



# 2023 – 2024 Annual Report



Community Information  
& Support Victoria

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, referrals and support including Emergency Relief.

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

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# The 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 June 2024.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the members of the Board of Management, and the CISVic staff team for their exceptional work during a year that has seen staff changes and an organisational restructure. With that, we farewelled long-serving staff and Board members, and welcomed new ones.

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.

CISVic welcomed the opportunity to work more closely with the State Government to support volunteers, and to assist communities with a range of Energy Assistance Programs. These programs will be reported on further throughout our Annual Report. We were very excited to launch our new branding, and we provided agencies with Member's Badges which are now displayed in offices and on windows throughout the state. These are just one way we help foster and demonstrate connectedness, solidarity, and consistency amongst our members. I would like to acknowledge our member agencies

who continue to report an increase in the number of people who approach them for support with the increasing impacts of rising costs of living, and housing stress or even homelessness.

Most people who present for support have complex needs and may also be experiencing family violence, relationship breakdown, social isolation, unemployment. Volunteers and paid staff work so hard to deliver key services that go far beyond food relief and know that the provision of emergency relief must be supported by excellent information, referrals, advocacy, and wrap-around services that support the individual today, and into the future.

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 at the highest level 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, energy, dental care, and health care. With an eye to the future, CISVic has plans to more fully measure the social and financial impact of the services provided by member agencies. And with a new Operational Plan endorsed, a Reconciliation Action Plan close to being finalised, and CISVic's Emergency Relief Consortia Report "A Decade of Impact" launched, we look forward to an exciting year ahead.



Leanne Petrides  
CISVic President

# The CEO's Report

**As I reflect on this past year, I am struck by the profound changes and significant achievements that have shaped our journey. It has been a year of transformation, resilience, and unwavering dedication from everyone involved in our organisation.**

Mid-2023 marked a turning point for us with a major organisational restructure. This was a time of mixed emotions as we said goodbye to several valued and long-serving staff members whose contributions over the years have been nothing short of remarkable. Their departure was not easy, and we owe them our gratitude for their hard work and commitment to our mission. At the same time, we welcomed new faces and saw existing staff step into new roles with incredible energy and determination. The support from our Board during this transition was invaluable, as was the dedication of those who remained focused and productive throughout this period of change.

Amid these internal shifts, our advocacy efforts took on renewed vigour. With a new team member leading the charge, we were able to channel the expertise, passion, and resources of our membership into impactful policy submissions, budget proposals, and presentations at government inquiries. We engaged with state and federal politicians, bureaucrats, and other key stakeholders to push for the necessary support and policy changes that will make a real difference in the lives of those we serve. This year, more than ever, our advocacy work has been a testament to the power of collective action.

The increasing demand for Emergency Relief has been a stark reminder of the growing challenges facing our community. Over the past decade, the need for our services has doubled, driven by rising living costs and the complex issues that many

individuals are grappling with. The sheer volume and complexity of the cases we handle underscore the importance of our work and the critical role we play in supporting those most in need.

In preparing for the next tender round for federally funded Emergency Relief and Financial Counselling programs, we took a moment to reflect on the impact of our collective efforts. We produced an Impact Report highlighting our service model's positive outcomes, showcasing the tangible benefits it has brought to the government, our partners, and the wider community. This report stands as a testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff and consortia partners.

Despite our best efforts, we faced a difficult loss this year with the closure of the CIS Yarra Ranges branch. This was a deeply disappointing outcome, and we share in the sadness felt by the community and those who worked tirelessly to keep the branch open. Nonetheless, we remain committed to our other branches and will continue to provide the support and services that our communities rely on.

On a brighter note, we have made significant strides in leveraging technology to enhance our impact. Thanks to the Department of Social Services, Strong and Resilient Communities funding, we have commenced a pilot of an online client management tool, Better Impact, designed to support our members manage volunteers and streamline their processes. This is just one example of how we are constantly seeking ways to innovate and better support our members.

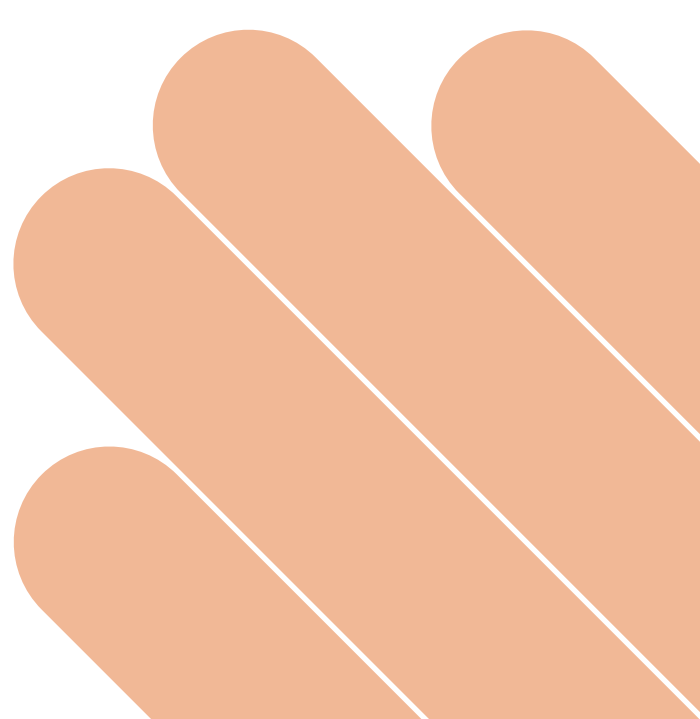
This year also marked significant milestones for two of our member agencies. The Mentone Community Assistance and Information Bureau and the Monash Oakleigh Community Support and Information Service both celebrated 50 years of service, having been established in January 1974.

These milestones are a testament to the enduring commitment and impact of our members, and we are proud to celebrate their achievements.

As I conclude this reflection, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to our Board, staff, volunteers, and members. Your unwavering dedication, passion, and resilience have been the driving force behind our success this year. It is because of you that we are able to continue our vital work and make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve. Together, we have navigated challenges, embraced opportunities, and achieved so much. I look forward to what we will accomplish in the year ahead.



Kate Wheller  
CISVic CEO





# Our Mission, Values & Strategic Plan



## Our mission

As the peak body for the community information and support sector, we will assist member agencies to deliver and grow their services to support people in personal and financial hardship.

Our services aim to uphold the dignity of all, respond to community needs, alleviate the impact of poverty, and promote social justice.



## Our values

### Connections

We value and rely on our connection with our members and key stakeholders to inform our work.

### Empowerment

We empower communities with information and holistic support.

### Integrity

We are accountable and authentic in all our dealings.

### Equity

We work towards a socially just society for all.



## Strategic plan

### Leadership and partnership

- Promoting and profiling the work of our members.
- Building closer relationships and understanding with all relevant stakeholders including government departments, policymakers, and elected representatives.
- Engaging with members to seek their views on a range of issues and briefing them on policy developments and other trends.
- Working with stakeholders to establish strategic partnerships to optimise the impact of CISVic.

