

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 838**

**PRESS RELEASE
STATE SCHOOL RELIEF PRESS RELEASE
COVID-19 highlighting inherent inequality in education
23 April 2020**

State Schools' Relief providing laptops and internet connectivity to at-risk Year 12 students as schools move to distance education model

State Schools' Relief, with support from the Victorian State Government, are providing technological devices and internet connectivity to financially disadvantaged VCE students as schools transition to a distance education model due to COVID-19.

Only 68% of children aged 5 to 14 in Australia's most disadvantaged communities access the internet at home, compared with 91% of students from the most advantaged communities.

As schools implement a distance education model, the demand for uniforms and shoes will dramatically reduce which has provided State Schools' Relief with the opportunity to redirect funds into assisting families who are unable to afford the cost of a device and internet connectivity, with financially disadvantaged Year 12 students being prioritised first.

Sue Karzis, CEO of State Schools Relief, states that the cost of a device can be prohibitive for families who are already struggling with the costs of living and by providing at-risk children with access to the technology to continue their education at home, will help alleviate some of the financial burden for them.

“State Schools' Relief, with the support of the state government, is pleased to be able to offer Year 12 students support with learning devices and internet connectivity during such a crucial period in their learning.”

“In what is our 90th year, we continue to remove barriers to learning for young people struggling with challenging circumstances. State Schools' Relief began assisting in 1930, during the Great Depression. 90 years on, we continue to be a source of vital assistance for over 60,000 Victorian students per year,” she says.

The VCOSS Victorian Budget Submission 2020-21 estimated that the out of pocket cost for a child or young person attending a state government primary

school in metropolitan Melbourne in 2019 was \$3,841. For secondary education, the cost was \$5,368.

In addition, 7.3% of Victorian households (180,000 households) persistently struggle to pay their energy bills and most people seeking emergency relief need support to pay their electricity bills, buy food, clothe children, pay rent or make mortgage repayments which has only been exacerbated with the recent spike in unemployment.

As a result of COVID-19 relief organisations have seen a spike in requests for help with educational costs including uniforms, books excursions and internet connection.

State Schools' Relief will be providing:

- *Lenovo 11E laptops (in line with DET specifications). Applications for these devices will not be received for students in Year 12 from targeted schools who have no access to a device in the first instance. Dependent upon demand, the devices will then be offered to other year levels.*
- *Internet USBs with 50GB of data per month (for 3 months). Applications for these USBs will only be received for students who have no access to home internet.*
- *Study packages comprising of a desk and chair (suitable for secondary students).*
- *Standard stationery package for primary and secondary students.*

Teachers of at-risk students are encouraged to apply for this assistance via the State Schools Relief website <https://ssr.net.au/schools/>. Applications are open from 22nd April 2020.

For further information, interviews or photo opportunities, please contact Chiquita Searle e: chiquita@chiquita.com.au p: 0423 686 380

Available for Interview:

Sue Karzis, CEO, State Schools Relief

About State Schools' Relief

<https://ssr.net.au/>

Established in Elsternwick in 1930, State Schools' Relief is a Victorian-based not for profit organisation that supports the needs of financially disadvantaged school students by providing them with new school uniforms, footwear and educational resources during times of vulnerability. In 2018/19, SSR assisted over 56,000 children and young people in need, with the number and value of items distributed exceeding 210,000 and \$6.3M respectively.

The not for profit is the only one of its kind in Australia and recently appointed its first female CEO, Sue Karzis, who is driving the roll-out of SSR's own uniform label, Student's Choice, which enables the charity to clothe three children for the price of one.

Through its establishment of innovative production processes and relationships with a range of sponsors including the Department of Education and Training (DET), AEU, Bank First and Bank Australia, SSR has been able to impact 79% of primary schools, 96% of secondary schools and 91% of P-12 schools, totalling 83% of all Victorian state schools during 2018. In the 2018/19 financial year 195 schools donated over \$135,000 through a range of school based fundraising activities. In 2020, the not for profit is on track to impact over 70,000 underprivileged state school children.

Link to State Schools Relief logo: <https://bit.ly/2B9zLzE>

Link to State Schools Relief Backgrounder: <https://bit.ly/2rvCQpe>

Link to State Schools Relief 2017/18 Annual Report:

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