# Back to school-Meeting the costs



This information sheet provides suggestions on assistance available to help you meet the cost of your children's education. Some information has been drawn from the Victorian Department of Education and Training's new Parent Payment Policy. For more information go to http:// www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpayments.aspx

Revised Jan 2017

## **Victorian Government Parent Payment Policy**

This policy aims to ensure that all children attending a Victorian Government School have access to the standard curriculum program (including VCE, VCAL & VET) free of charge regardless of their financial situation. Schools may set their own programs and payments but the costs associated with the administration, coordination and instruction of the standard curriculum must not be charged to parents.

You may be asked to pay for essential learning items deemed essential to student learning in the standard curriculum including text books, stationery and school uniforms. Parents have the option of purchasing equivalent material from other sources in consultation with the school. Optional items are items or services that are offered in addition to the standard curriculum, which you are not obligated to pay. These may include school magazines, class photos, music tuition, functions, formals and fees for guest speakers. Parents can be invited to make a voluntary financial contribution towards a building or library fund but these are optional contributions. A full description of the Victorian Government Parent Payment policy is here. http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/

Pages/parentpaymentfaqs.aspx

## Talk to your school

If you are experiencing hardship, speak to the School Welfare Officer, Principal or nominated parent payment contact person about support options available. These may include but are not limited to:

- Payment options including waiving or reducing fees, deferring payments, extending deadlines, flexible payment plans, cost saving alternatives & referrals to government and community assistance programs;
- Referrals to State Schools' Relief (see below);
- Assistance with second hand text books or text book hire schemes:
- Access to a personal device during times where a device is required at school where a device has not been purchased or leased by the family;
- Interpreting and translation services.

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/ Pages/families.aspx

#### Uniform and school shoes assistance

State Schools' Relief (SSR) provides assistance with uniforms, shoes & other essential items to students in need who are attending a Victorian government school. In 2017, Prep & Year 7 recipients of the Camps Sports & Excursion Fund (CSEF) automatically qualify for a uniform voucher/pack through SSR. Speak

to your Principal or School Welfare Officer to apply.

Clk2sell: Buy and sell secondhand school items. clk2sell.com/

#### **Travel Costs**

Conveyance Allowance Program (CAP): Financial assistance to help families in rural and regional Victoria with the cost of transporting their children to their nearest appropriate government, non-government or specialist school/campus. The allowance is also available to eligible students whose nearest school is not serviced by a free school bus. Applications are made through the school. education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/finance/pages/ conveyance.aspx

**Student Concession Cards:** Public Transport Victoria can advise on student travel and concessions available. For further information call 1800 800 007 or go to: ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/concessions/students/

Travellers Aid: Pathways to Education program can provide assistance with travel costs in limited circumstances for disadvantaged students attending school at an alternative setting and who are at risk of disengaging from education. Referrals are made by the school.

travellersaid.org.au/our-services/pathways-education

## **Government Assistance**

Camps, Sports & Excursions Fund: Financial assistance provided by the Victorian Government and paid to the school to assist eligible families to cover the costs of camps, sport and excursions. Contact your school for application forms. education.vic.gov.au/csef

Schoolkids Bonus: The final instalments of the bonus were paid in January and July 2016. If you did not receive them, eligible families receiving Family Tax Benefit Part A for a dependent child have until 30 June 2017 to update their child's education details to receive the final payment. humanservices.gov.au/customer/ enablers/notification-time-limits-schoolkids-bonus

Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme: Help for students who cannot attend an appropriate state school due to geographical isolation, disability or special health needs. You can claim a payment to assist with the cost of home schooling your children. humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/assistancefor-isolated-children

Jet Child Care Fee Assistance (JETCCFA): Helps with the cost of approved child care for eligible parents undertaking an approved activity such as work, study, training or job search. JETCCFA is only available if you are receiving the maximum rate of Child Care Benefit and an eligible income support payment. You will need to pay a co-contribution to your child care service and any hours you use over your entitlement will incur the full cost. For more information call 136 150. humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/jobseducation-and-training-child-care-fee-assistance

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC): OSHC provides care for primary school age children outside school hours, during school holidays and on student free days. Talk to your school about what is available. There may be limited school holiday care available for children of secondary school age. Check with your local council for availability in your area.

## **Equipment**

Information about the rules around computers is here: <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpaymentdevices.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpaymentdevices.aspx</a>

**Low cost computers**: There are a number of groups providing low cost refurbished computers to people on low incomes including:

• Computerbank: (03) 9600 9161

computerbank.org.au GreenPC: (03) 9418 7452

greenpc.com.au

WorkVentures ConnectIT: 1800 112 205

workventures.com.au

**Internet Shopping:** Websites may be able to help with second hand items or cheap options for new books. Some of these are:

- States Schools' Relief clk2sell clk2sell.com
- The Sustainable School Shop: sustainableschoolshop.com.au/
- School Xchange: schoolxchange.com.au
- Angus & Robertson Bookworld:
- bookworld.com.auBook Depository:bookdepository.com

## Selling sites:

- E-bay <u>ebay.com.au</u>
- Gumtree gumtree.com.au

**Stationery shops** may be cheaper than school ordering. Officeworks will price match and even give a small discount if their advertised price is the more expensive.

## Student Scholarships

The Department of Education and Training (DET) administers a range of student scholarships available to primary, secondary and tertiary students. <a href="mailto:eduweb.vic.gov.au/scholarships/">eduweb.vic.gov.au/scholarships/</a>

## **Community Organisations**

#### **Smith Family Learning for Life**

Families are referred by a community agency or school for Learning for Life Scholarships in select locations. Families must meet specific eligibility criteria. For information contact (03) 9473 4300.

thesmithfamily.com.au/what-we-do/our-work/supporting-communities-in-need

#### **Opening the Doors Foundation**

Education assistance for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in an independent educational institution in Victoria. <a href="mailto:openingthedoors.org.au">openingthedoors.org.au</a>

### A Start in Life

Provides financial assistance to disadvantaged students and families to ensure they can access the same learning opportunities as their peers. For information phone (02) 9264 3017. <a href="mailto:asstartinlife.org.au">asstartinlife.org.au</a>

#### The Queen's Fund

Financial assistance with the cost of educational expenses for children through their Education Fund. <a href="mailto:queensfund.org.au">queensfund.org.au</a>

#### **Good Shepherd Microfinance**

Provides affordable financial programs for people on low or limited incomes that may assist families to afford educational costs and other expenses. The *No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)* provides access to fair and safe credit (up to \$1,200) for essential educational items. goodshepherdmicrofinance.org.au/

#### Saver Plus

Provides financial education and up to \$500 in matched savings for education costs for individuals and families who have some regular income from work. For information phone 1300 610 355. bsl.org.au/services/money-matters/saver-plus/

## Community Information & Support Victoria (CIS Vic)

Some member agencies provide support to families through their *Back to School Program*. Emergency relief, information and support is also available for families in need. <a href="mailto:cisvic.org.au/node/251">cisvic.org.au/node/251</a>

#### **School Breakfast Clubs**

Offers a healthy breakfast for children in disadvantaged primary schools. <a href="mailto:education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/">education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/</a>
<a href="Pages/breakfastclubs.aspx">Pages/breakfastclubs.aspx</a>

### **Further information and resources**

#### **Reducing School Costs**

Australian Securities and Investments Commission's (ASIC) Money Smart website has some useful information on how to reduce school costs and includes a comprehensive online budget planner to help families work out their school expenses. moneysmart.gov.au/life-events-and-you/families/reducing-back-to-school-costs