family Violence 2022 to say, 'Enough is Enough'. Under our banner, they walked in solidarity with victim-survivors, and in memory of those who lost their lives.

Our Research, Advocacy and Policy Manager, Dr Jennifer Borrell resigned, after 5 years of building a strong and enduring framework for ongoing work. During her time with us, Jennifer conducted key pieces of sophisticated research, made numerous policy submissions, and led key advocacy campaigns. Her work has lifted the organisation and sector's profile. We also farewelled the wonderful and dynamic Sector Support Zoe Evans, whose contract ended after State Government COVID employment initiatives funding ended.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude for our incredible Board and team, who work tirelessly to ensure we can promote and support our sector.

Kate Wheller

Our Sector



We have **55** member agencies delivering services from **70 sites**.

We had **2 new** members join.

52 members operate across **30 Local Government Areas**.

3 members are **statewide** services.

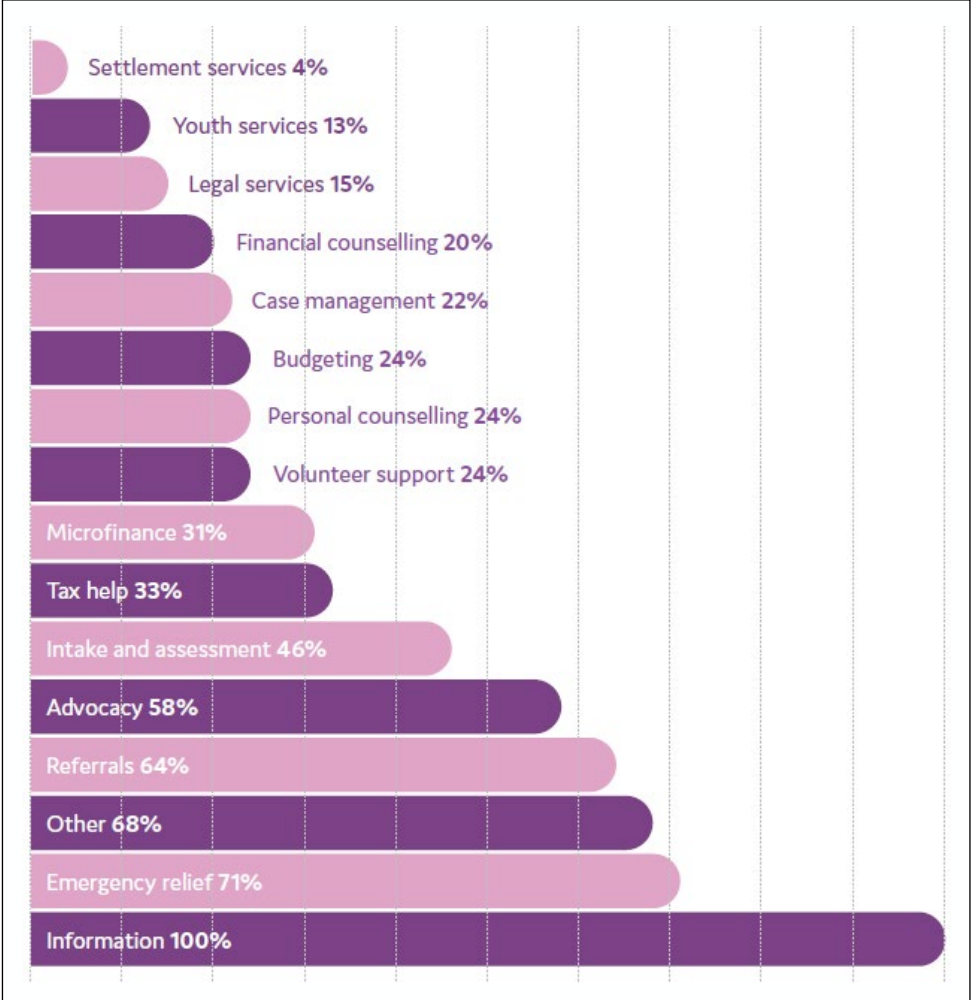


Collectively, we had **791,111 individual contacts**.

This is a **45% increase** on last year's total contacts.