### Membership engagement and resourcing

- Developing and maintaining an understanding of the roles, functions and needs our membership.
- Supporting the sector by offering a range of membership services and facilitating networks.
- Engaging and resourcing our members in workforce training, sector development, advocacy, and research.
- Resourcing and supporting volunteering in our member agencies.
- Exploring opportunities to grow the sector to respond to community needs and address geographic gaps.

### Research informing action

- Engaging with members about current issues and needs to shape our advocacy work.
- Creating change by using high-quality data and grassroots case studies to achieve a fairer society.
- Collaborating strategically with other organisations on relevant campaigns.

### Organisational effectiveness

- Ensuring the operational sustainability of CISVic.
- Delivering sound governance and direction by a strong, effective Board.
- Providing an employment culture that values and supports all staff.
- Ensuring the organisational structure supports the strategic direction.

## Our Team

### Staff A – Z

**Anne-Marie Yung**  
Office Coordinator  
(left July 2024)

**Claire Kartsidimas**  
CIS Merri-bek  
Branch Coordinator

**Christine Falzon**  
CIS Yarra Ranges  
Branch Coordinator  
(left Nov 2024)

**Daniela Markovic**  
CIS Glen Eira  
Branch Coordinator

**Deborah Rosenberg**  
Student Placement  
Program Coordinator  
(left July 2024)

**Elke Colbert**  
Community Support  
Team Leader, Glen Eira

**Helen Byrne**  
Trainer

**Jill Wilson**  
Volunteer Development  
Manager

**Kate Wheller**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Kellie Macnaushtan**  
Advocacy, Policy &  
Research Consultant

**Kim Smythe**  
Branch Manager/  
Program Evaluator

**Kylie Farrugia**  
CIS Merri-bek, Food &  
Material Aid Worker

**Louise Howe**  
Administration Officer  
CIS Glen Eira

**Meagan Skehill**  
Sector Development  
Manager

**Michael Cooney**  
Trainer

**Ruth Morgan**  
Project Officer

**Tracey Swadling**  
Executive Assistant



Team End Of Year  
Celebration 2023



## Our Team

### Board Members A – Z

**Anjali Isley,**  
Treasurer, Retired  
November AGM,  
Individual Member

**Anne Catanese**  
Individual Member

**Ben Smith**  
Vice-President  
Mornington Community  
Support

**Chandana Narayan**  
Treasurer, Individual  
Member

**Hiyah Rahmen**  
Whittlesea Community  
Connections

**Ian Parker**  
Banyule Support and  
Information Centre

**Jenny Elvey**  
Bendigo Family and  
Financial Services

**John Lambert**  
Retired November AGM,  
Individual Member

**Karyn Doyle**  
Retired, Individual  
Member

**Kathy Hosie**  
Retired, Monash Oakley  
Community Information  
and Support Service

**Leanne Petrides**  
President, Community  
Information and  
Support Cranbourne

**Sharon Henderson**  
Banyule Support and  
Information Centre

### Glen Eira Volunteers

Adrian

Alan

Amy

Anat

Belinda

Catherine

David

Deborah

Derek

Elke

Isabelle

Kay

Kelly

Kevin

Lane

Lyn

Maree

Maria

Michael G

Michael O'D

Michael K

Rhona

Robyn

Ruth

Simone

Sue

Talilah

### Merri-bek Voluneers

Anthony

Carla

Carol

Fatimah

Ian

Iman

Jane

Jean-Paul

Kerry

Lenora

Sean

Rianne

Valentino

William

## Key Highlights

### Fond Farewells and Happy Hellos

An organisation re-structure mid 2023 meant that valued and long-serving staff left us. It was a difficult time, and we acknowledge the hard work and dedication that departing staff had made during their time with us.

Our heartfelt thanks went to those who departed, to those who stepped into new roles and existing vacant ones, and to our Board and everyone who remained productive and committed throughout this period of change.

### Empowered Advocacy

With a new worker at the helm, our advocacy and policy work were energised and refocused. Drawing on the expertise, passions and resources of the membership, we have produced a range of policy submissions, budget bids, presented at government inquiries, and advocated to state and federal politicians, bureaucrats and other stakeholders for the supports and policy changes required to lead to lasting improvements and greater support for our member agencies and the people they support.

This has led to increased funding for our vital Emergency Relief program, which provides essential support to those experiencing financial hardship.

### Unprecedented Demand and Growing Complexity

Over the past decade, demand for Emergency Relief has doubled, highlighting the increasing needs within our community as daily living costs soar. In addition to this, many individuals are grappling with a complex array of issues that require careful unravelling and comprehensive support.



Kate Wheller and David Southwick MP

## Key Highlights

### Documenting a Decade of Impact

As we prepare to enter a new tender round for federally funded Emergency Relief and Financial Counselling programs, we reflected on the value of our ER Consortia, and produced an Impact Report, highlighting the positive impact of our service model for government, our partners and the community.

### Streamlining the Annual Membership Renewal Process

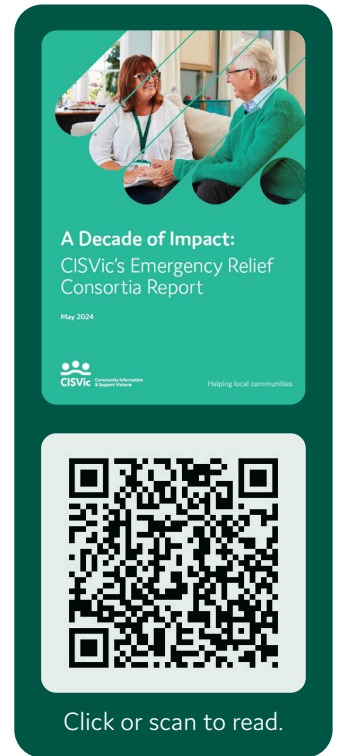
During this period, we initiated an active review of our current systems and processes related to member management and renewals. As a part of this effort, we implemented an enhanced membership renewal process for the upcoming financial year. During the next period, we will identify and implement a new Membership Management System. All member information, including contact details, will be securely held in the new system. It will be designed to streamline communications and support activities like the annual membership renewal process. Through consultation with member agencies, consideration will be given to introducing a member's portal. Robust data privacy and security measures will be in place, providing peace of mind about personal and organisational information being protected.

### Against all our best efforts, a branch closed

Despite our best efforts, we faced a difficult loss this year with the closure of the CIS Yarra Ranges branch. This was a deeply disappointing outcome, and we share in the sadness felt by the community and those who worked tirelessly to keep the branch open. Nonetheless, we remain committed to our other branches and will continue to provide the support and services that our communities rely on.

### Better Impact with Better Technology

We have made significant strides in leveraging technology to enhance our impact. We are piloting an online volunteer management tool, Better Impact. This software aims to decrease administrative workload and increase volunteer engagement for users. We currently have 11 agencies participating in the pilot, and we have employed an expert to train, support and customise the platform for pilot partners.





## Key Highlights



Celebrating 50 Years of Service.

### An Evidence Base for ER

In partnership with Swinburne University, we are conducting a study which explores the client experience of those accessing emergency relief via a holistic assessment and support, versus those who have simply been given a food parcel in a more 'transactional model'. This is allowing us to test our belief that a holistic ER model promotes better outcomes for the people we support.

