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Children suffer as families unable to pay school costs

Many Victorian families are facing financial crisis and struggling with their children's education costs.

CISVic agencies are being inundated with requests for help with books, uniforms, laptops, school fees, camps, swimming lessons and other school costs.

"The stories are pretty much similar; the costs of books and uniforms are high, and for secondary school students add another few hundred dollars for a computer device, and it's quite difficult to manage if you are already struggling financially" according to one agency.

"In these situations it is the children who suffer, as they are often excluded from school life as well as education activities" said Kate Wheller, Executive Officer of CISVic.

"Typical is one request for assistance with the cost of a uniform so that the daughter felt like she belonged and didn't draw attention to herself by looking different on her first day at a new school".

"Much of the family anxieties centred around financial disadvantage experienced by their children and the effect on their relationships formed through school interactions" said one financial counsellor.

"We all think it's appalling that school is not free", according to another CISVic agency struggling to keep up with demand from parents to support their children's education.

CISVic supports VCOSS's call for the Victorian Government to:

1. Establish a subsidy scheme to help families experiencing disadvantage pay for sport or recreation.
<https://vcoss.org.au/news/victoria-please-help-all-kids-access-sport/>
2. Provide secure funding to the State Schools' Relief organisation and top-up funding for the *Camps, Sports and Excursion Fund*, programs that provide much-needed financial assistance. Existing funding for both will run out at the end of 2019.



CISVic is the peak body representing local community information and support services. These services assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support, including emergency relief. CISVic delivers over \$2million of emergency relief annually to people in need.

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

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