Services offered by our members

Member agencies provide a wide range of additional services and supports, tailored to the needs of their local communities. These can include social enterprises, education support, employment services, op shops and disability services.



Keeping our members informed

We continue to produce a regular newsletter, our 'E-Bulletin', which provides the opportunity for us to share news, resources, information, funding and training opportunities with our members.



23 E-bulletins were sent to **782 subscribers**.

Social Media

We use social media to share key news, information, acknowledge special events, profile member agencies activities, and advocate for core issues.

During this period, we had:



316 Facebook posts



57 Instagram posts



67 Tweets



10.4% increase in FB followers

Membership & stakeholder engagement

Membership

CISVic provides a range of ways for member agencies and their staff to come together to network and develop communities of practice. During this period, we facilitated the following:

- 2 Roundtables (discussing Christmas programs and Student Placements)
- 4 CISVic Members Meetings
- 7 Advocacy Working Group Meetings
- 4 Caseworker Network
- 9 Regional Network Meetings
- 4 Volunteer Coordinators Networks
- 4 Energy Mentor Network

Stakeholders

We actively participate in a range of external networks to ensure we have opportunities to advocate, represent and promote our members and their work. During this period, we participated in the following meetings and events:

- Network of Asylum Seeker Agencies Victorian Emergency Relief Network Meeting – attended 7 meetings
- VCOSS States and Peaks Network – attended 3 meetings
- VCOSS' Vic Utilities – attended 3 meetings
- 2 Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) Energy Consumers Insights Forum
- An Essential Services Commission Sector Roundtable
- 2 Victorian Volunteer Support Network
- 2 Victorian Emergency Relief Sub-Committee Meeting
- VCOSS Treasurer's Budget lunch
- Volunteering Victoria's Leadership and the Election Forum
- Chisholm TAFE Community and Social Services Industry Reference and Networking Day

Workforce development

We delivered a range of accredited and non-accredited training to our workforce to enhance their skills and knowledge.

The Community Support Worker (CSW) course is our accredited training course. It is mandatory that volunteers involved in service delivery from full member agencies undertake this course.

We do offer Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for volunteers who have completed the unit 'Assess Co-existing Needs' or have relevant qualifications.

- 12 volunteers received RPL.
- 3 additional volunteers received RPL with some additional training.

Course	Sessions
Community Support Worker Course	9 sessions, 79 participants
Indigenous Cultural Awareness	38 registrations
Working with Interpreters	86 registrations
CISVic Portal – on-line	34 registrations
CISVic Portal – Face-to-Face	1 session, 5 participants
Dealing with Challenging Situations	1 session, 16 participants
Working Smart, Not Harder	1 session, 10 participants
Suicide Conversations and Safety	1 session, 10 participants
Building Relationships with Clients & Colleagues	1 session, 17 participants

Advocacy, Research and Policy

Our work during this year was spread across a range of advocacy issues. We continued to work on advocacy issues from the last financial year while developing two new campaigns which became our focus during the state and federal government elections.

This work continues to be guided by our member representative Advocacy Working Group who met seven times over the last 12 months.

Key campaigns:

Coordination Funding for CISVic Agencies

Increased Emergency Relief Funding

Secondary campaigns:

Housing and homelessness

Centrelink payment levels

Schools costs

Utilities

Asylum seekers and refugees

Family violence

Climate change

Primary areas of advocacy:

3

Policy submissions



2

Research pieces



102

Letters to politicians



2

Letters in The Age



2

Election campaigns



6

Meetings with MPs



Primary Campaigns

Coordination funding for CISVic agencies

To expand our reach and provide much needed support to the most vulnerable people in our community, CISVic's volunteers need the critical scaffolding of a paid coordinator to ensure they can take on and be supported with the challenges of assisting people in hardship. A paid coordinator in every CISVic member agency will mean children will not go hungry, lights and heating can stay on, and people doing it tough will be guided to options that can help. To do this, we are seeking recurrent state government funding of \$5.7 million annually.

Key activities

- Created a campaign kit and social media campaign, sent over 25 letters to Ministers and MPs.
- Met with MPs.
- Facilitated and/or supported media interviews.
- Prepared a State Budget submission.

Increased Emergency Relief funding

To increase the base level of Emergency Relief funding to all providers to enable agencies to meet the skyrocketing demand.