### Milestones for members

Two member agencies celebrated a significant milestone this year. Founded in 1974, these agencies celebrated 50 years of delivering services to the community. This is a testament to the commitment of the workers at both sites, and the community's continued trust in them. Both agencies were established in January 1974.

Congratulations to **Mentone Community Assistance and Information Bureau** and **Monash Oakleigh Community Support and Information Service**.

# We have 52 member agencies.

Delivering services from **64 sites**.

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Operating across **44 Local Government Areas**, including  
**four statewide services**.

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Working with **705,264** Individual contacts collectively.

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Offered **422** student placements to TAFE and Universities.

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We have **524** paid staff, and **3,636** volunteers.

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Our volunteers have worked over **528,528** hours.

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## Our Services

Our services are delivered by trained staff, many of whom are volunteers. Services are confidential, respectful, and in a caring and compassionate manner.



### Information & Referral

Our members provide free information and referral services on topics such as housing, health, personal issues, families, education and much more. Referrals are made to the appropriate government or community services and other not-for-profit organisations.



### Advocacy

Our members can act on behalf of people to negotiate payments and discuss issues with a range of service providers, including:

- Utilities (gas, electricity, water)
- Telephone companies
- Centrelink
- Real estate agents
- Government departments

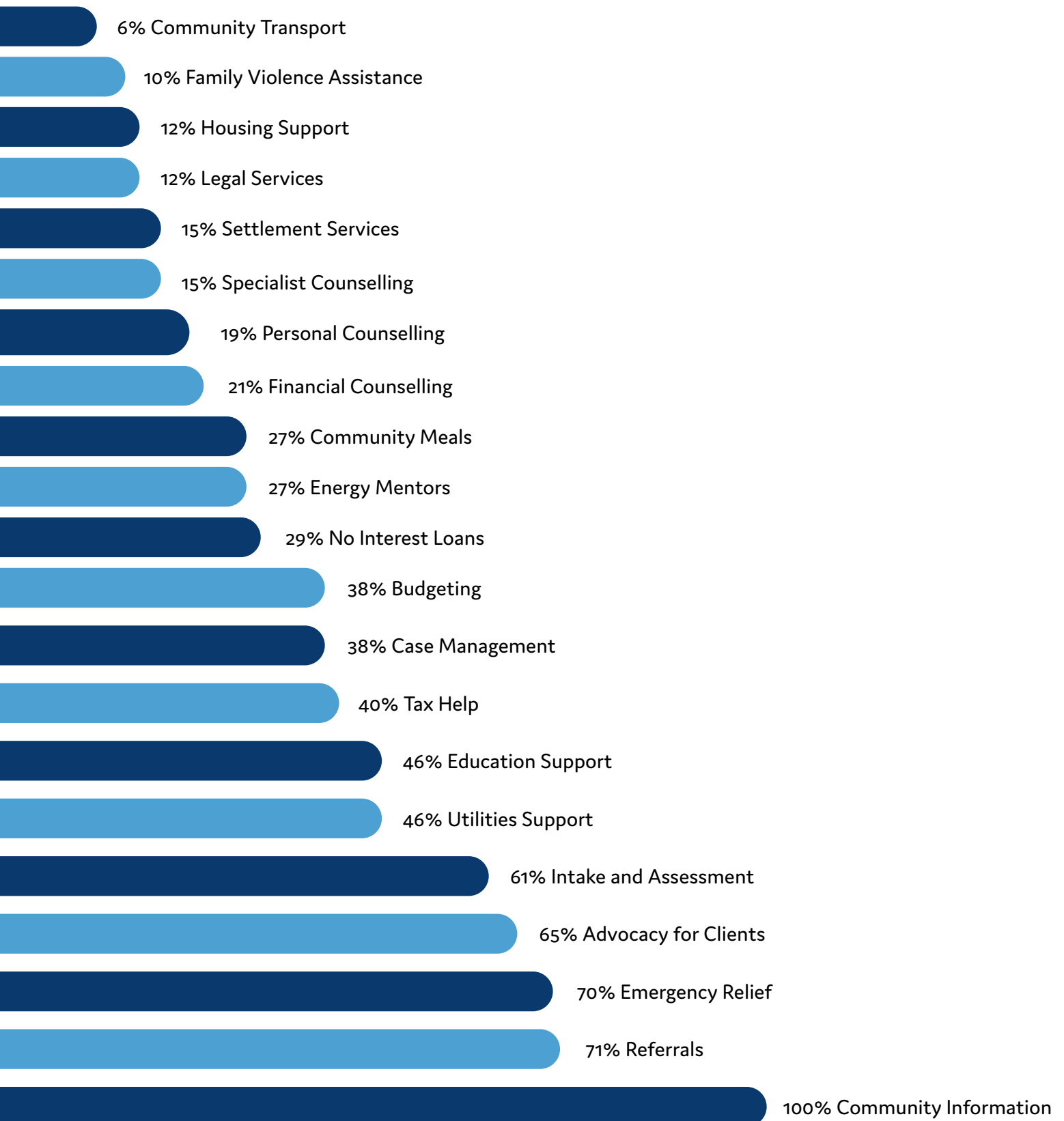


### Emergency relief

Food, food vouchers and other assistance are provided to people experiencing financial hardship.

Other types of assistance can include help with household bills (utilities, medical expenses, transport, education costs) and material aid (toiletries, feminine hygiene products, clothing, swags, tents, sleeping bags).

## Services Our Members Offer



# How We Support Our Members

## Member Engagement

35 visits to member agencies

9 regional members meetings

4 energy support network meetings

1 case worker network meeting

1 Roundtable

## Communications

4 editions of Fact Sheet Friday

1 Tip Sheet Tuesday

70 Facebook posts to 1,054 followers

10 E-bulletins produced to a subscriber base of 464



ABOVE: Homelessness fact sheet for Fact Sheet Friday

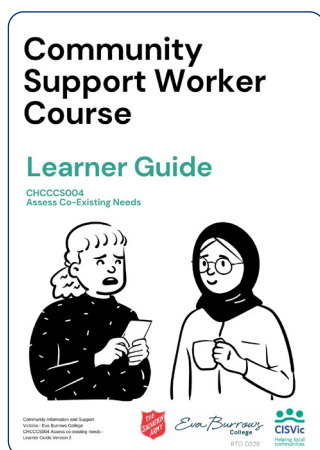
LEFT: Our team and Ged Kearney MP at Roundtable meeting

## How We Support Our Members

### Workforce Development

Each year we conduct a range of professional development and training sessions for our workforce.

Course	Sessions
Community Support Workers (SW) Course	4 sessions, 43 participants
CSW Orientation Online Webinar	26 views
CWS Refresher	3 sessions, 31 participants
Indigenous Cultural Awareness	106 registrations
Supporting people with Energy Hardship	4 sessions, 33 participants
Working with Interpreters Webinar	112
Content Creative Training Program	2 sessions, 44 registrations from 26 agencies



## How We Support Our Members

### Content Creation Training Program

Free, practical series of online, facilitated training sessions on creating amazing content using a smart phone run by expert Wes Alan from Tap Edit Go. A total for 4 1-hour training sessions will be delivered online through a platform. Two were conducted in this period, and the final two in the next reporting period.

**44 individuals from 26 agencies registered for these sessions.**





## How We Support Our Members

### Branding

This year we introduced a Membership Badge and shared our branding collateral to help strengthen our sector's identity. Members are using the badge on their building signage, in email signatures and in other materials.

CISVic's membership badge helps CISVic members to be easily recognised as part of the wider Community Information and Support sector. Consistent branding across the sector allows us to appear more visible and credible to government officials, decision-makers, funders and philanthropists, ultimately leading to more support for the sector's members and the communities they assist.



CISVic Membership badge



Mornington



Diamond Valley



Stonnington

# CISVic's 5-Year Volunteer Action Plan

This plan, created in 2023 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, rewarding volunteer experiences.

## Priorities



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



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



Provide 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.

# 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.

## Tracking against Year 1 actions

- CISVic continues to advocate with state politicians and through VCOSS's budget submission for a paid coordinator in CISVic member agencies to support volunteering.
- Delivery of four comprehensive workshops and an online forum that aimed to empower and educate participating members to develop messaging and create online and physical content that engages potential volunteers or shares their contributions.
- Implementation of CISVic's volunteer management software pilot Better (Impact), including one-on-one support with participating members, portal set-up, onboarding volunteers, resource creation including templates, processes and policies, and training. This work is ongoing and will continue into the second year of our volunteer action plan.
- To support the ongoing viability of the Victorian Volunteer Support Network
- (VVS), CISVic joined the VVSN executive. However, at this stage, the VVSN is currently paused.
- CISVic continues to meet with Volunteering Victoria and support their work to ensure that the current Victorian volunteer support infrastructure is effectively resourced.

# Year two 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 Promote the strength of our sector by sharing our volunteer contributions through the production of CISVic's 2024 Volunteer Census, which includes mapping how members' practices and supports align with the eight National Standards of Volunteer Involvement.
- 1.2 Promote the strength of our sector through the sharing of our volunteer contributions.
- 2.1 Undertake a member volunteer training needs assessment.
- 2.2 In response to the needs assessment, deliver appropriate training to build the capacity of those coordinating volunteers.
- 3.1 Recruitment of Better Impact content expert to further support the implementation of the volunteer management software (Better Impact) pilot
- 3.2 Development of resources to support members' engagement with Better Impact.
- 4.1 Regular contact with Volunteering Victoria and their work supporting place-based volunteer resourcing.
- 4.2 Support the volunteer sector, including members that provide volunteer support services, that ensures sustainability.

## Tracking against Year 2 actions

- Delivery of CISVic's 2024 Volunteer Census, including mapping how members' practices and supports align with the eight National Standards of Volunteer Involvement.
- Needs assessment that will inform future planning and rollout of training to build members capacity in relation to volunteering.
- Recruitment of a Better Impact content expert to further support the implementation of our volunteer management software pilot.

## Strong and Resilient Communities – Volunteering Program

CISVic received transitional volunteer funding under the Department of Social Services Strong and Resilient Communities - Volunteering. This funding has enabled us to focus on supporting volunteering across our membership.

### Key activities have included:

Delivery of CISVic's 5-year Volunteer Action Plan in years one and two, specifically the delivery of the content creation training program, further implementation of CISVic's volunteer management software pilot (Better Impact), resource development and CISVic's volunteer census.

## Volunteer Census

At CISVic, we understand the vital role that volunteers play in our sector. Every day, our members are supported by volunteers who generously give their time, knowledge, and compassion to assist those seeking support during difficult times.

This year conducted our third iteration of our sector-wide Volunteer Census. The census aims to ensure that the volunteers who significantly impact our sector receive the recognition they deserve. It also serves as a platform to highlight their strengths as volunteers, to hear their voices and to learn how we can best support them.

We launched the 2024 Census Report in Volunteer Week. Key Findings:



Our volunteers continue to be well supported by their agencies.



Agencies' practices and procedures are still aligned with The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement; however, greater awareness of the Standards is needed.



Over a third of volunteers have taken on additional volunteer hours, and agencies confirm reduced volunteers, volunteer availability and fewer people interested in volunteering since the pandemic.



Volunteers are seeing an increasing and more complex need in the people they support. Underscoring the call for more and varied training opportunities as identified by both volunteers and agencies.



Our volunteers are filling the gaps in a significantly underresourced sector. On average, volunteers carry out 3.2 roles each in the agencies.



It is of great importance to our volunteers that they feel heard and valued, and that their efforts are meaningful.



Increasingly, volunteers are being recruited through online advertisements.



Click or scan to read.



# We delivered **88,988** episodes of support, (up 3%).

To 23,407 unique clients.  
That's 7,415 people supported  
on average per month.

16% of people were homeless

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33% of people were in private rental

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25% of people were in public housing

---

31% of clients identify as having a disability

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6% of clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

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The CISVic Emergency Relief consortia experienced another demanding year, marked by a record-breaking surge in service requests – a **3% increase compared to last year.**

Additionally, the complexity of issues faced by those seeking support has grown significantly. Over the last 5 years, **the demand for our ER service has increased by a staggering 61%.**

This challenge is not unique to our sector; the broader community sector is also struggling, burdened by inadequate resources and the inability to meet the rising demand.

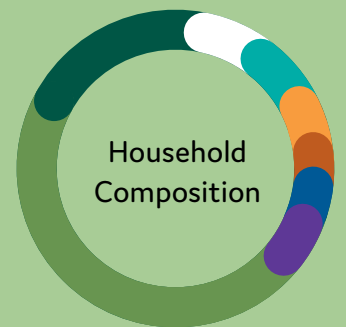
**Underlying reasons for seeking assistance:**

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

# 69% of clients assisted were Australian-born, a 3% decrease year-on year.

Top 5 countries of birth excluding Australia:

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



- 59% Female
- 39% Male
- 2% Non-binary/not-stated

- 2% 0-19
- 33% 20-39
- 51% 40-64
- 14% 65+

- 18% Arabic
- 8% Dari
- 7% Persian
- 4% Mandarin
- 4% Russian
- 4% Greek
- 3% Somali
- 42% Other/not stated

- 34% Single person living alone
- 22% Sole parent with dependant/s
- 10% Couple with dependant/s
- 10% Group (related adults)
- 7% Couple
- 6% Group (unrelated adults)
- 5% Homeless or no household
- 7% Not stated or unknown

# 59% of clients accessing support are on government payments, pensions or allowances.

## 407 clients recieved financial counselling.

While our financial counsellors continue to work at capacity, we have seen a small increase in the number of clients supported during this period. We are increasingly working with individuals facing deeply complex issues. On top of this, our waiting lists have now stretched to an alarming 10 weeks. This prolonged delay is far from acceptable, especially for those in the midst of financial crises, who cannot afford to wait for the urgent support they desperately need.



## Advocacy, Policy & Research

This year marked a shift in our advocacy strategy, emphasising quality over quantity in our efforts to influence meaningful change. Our approach centred on deepening partnerships, enhancing skills and concentrating our resources where they would make the most impact.