- Met with the Minister and other MPs.
- Met with departmental staff.
- Prepared a Federal Budget submission.

Submissions

We made three submissions to the following Federal Government inquiries:

- Philanthropic Inquiry
- Cost of Living Inquiry
- Inquiry into 'The extent and nature of poverty in Australia'

Research

We undertook two pieces of research:

- Family Violence Snapshot Report
- Emerging Stronger Evaluation

Emergency Relief Consortia



Underlying reasons for seeking assistance

1. Housing costs
2. Utilities/phone expenses
3. Transport expenses
4. Medical expenses
5. The need for material aid/ household goods

86,093 episodes of support

16% of people were homeless*

21% of people were living in public housing

35% of people were in private rental

4% of people had a mortgage

*Definition of homelessness: Caravan Park, living in boarding/rooming house/severely crowded dwellings, emergency housing, rough sleeping, staying temporarily with others, living in supported accommodation for the homeless and unstable/insecure.

There has been a **15%** increase in client presentations when comparing the data from the previous year.

Of note, there is a significant increase in the change of pre-COVID demand and funding levels. Demand has increased significantly while funding has reduced back to pre-COVID levels from July 2023.

	2018/2019	2022/2023
Base funding	\$2 million	\$2 million
Presentations	55,160	86,093

*We did receive an extra \$700,000 in additional ER, supplementation, and indexation, but in 2023/2024 funding has reduced to base levels.

Funding has returned to pre-covid levels however the demand for services has increased by **56%**.

There has been a

56.07%

increase in client presentations when comparing the data for 2022/23 to 2018/19.

There has been a

14%

increase in the # of unique clients when comparing the data for 2022/23 to 2018/19.

There has been a

47%

increase in the assistance provided when comparing the data for 2022/23 to 2018/19.

The CISVic Emergency Relief Consortia received **\$2.7M** in emergency relief funding from the Department of Social Services.

During the last financial year, our consortia partners successfully attracted over **\$2.8 million** in additional emergency relief funding from a variety of sources including, philanthropy, community donations, social enterprise, and local government.

During 2022/23, all consortia partners reported concerns about the increased demand for emergency relief alongside increased complexity of client support needs.

This was compounded by the fact that volunteer capacity was down by **30%**.



- 35% of people were under 39 years of age
- 51% of people were between 40-64 years of age
- 14% of people were 65+ years of age



- 31% Yes
- 65% No
- 4% Not stated



- 34% Single person (living alone)
- 20% Sole parent with dependant(s)
- 8% Couple
- 9% Couple with dependant(s)
- 9% Group (related adults)
- 6% Group (unrelated adults)
- 6% Homeless/ No household
- 8% Not stated or unknown

72% of clients assisted were Australian-born

Top five countries of birth excluding Australia:

1. New Zealand
2. Afghanistan
3. England
4. Iran
5. Iraq



- 7% New Zealand
- 6% Afghanistan
- 6% England
- 5% Iran
- 4% Iraq
- 3% Greece
- 3% China
- 66% Others

English was the main language spoken at home for 85% of people assisted. Below is a diagram that shows the percentages for the remaining 15%.



- 17% Arabic
- 7% Dari
- 6% Persian (excluding Dari)
- 4% Russian
- 4% Greek
- 4% Mandarin
- 4% Somali
- 54% Other and not stated

Financial Counselling Program

Total number of clients **397**

The average time spent with each person is **247 minutes**.

The average time spent with follow-up advocacy and support was **218 minutes** per client.

The average waiting time for financial counselling was **6-8 weeks**.



- 34% Male
- 64% Female
- 0% Intersex indeterminate
- 2% Not stated/Inadequately described



- 34% Yes
- 63% No
- 3% Not stated



- 2% Under 19
- 36% 20-39
- 52% 40-64
- 10% 65+



- 36% Single person (living alone)
- 23% Sole parent with dependant(s)
- 10% Couple
- 9% Couple with dependant(s)
- 9% Group (related adults)
- 6% Group (unrelated adults)
- 3% Homeless/No household
- 4% Not stated or unknown

Student Placements

RMIT Partnership

A total of eight students were part of the CISVic student program across the two semesters in this reporting period. Numbers vary from year to year depending on how many placements CISVic can offer and on how many student matches RMIT can make. Students were placed at, CISVic office, Camcare, Bayside Community Information & Support Service, Casey North Community Information & Support Service, Community Support Frankston, and Southern Peninsula Community Support.