At the heart of our approach was a commitment to understanding and addressing the needs of our member agencies. We conducted in-depth, one on one consultation meetings with 19-member agencies, in addition to two Advocacy Working Group meetings, providing a form for members to voice their concerns and shape our advocacy priorities. This collaborative approach ensures that our efforts are aligned with the lived experiences of our members on the front line.

Building on this foundation, we focused on strengthening our relationships with government stakeholders. By fostering open dialogue and presenting well-researched policy positions, we've seen an improvement in our interactions with both Victorian and Federal Government MPs, Ministers and Departments. This has opened new avenues for influencing policy decisions and securing funding and support for our member agency's work, and is building recognition for our organisation as a trusted voice in social policy discussions.

Rather than stretching our resources thinly across a wide range of social justice issues, we opted to partner strategically with organisations on their targeted external initiatives like VCOSS and the Essential Services Commission. This allowed us to focus most of our advocacy efforts on securing support and funding for our member agencies while still representing the values and experiences of the people we service. To support our advocacy work, we invested in policy research, analysing existing welfare models around the world and State and Federal Government policies for well-informed and effective policy submissions, engagement with government, and briefings on policy for our members.



A Decade of Impact:  
CISVic's Emergency Relief  
Consortia Report

May 2024

CISVic  
Community Involvement  
Support & Advocacy

Helping local communities



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Recognising the power of a unified voice, we have focused on ups killing our member agencies in their advocacy efforts. We developed and shared pro-forma templates with our member agencies ensuring a consistent message to government across our members. This has streamlined our communications and empowered smaller member agencies to engage more confidently in advocacy work. As we move forward, we remain committed to this strategic and quality-driven approach to advocacy. By continuing to leverage our collective strengths and build on our relationships we are well-positioned to influence positive change for our member agencies and the people they support.

### Key advocacy campaigns have centred around:

1. **Increasing Emergency Relief funding** Meetings with, and letters to the Minister and Members of Parliament
2. **State Government for Coordination funding** Budget bid
3. **Demonstrating the value of the CISVic ER Consortia** We produced a report A Decade of Impact; CISVic's Emergency Relief Consortia Report demonstrating the value of our model.

## Stronger Together

We continue to collaborate strategically with other organisations, both via support with campaigns or through networks.

- ACOSS Raise the Rate - signing joint letters and social media promotion media
- ACOSS Blueprint Framework for Fair, Fast and Inclusive Climate Change Action - joining a delegation to Canberra and social media promotion
- Everybody's Home - signing joint letters and social media promotion
- VCOSS Disaster Resilience Network
- VCOSS Statewide and Peaks Network
- VCOSS Vic Utilities Network

In late 2023 CISVic established a National Emergency Relief Network with the aim of providing a mechanism to bring together emergency relief providers from across the country, to share best practices, resources, identify new and emergency trends and identify opportunities for potential collaboration. Four meetings were held during this reporting period and a further 2 National ER Advocacy Working groups were held.

## A National Voice for ER

In late 2023 CISVic established a National Emergency Relief Network with the aim of providing a mechanism to bring together emergency relief providers from across the country, to share best practices, resources, identify new and emergency trends and identify opportunities for potential collaboration. Four meetings were held during this reporting period and a further 2 National ER Advocacy Working groups were held.



# 01

## Reconciliation Action Plan

CISVic is committed to actively supporting and promoting reconciliation to mitigate the enduring impact of colonisation and systemic disadvantage for First Nations people.

We recognise that, despite a raft of strategies by various stakeholders over many years, First Nations people still experience high and unacceptable levels of disadvantage, particularly concerning life expectancy, health, employment, mortality rates, incarceration and out-of-home care. We recognise that inter-generational trauma continues to be a factor, and effective solutions must be introduced and reinforced - namely, truth-telling and self-determination. In addition to this, reconciliation requires building and maintaining strong relationships between all groups in the community.

Our own Reconciliation Action Plan is the first step in us being able to take positive action in this area, and purposefully engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. It will inform how CISVic will assist in this and includes a range of locally based activities or processes that will help our stakeholders and the broader community to recognise the persistent injustices and redress the wrongs of the past.

The RAP will be built into our operational plan and most of our small team will be assigned tasks to facilitate awareness and ownership at all levels. We will report on the progress of this plan to our Board at their bi-monthly meetings. We hope to launch this early in the next financial year.

# 02

## Privacy Review

We have engaged legal firm Russell Kennedy to assist us to review and update our Privacy Policy and Consent forms to ensure they are compliant with laws and contracts. Once complete, we will share these resources with member agencies so they can also update their collateral if required.

# 03

## Victorian Government Energy Assistance Programs

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 energy assistance to vulnerable and hard-to-reach community members. The CISVic led the delivery of the DEECA Energy Assistance Program in partnership with our 17 CISVic member agencies. CISVic managed the contract, trained, and supported our member agencies.

The holistic service approach ensured a comprehensive assessment was undertaken so that a clear picture of presenting needs and underlying reasons for seeking assistance are identified and prioritised. This ensures agencies tailor specific supports and address the root cause of financial hardship. In-person, practical support was provided to assist people in understanding their utility bills, advocate for manageable payment plans, assist with applications for Utility Relief Grants, ensure concession card discounts are applied, compare best offers, and ultimately reduce stress and financial hardship associated with utility costs. The number of clients formally reported does not reflect the actual number of clients that were provided with EAP assistance over the course of this program.

**1841 individuals supported through the EAP program during this financial year.**

**1619 people received support to access concessions; of those supported with concessions, 66% held a Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card, and 33% had a Centrelink Healthcare Card.**

**The busiest month was May 2024**

**The program supported the application of 822 Utility Relief Grants with the potential saving of over \$500,000**

# 04

## A Strong and Effective Organisation

We have a strong, effective Board that govern the organisation with diligence and set the strategic direction. The Board includes representatives of member agencies and independent community members, targeted for their skills and expertise. We have several sub-committees (Membership and Policy) that are active as required, except for the Finance Sub-Committee which meets monthly. The Board conducted 7 general-purpose meetings during this period and 1 special-purpose meeting.



The CISVic team conduct weekly meetings to ensure staff are abreast of all the news, and key activities. Once a month, they are joined by branch staff. All paid staff are given regular supervision and in the next financial year, we will introduce work plans aligned with our strategic and operational plans and key projects. Our annual Team Day in June 2024 was attended by 9 staff and 1 facilitator. It was an opportunity to step out of our usual roles and workplaces for a day of fun and learning-based activities.



The facilitator from the Team Building Company provided several key activities to get staff working in different teams to achieve particular tasks. He provided commentary and reported observations, asking the same from participants. It was a fun and insightful day.

# CIS Glen Eira FY24

CIS Glen Eira is a free and confidential information and support service for people who reside in the City of Glen Eira. It is a branch of the peak body CISVic and receives core funding from the local council. We have two part-time paid staff and 24 volunteers.

## Services we provide:

- Information, Advocacy & Referral
- Emergency Relief – Food Support (food parcels and supermarket gift cards) and Material Relief
- Pharmacy – Essential medications and other medical expenses
- Public Transport – Myki and Day passes
- Fresh Food Market
- Weekend Food Support
- Energy Assistance
- Energy Compare Program – Carnegie Library
- No interest Loans
- State School Relief
- Tax Help
- Volunteers of Glen Eira
- Bolton Clarke Homeless Person Case Worker – outposted, one day per week
- Jobs Victoria Advocate
- Counselling
- Case Work

Total Contacts: 5,376

Clients Assisted with ER: 2,040

Case Work appointments: 142

Personal Councelling Appointments: 35

Christmas Hampers: 79

Tax Help Appointments: 48

No Interest Loans Appointments: 108

Energy Assistance: 70

Placements offered to TAFE and University Students: 9



## CIS Glen Eira Highlights

### New partnerships with Food Rescue Service FoodFilled Inc.

We have developed a new partnership with FoodFilled Inc enabling us to expand our offering of fresh fruit, vegetables and frozen meat.

### Increased local donations and grants

We received over \$42,000 in additional funding via government grants, philanthropic trusts and local community groups and individuals.

### Market Stall – Pilot

Developed as an adjunct service to enhance our existing ER program, this market runs as a drop-in model to support residents experiencing food insecurity one day per week. This program provides fresh veggies, fruit, some basic grocery items and other items as they become available such as blankets, period products, pet food and toiletries.

### Weekend Food Parcel Program – Pilot

We have developed a new partnership with a local church – St Agnes Anglican Church, Glen Huntly. Each week we pack and deliver approximately 12 food parcels. These food parcels provide opportunities for Glen Eira residents to access food over the weekend, and on Monday, when our doors are closed. We have met several times with St Agnes and are working closely with them to raise funding for this program, with a planned "Curry and Hopper Night" for early October, in which all profits will go to fund this program.

### Energy Compare Outreach

Delivered by a volunteer with a professional background in the energy sector, this program is run from Carnegie Library, one day per week. Initially introduced as a pilot, the success of the program has

seen it become a permanent fixture. We provide free and independent assistance to find, compare and switch energy offers to support the Glen Eira Community.

The program aims to facilitate the switching process, handle the paperwork and provide advocacy or assistance with communicating with the provider, as required. Our target client groups include those with low computer literacy, no access to technology, people with a disability or those from a CALD background.

### Extra support for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness

With an increase in the number of people accessing our service who are sleeping rough or having trouble accessing housing support, we have explored ways to improve referral pathways with specialist services and partnered with Bolton Clarke Homeless Persons Service, with an Outreach worker onsite one day per week.

### Volunteers of Glen Eira

This program delivers volunteer support services in and around the Glen Eira municipality. We assist individuals in finding suitable volunteering opportunities, provide information to individuals and groups about volunteering, assist volunteer-involving organisations with information and support, and promote and celebrate volunteering throughout the community. This year we were able to enrich the service by focusing on inclusivity and accessibility, offering face-to-face interviews for people seeking volunteer roles, and refining the administration and communication processes.

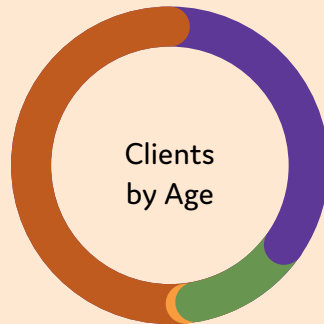
### Staff changes

Our Administration Support Worker resigned after almost 15 years of dedicated service. This provided an opportunity to explore a new staffing structure and we introduced a new role, Community Support Team Leader. Both this worker and the Branch Coordinator now work 3-days per week.

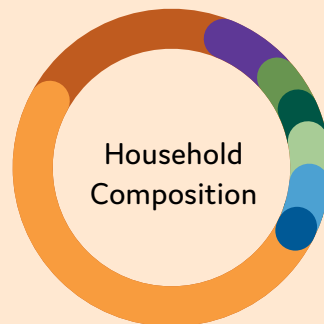
## CIS Glen Eira Emergency Relief Stats



- 50% Female
- 49% Male
- 1% Non-binary/  
not-stated



- 1% 0-19
- 30% 20-39
- 54% 40-64
- 15% 65+



- 44% Single
- 19% Sole parent
- 9% Group – unrelated
- 7% Couple with dependent children
- 7% Group – related
- 6% Couple
- 5% Homeless
- 3% Other

## The Top 5:

### Accommodation types

Private rental

Public rental

Owner (no mortgage)

Supported accomm.

Owner (mortgage)

### Reasons for seeking assistance

Need for Food

Cost of utility bills

Housing costs

Medical expenses

Material aid (clothing)

### Suburb of Residence

Carnegie

Glen Huntly

Bentleigh East

Caulfield South

Caulfield North

### Languages spoken at home

English

Russian

Spanish

Ukrainian

Mandarin



### Case study 1 – John

John attended feeling overwhelmed about a number of issues including becoming homeless, no income or Centrelink, and being unable to pay his bills and having had his mobile phone cut off.

He attended several appointments where we assisted him in a number of ways including meeting his immediate need for food, providing information about other community resources, assisting him to complete a Police Check and a Stat Dec which enabled him to get Identification to meet his Centrelink mutual obligation requirements by volunteering. We were also able

to pay his electricity bill and organised for him to be on the best plan with his current provider.

A short time later John was evicted from his rental property. We referred him to our Bolton Clarke Homeless Person's Outposted Worker, who was able to support John to register with the local housing support service, where he was referred to Community Housing, where he was able to secure suitable and safe housing. John now reports that he is confident about the future.

### Case study 2 – Jes

Jes first attended the service in 2022, where she reported having lost her job the previous year, resulting in her having to move to shared housing and was struggling to feed herself. Jes also reported living with a significant mental health issue which she stated was the main reason she was unable to maintain employment.

She also struggled with poor memory, making it difficult to attend appointments consistently. To address food insecurity, we provided Jes with groceries on a regular basis and she now attends our weekly Fresh Food Market. Jes has also returned to study and we were able to support her by funding a laptop.

### Case study 3 – Pete

Pete has experienced food insecurity for an extended period of time and has been receiving food relief from our service since 2015. This year he was unable to maintain secure housing and fell into homelessness. We were able to address his immediate needs by providing a mobile phone (to assist with safety and maintain relationships and connections) and provided him with a sleeping bag to help keep him warm, as he was living in a garage without electricity. We also suggested a referral to our local housing

support service (which he declined). Pete shared that he is struggling with dependency issues and lives with a significant mental health issue. We offered to refer him to appropriate community supports, however he reported that he is not ready to engage. We will continue to provide him with parcels of food, that he can manage in his current circumstances and practical items such as blankets, beanies and scarves and are always here to listen carefully and provide support when needed.

## CIS Glen Eira Client Feedback

"What as a community would we do without CIS? So grateful for your invaluable help. Never feel judged or bad for coming in. Thank you so very much. (The support worker) was wonderful."