The Social Work Student Program has been a partnership program with the RMIT School of Social Work since it was piloted 2012. Students were placed in CISVic member agencies with an agency staff member as their task supervisor. Our Student Program Coordinator provided professional social work supervision to each student both individually and in a group setting, while also providing general support for the placement. Our participating members found that having social work students under this model helped build agency capacity. Task supervisors felt well supported and students appreciated both the dual supervision model and the opportunity to learn about the Community Information and Support sector while undertaking emergency relief interviews and complex casework. Over the last twelve months, across both semesters, CISVic was able to offer RMIT many more placements than the university was able to fill. This is an indicator of the value our members saw in the program. For the immediate future, this program is being paused due to funding constraints.

TAFE placements

We support, when required, member agencies and our branches to offer student placements to TAFE students. Commonly, these are students undertaking a Diploma in Community Services. This support included Support Worker training to 13 students across eight sites.

Projects

Energy Hardship Partnership

Addressing energy hardship is critical to our sector's support of vulnerable Victorians. To support this work at the start of 2023, with funding from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), CISVic led a partnership of member agencies to provide cost-of-living relief through the \$250 Power Saving Bonus and energy assistance to vulnerable and hard-to-reach community members.

The 32-member strong partnership delivered three programs, including the Power Saving Bonus 3 & 4 Community Outreach programs and the Energy Assistance Program. These programs will continue into the next financial year.

Program outcomes as of June 2023:

- \$1,191,000 worth of cost-of-living relief provided to vulnerable Victorians.
- 5,059 Victorian households supported to access the program.
- 14,386 different occurrences of light affordability information and advice provided.
- 2,844 episodes of advocacy provided to access different energy affordability supports.



Photo from the Power Saving Bonus 4 Launch

L – R Kate Wheller, CISVic EO, Premier

Daniel Andrews and Minister Lily D’Ambrosio

Case Study

When attending a local shopping centre, Silvia, a senior single woman, spoke with agency staff at their pop-up desk. Silvia was surprised to learn that she was eligible for the PSB and that concessions should appear on her bill. When the concessions were processed and backdated for 12 months, and with the PSB, Lauren found herself paying less, and the small debt she owed cleared.*

“I didn’t think I would get the bonus as I didn’t have concessions. I then found out I should have been accessing concessions and other bonuses all along. This friendly volunteer called on my behalf to have my concessions applied. This has been very helpful as I have been struggling with the cost of everything. How wonderful!”

Program Participant. (Name and some details have been changed to protect the participant's identity.)

Emerging Stronger

Funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, CISVic's Emerging Stronger: Increasing Volunteer Capacity project used an action research approach to:

Phase 1

Explore and analyse the broader volunteer landscape and trends associated with volunteering in CISVic member agencies and branches to inform strategies to increase our sector's volunteer workforce capacity.

Phase 2

Evaluate piloted strategies.

Phase one primarily focussed on identifying key factors and trends affecting volunteer capacity, both broadly and specifically within our sector. This phase included a literature review, environmental scan and sector consultations via an action-research evaluation framework that informed phase two.

What was clear from this research is that CISVic members are not alone in seeing a depletion in their volunteer workforce. Issues included reduced agency capacity, higher turnover of volunteers, challenges associated with recruiting different volunteer cohorts and fewer volunteers doing more.

One agency commented that the project offered... *"A real appreciation of and recognition that the problems we face are sector-wide rather than a local problem."*

During phase two, CISVic trialled various activities to increase members' volunteer capacity with varied success. These included:

- The pilot of non-accredited Community Support Worker (CSW) training, three courses delivered with engagement from 13 volunteers.
- CISVic's online advertisements recruited 63 potential volunteers from October 2022 – March 2023 for members.
- Delivery of three information sessions to TAFE and University students about volunteering in our sector.
- An investment in volunteer management software for members over the next three years.
- Resources, tools and a CISVic roundtable, 'Student Placements: How agencies use them to add value to their volunteer programs', held with 15 CISVic member agencies in attendance.