**"I came in sad and stressed and I left feeling uplifted and with hope in my heart."**

"This service has been super helpful in my journey. (The support worker) couldn't have been more helpful in assisting me in getting what I needed. Whether it was services assistance, food assistance or getting approved for Centrelink. I couldn't recommend this service any higher than I do. Thank you."

"Been to many services, but CIS is the best, (they) actually care and follow up with things. (They send) messages when required, always supportive and referral communication is really good."

"I was at CIS yesterday. A lot of work had been done. Thank you very much for your assistance in reducing electricity and gas bill. Your work is very important for pensioners who don't speak English and do not use computer. Thanks very much to (the support worker) who assisted me today."

# CIS Merri-bek FY24

CIS Merri-bek is a free and confidential information and support service for people who reside in the City of Merri-bek. We are a place-based generalist service, operated as a branch of the peak body CISVic. We have two part-time paid staff and 14 volunteers.

## Services we provide:

- Information, Advocacy & Referral
- Emergency Relief – Food Support (food parcels and supermarket gift cards)
- Material & Financial Assistance
- Case Work
- Utility Bill Assistance
- Education Assistance Program

Clients assisted with ER: 3,842

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Distributed kgs of food: 10,508

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Halal Food Boxes: 123

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Pre-made meals for clients: 2,880

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Education Support: 27

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Utility Relief Grants: 99 Applications

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Placements offered to TAFE and University students: 16

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## CIS Merri-bek Highlights

### Core Funding

We have gratefully received \$50,000 per annum to support our operations from the City of Merri-bek. This is a new 3 year funding arrangement which will ensure we can continue to deliver critical support services to people in need.

### Food parcels

We have been offering 44 appointments for food parcel's each week and this has been well received by our community. We are fully booked each week. Providing a supermarket style of shopping where people choose their own produce and individual time to do so has enabled us to have brief conversations with people that is leading to further appointments being scheduled for more in-depth assistance.

### Increased Student Placements

We have developed strong relationships with local TAFEs and RMIT University which has allowed us to expand our student placement offerings and. CIS Merri-bek offers a diverse and rich student learning environment and students help us to deliver services, particularly when volunteers are in short supply. During this period, we had 16 students.

### Strong Partnerships

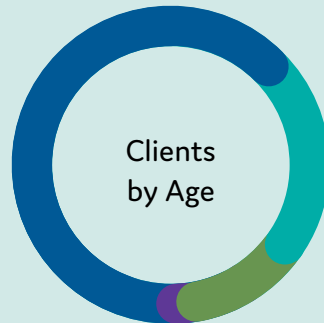
We work with a range of organisations to ensure we can meet the needs of the local community. These include Foodbank Victoria, Halal Foodbank, Pets for the Homeless, Big Group Hug, Les Twentyman Foundation, The Queens Fund, Thread Together, KOGO, The Nappy Collective, Street Smart and Share the Dignity.



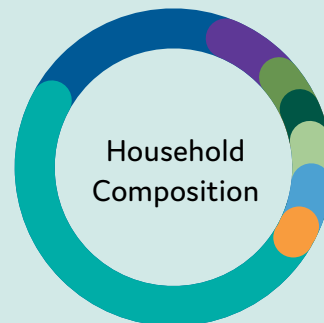
## CIS Merri-Bek Emergency Relief Stats



- 59% Female
- 40% Male
- 1% Non-binary/not-stated



- 1% 0-19
- 28% 20-39
- 56% 40-64
- 15% 65+



- 40% Single
- 19% Sole parent
- 10% Couple with dependent children
- 8% Couple
- 8% Group – related
- 6% Group – unrelated
- 5% Unknown
- 4% Homeless

## The Top 5:

### Accommodation types

Private rental

Public rental

Owner (no mortgage)

Supported accomm.

Owner (mortgage)

### Reasons for seeking assistance

Need for Food

Cost of utility bills

Housing costs

Medical expenses

Material aid (clothing)

### Suburb of Residence

Coburg

Brunswick

Glenroy

Fakner

Brunswick West

### Languages spoken at home

English

Arabic

Persian

Pashto

Greek

## Acknowledgments

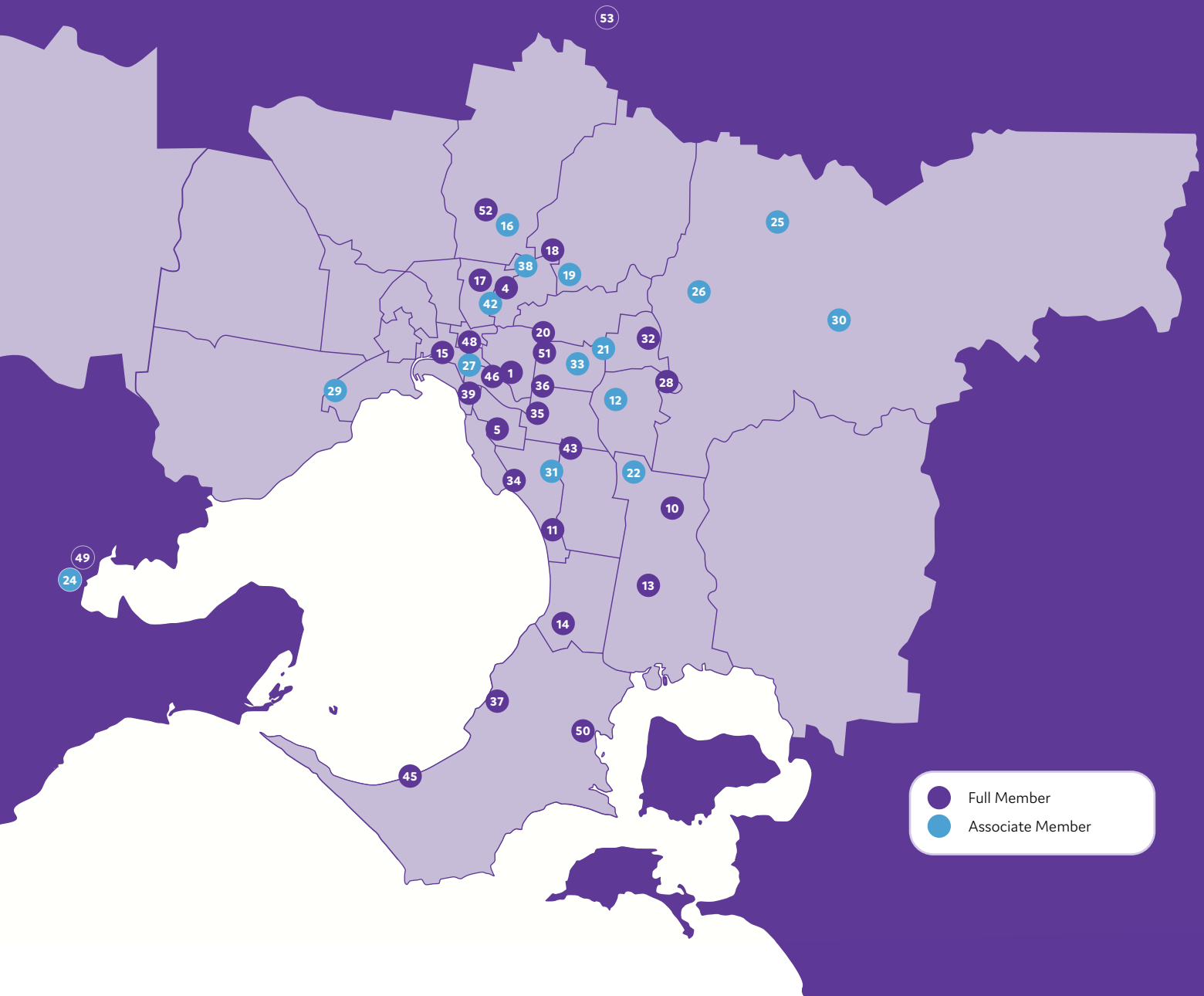
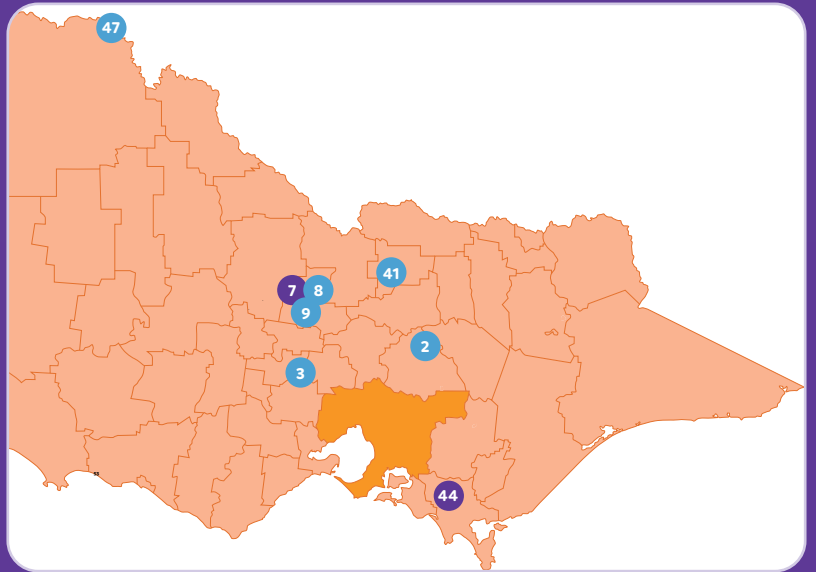
Thank you for supporting the work of our organisation and members.