Quotes about positive aspects of the project, include:

"It is great to talk about challenges in engaging volunteers with other agencies and hear about their experiences."

"Putting a stronger focus on assisting with volunteering."

"Great ideas and resources to share."

"We are really looking forward to the volunteer database offering as tracking data is a big time drain. Our biggest challenge is paid resources to support, train and recognise volunteers."

The project has refocused CISVic's recognition of the importance of volunteers to our sector's capacity, our members' needs in this area, and our role in assisting. Informed by the project, our Five-year Volunteer Action Plan will drive our continued work in this space.

CISVic's 5-Year Volunteer Action Plan

Helping local people, help local communities

May 2023

This plan sets out the vision and priorities of CISVic in supporting our sector with volunteering over the next five years.

Through consultations with our sector, utilising the Victorian Government's Emerging Stronger project and our Volunteer Census, we have crafted a plan to effectively address the needs of our member agencies and volunteers we aim to assist.

Vision:



Our volunteers feel respected and supported, and member agencies are empowered to provide safe, effective and rewarding volunteer experiences.

Priorities:



The critical work of our volunteers to the community is acknowledged and adequately resourced.



Volunteers and agencies are supported with resources and training that strengthen and develop their knowledge, skills and practice.



Provision of benefits, resources and tools to our sector that help to increase inclusive, meaningful and flexible volunteering experiences.



Work in partnership with our members, their volunteers and other key stakeholders to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the volunteer sector.

CISVic acknowledges the true custodians of Country and pays our respects to Elders past and present.



Year one actions



Priorities:



1. The critical work of our volunteers to the community is acknowledged and adequately resourced.



2. Volunteers and agencies are supported with resources and training that strengthen and develop their knowledge, skills and practice.



3. Provision of benefits, resources and tools to our sector that help to increase inclusive, meaningful and flexible volunteering experiences.



4. Work in partnership with our members, their volunteers and other key stakeholders to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the volunteer sector.

- 1.1 Campaign government for a paid coordinator in CISVic member agencies to support them in volunteer recruitment, screening induction, training, mentoring, and debriefing, and to foster a volunteer-friendly culture and workplace.
- 1.2 Promote the strength of our sector through the sharing of our volunteer contributions.
- 2.1 A webpage with information and resources for agencies to recruit and manage volunteers.
- 2.2 Provision of new and existing volunteer training and additional resources that support the work of our sector.
- 3.1 Pilot investment in volunteer management software for member agencies.
- 3.2 Multi-pronged volunteer recruitment campaign (including promotional materials that can be used via online and word-of-mouth recruitment channels).
- 4.1 Participation on the Victorian Volunteer Support Network (VVSN).
- 4.2 Support the volunteer sector, including members that provide volunteer support services, that ensures sustainability.

Branch Management

Much of the last twelve months has been focussed on trying to secure additional funding and alternative premises for the Yarra Ranges Branch. Unfortunately, this was not successful and as a result the Branch will close its doors at the end of October 2023. The operations of the Yarra Ranges Op Shop was also reviewed, and a decision made to close due to insufficient income over an extended period. The Op Shop ceased trading at the end of July 2023.

We are hopeful that the work to secure additional funding and alternative accommodation for the Merri-bek Branch will be successful. We have received the support of key Merri-bek councillors for a proposal to provide base funding that would be available on a 12 monthly cycle. The future of the redevelopment of the Coburg site is still not finalised but we are working with both Assemble Futures and the Merri-bek Council to try to secure both temporary and longer-term accommodation.

Glen Eira has been able to grow its range of programs despite some challenges in past twelve months. We are working with the Glen Eira Council to refine our KPIs to better reflect the services we offer which are guided by the needs of the local community.

We are managing the hours we are open for drop-in service to ensure that we have a strong team available particularly for new clients and have implemented a booking system that allows for some drop ins which appears to be working well. This has allowed us to better manage workflow and budget.

A planning day for all Branches was held in February and key issues identified. Overall, we have worked to improve financial reporting and to build a consistent understanding of all the costs associated with running each Branch. This has meant that Branch Coordinators have more confidence in the monthly reports and are better equipped to track expenditure and identify emerging issues.

CIS Glen Eira

*Full detail about the individual branch's service delivery is published in a separate report.

Services



Information



Advocacy



Referral



Education Support



Emergency Relief/Material Aid



Financial Assistance



No Interest Loans & Tax Help



3,420 individual contacts

Volunteers of Glen Eira

Our Volunteer Program offers information about all aspects of volunteering. We help people identify their areas of interest and offer a range of volunteering options. We also assist local not-for-profits who need assistance with volunteer recruitment and management.

This year our program supported 1,048 people.

CIS Merri-bek

Services



Information



Advocacy



Referral



Education Support



Emergency Relief/Material Aid



Financial Assistance



4,058 individual contacts

Case Study

Ali dropped into CIS Merri-bek on a Monday after picking up an EFTPOS voucher from a local emergency relief provider and was referred to our agency for further assistance. Ali was to receive his Centrelink payment on Friday but had no money other than his \$40 voucher to buy food for the week and had overdue utility bills. During an intake interview with our reception staff, it was found that Ali had very little knowledge of the supports available to him. Ali had not applied for his \$250 Power Saving Bonus and did not know what a Utility Relief Grant was, nor how to access it.

Ali was provided with a food parcel made up of food that he chose from our pantry. He also received some pet food for his cat and our email address to email his utility bill to and we sent him a further appointment for assistance from a Community Support Worker. Later that day when his utility bill was received, a Community Support Worker called him back and completed the \$250 Power Saving Bonus application with him. Later that week, at his appointment, a Community Support Worker completed a Utility Relief Grant for him for gas, water and electricity as all of these bills were overdue.

This support provided Ali with over \$1,500 of financial assistance. Financial assistance from our agency was also provided and information about other food and material aid support that he can access in the local area. Ali now attends monthly to access food relief and keeps in touch with our team if any further issues arise for him.

CIS Yarra Ranges

Services



Information



Advocacy



Referral



Education Support



Emergency Relief/Material Aid



Financial Assistance



1,796 individual contacts

Case Study

Polly single, first-time client came in for assistance with several issues that are overwhelming her. Polly also has Bipolar and Epilepsy. She had a seizure and was hospitalised for 3 weeks. During this time, she was sacked from her casual work by email and is now on Jobseeker but would like to apply for DSP. She has a pharmacy bill and out-of-pocket expenses from her hospital stay. Her car needs repair to drive it again and was quoted \$350. Polly is now also behind on paying her rent.

Actions taken:

Supporting letter to Hospital to have out of pocket bills. Paid Pharmacy bill with medical grant that we received. Applied for funding to help with car repair. Referred to DSP helpline to get support with applying for Disability support pension. Provided support with food and food vouchers. Applied for Utility Relief Grant and Power Saving Bonus.

Outcome

The Hospital waived the out-of-pocket fees and with help of the medical grant we could pay Polly's pharmacy bill. We applied successfully for funding to have her car repaired. DSP application is on the way and Polly is waiting for an outcome.

With the help of the URG and PSB, the rental arrears were covered. Polly moved out of her rental and is now living in a more affordable shared rental with a friend.

Acknowledgements

ADRA Croydon
Alex Makes Meals
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Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Department of Social Services
Foodbank
FoodFilled
Give It
Glen Eira Council
Healthy Bake
Holy Fools
Iced Bakery
Intertrading Australia
Knit One Give One (KOGO)
Magistrates Court of Victoria - Court Fund
McKenzie's Foods
Mitre 10 Monbulk
Mooroolbark Fellowship Church
OONAH
Oz Harvest
Pets of the Homeless
Pinchapoo
Queens Fund
Share the Dignity
State School Relief
Street Smart
Vantage Point Church
Variety Kids
Victorian Council of Social Services
Walter and Eliza Hall Trust
Yarra Ranges Council
Yarra Valley Cheese

Our team

Board

Leanne Petrides, President
(Jan-Jun)
John Lambert, President
(Jul-Jan), Vice-President
(Jan-Jun)
Anjali Ilsley, Treasurer
Anne Catanese, Hon.
Secretary
Ordinary members:
Ian Parker
Karyn Doyle
Kathy Hosie
Hiyah Rahman
Jenny Elvey