Alex Makes Meals  
ATN Business Services  
Australian Council of Social Services  
Bentleigh Moorabbin Central Rotary Club  
Bolton Clarke  
Bright Sparqe  
Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation  
Carnegie Library  
Carnegie Lions Club  
Caulfield Gardening Club  
Caulfield South Community House  
Community Park Caulfield Park- Bendigo Bank  
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action  
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing  
Department of Social Services  
Ego Pharmaceuticals  
Eva Burrows College  
Foodbank Victoria  
Foodbank Victoria  
FoodFilled inc  
Freemasons Community Relief  
GIVIT  
Glen Eira Council  
Glen Huntly Anglican Church  
Glen Huntly Community Pharmacy  
Glen Huntly Woolworths  
Infoxchange  
Jobs Australia  
John Wurzel and Co.  
Joining Threadz  
Kogo  
Lions Club of Moorabbin

Melbourne Magistrates Court  
Merri-bek Council  
Moorabbin Lions Club  
MP David Southwick  
MP Nick Staikos  
MP Zoe Daniels  
Mr Gavin O'Dee  
ONETOO  
Ormond Anglican Church  
Oz Harvest Melbourne  
PCs for Kids  
Pets of the Homeless Australia  
Rotary Club of Bentleigh Moorabbin Central  
Russell Kennedy Lawyers  
Share the Dignity  
Souper Kitchen and Bistro  
State School Relief  
StreetSmart  
The Bread Roll Shop- Ormond  
The Glen Eira Community  
The Holland Foundation  
The Posh Op Shop  
The Queen's Fund  
The Reconnect Program  
The Sourdough Man  
The Walter and Eliza Hall Trust  
Uniting Church Bentleigh  
Victorian Council of Social Services  
Victorian Managed Insurance Authority  
Volunteering Victoria  
WIZO VICTORIA - Masada  
Yarra Ranges Council



# Members



- Full Member
- Associate Member

## Members

- 1 Access Health & Community (Camcare)
- 2 Albury Wodonga Regional Foodshare
- 3 Ballarat Foundation United Way Inc.
- 4 Banyule Support and Information Centre Inc
- 5 Bayside Community Information And Support Service Inc
- 6 Bellarine Community Support Register (No Location)
- 7 Bendigo Family and Financial Services Incorporated
- 8 Bendigo Foodshare Inc
- 9 Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre Inc
- 10 Casey North Community Information & Support Service Inc.
- 11 Chelsea Community Support Service Inc
- 12 Citylife Community Care Inc
- 13 Community Information & Support Cranbourne Inc
- 14 Community Support Frankston Inc
- 15 Council of Single Mothers and Their Children Inc
- 16 Countrywide Community Missions Victoria Inc
- 17 Darebin Information Volunteer & Resource Service Incorporated
- 18 Diamond Valley Community Support Inc
- 19 Diamond Valley Foodshare Inc
- 20 Doncare Community Services
- 21 Eastern Emergency Relief Network
- 22 Endeavour Ministries
- 23 Friends For Good (No Location)
- 24 Geelong Food Relief Centre Inc
- 25 Healesville Interchurch Community Care Incorporated
- 26 Holy Fools Incorporated
- 27 IndianCare
- 28 Knox Infolink
- 29 Laverton Community Integrated Services Inc
- 30 LinC Church Services Network Yarra Valley Inc
- 31 Make a Difference Dingley Village Inc
- 32 Maroondah Community Assist Inc
- 33 Melbourne East Disability Advocacy Inc
- 34 Mentone Community Assistance and Information Bureau Inc
- 35 Monash Oakleigh Community Support and Information Service Incorporated
- 36 Monash Waverley Community Information and Support Inc
- 37 Mornington Community Information and Support Centre Incorporated
- 38 North East Citizen Advocacy Inc
- 39 Port Phillip Community Group Limited
- 40 Regional Food Security Alliance Inc. (No Location)
- 41 Shepparton Foodshare Incorporated
- 42 Somali Australian Council of Victoria
- 43 South East Community Links Inc
- 44 South Gippsland Citizens Advice Bureau
- 45 Southern Peninsula Community Support Inc
- 46 Stonnington Community Assist Incorporated
- 47 Sunraysia Information & Referral Service Inc
- 48 Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania)
- 49 Volunteering Geelong Inc
- 50 Western Port Community Support Inc
- 51 Whitehorse Emergency Relief and Support Inc
- 52 Whittlesea Community Connections Inc



**CISVic**

Community Information  
& Support Victoria

**Community Information and Support Victoria**

1134 Glen Huntly Rd, Glen Huntly, Vic, 3163

**Call** 9672 2000

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**Email** [admin@cisvic.org.au](mailto:admin@cisvic.org.au)

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**Visit** [www.cisvic.org.au](http://www.cisvic.org.au)

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