Staff

CISVic Team

Anne-Marie Yung, Office
Coordinator
Bridgette Mortensen, Project
Support Worker
Deborah Rosenberg, Student
Placement Program
Coordinator
Helen Byrne, Trainer
Jennifer Borrell, Research,
Advocacy and Policy
Manager
Jill Wilson, Volunteer
Development Manager
Kate Wheller, Executive
Officer
Kim Smythe, Branch
Manager
Leanne Petrides, Acting EO
(Jul-Jan)
Meagan Skehill, Sector
Development Manager
Michael Conney, Trainer
Will Edmonds, Project
Officer

Zoe Evans, Sector Support
Officer

CIS Glen Eira team

Staff

Daniela Markovic, Branch
Coordinator
Louise Howe, Administration
Officer

Volunteers

Adelina Rachma Shakuntala
Amy Bachrach
Anat Cossen
Ann Orre
Belinda McClennan
Deborah Searle
Derek Shapiro
Diane Cole
Frances Witwicki
Isabelle Tabain
Kay Schmidt
Kevin Dai
Lane Shmerling
Lesley Skinley
Linda Duong
Maree Connelly
Maria Morely
Michael King
Michael O'Donovan
Peter Whitelaw
Raz Machado
Rhona Rosenberg
Robyn Zingler
Ruth Pojer
Sarah Turley
Scott Jenes
Simone Fookes
Susan Wald
Tal Silverstein
Tallilah May
Vivienne Hoai Liv
Xiao Dan He (Kelly)

CIS Merri-bek team

Staff

Claire Kartisidmas, Branch
Coordinator

Kylie Farrugia, Case Worker –
Food & Material Aid Worker

Volunteers

Carol Steele
Courtney Wagstaff
Delphi Christall
Gerard McMaster
Ian McNaughton
Jane Lofthouse
Jannette Lansdown
Jeff Tyson
Kerry Ogbourne
Laura Morgan
Lenora Lippmann
Margo Barker
Mary Goliopoulos
Patrick Hayton
Phillip Elkins
Tammy Jacoby
William Edmonds

CIS Yarra Ranges team

Staff

Christine Falzon, Branch
Coordinator

Volunteers

Ellen Anderson
Ellise Rickhard
Erin Lennox
Gayle Ward
Jeanine Belbin
Kim Kirby
Lineth Aguirre
Ludy Beresniak
Op Shop Volunteers
Gayle Courtney-Warren
Jeanine Belbin
Alexandra
Marg
Jan Adams
Lisa Kelly

Member agencies

<p>Full Members</p> <p>Banyule Support & Information Centre Bayside Community & Information Support Service Bendigo Family & Financial Services Camcare Casey North Community Information & Support Service Chelsea Community Support Services Community Information & Support Cranbourne Community Support Frankston Darebin Information, Volunteer & Resource Service Diamond Valley Community Support Inc Doncare Knox Infolink Maroondah Community Assist Mentone Community Assistance & Information Bureau Monash Oakleigh Community Support & Information Service Monash Waverley Community Information & Support Mornington Community Support Port Phillip Community Group South East Community Links South Gippsland Citizens Advice Bureau Southern Peninsula Community Centre Stonnington Community Assist Uniting (Victoria & Tasmania) Western Port Community Support Whitehorse Emergency Relief & Support Whittlesea Community Connections</p>	<p>Associate Members</p> <p>Albury Wodonga Regional Foodshare The Ardoch Foundation Ballarat Foundation United Way Bellarine Community Support Register Bendigo Foodshare Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre CityLife Community Care Council of Single Mothers and their Children Countrywide Community Missions Victoria Diamond Valley Foodshare Eastern Emergency Relief Network Endeavour Ministries Friends for Good Geelong Food Relief Centre The Gianna Centre Healesville Interchurch Community Care IndianCare Laverton Community Integrated Services LINC Yarra Valley Make a Difference Dingley Village North East Citizen Advocacy OZ Assist Regional Food Security Alliance Shepparton Foodshare Somali Australian Council of Victoria Sunraysia Information & Referral Service Volunteer West Volunteering Geelong Women Wellbeing Australia</p> <p>Branches</p> <p>CIS Glen Eira CIS Merri-bek CIS Yarra Ranges</p>
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