



SJC *speaking*

Social Justice Committee

Back to School and education assistance - a quick guide

With the start of each year many low income families find themselves struggling with education costs. Detailed below are some of the assistance schemes that are available to assist these households.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING:

EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) - Provides assistance to low income families by helping with the costs associated with the education of their children. Schools are responsible for communicating the availability of EMA to eligible families. Parents need to complete an application form.

Eligibility: Parents with health care card or pension care cards of children under 16 years old and must be attending government or registered school in Victoria.

Amount: Annual- \$235 for Primary School and \$470 for Secondary School

EMA amount is paid in two instalments and with both instalments, half is paid to the parent and the remainder paid to the school. **For more information:** www.education.vic.gov.au/management/financial/ema/

School Start Bonus – Is a one off payment available to those who are eligible for the EMA to help with the extra costs associated with starting primary or secondary education. A voucher will be distributed by the school using enrolment information. Mid January to end of March

Eligibility: When your child is starting Prep or Year 7

Amount: \$300 per student

ETR (Education Tax Refund) is a federal government initiative to help families with the costs of certain education expenses, including school uniforms, laptops, home computer and software, internet connection, printers, school text books and prescribed trade tools. School fees are not eligible items.

How: If you are required to lodge a tax return, you must claim the ETR at item T6 in your 2010/11 individual tax return.

Eligibility: you must be entitled to Family Tax Benefit Part A for any child undertaking primary or secondary school studies whose education expenses you wish to claim, or do not receive Family Tax Benefit Part A for your child undertaking primary or secondary school studies and have a pension or health care card OR are an eligible independent student

Amount: Eligible parents, guardians and independent students claim 50% of their eligible education expenses. For the 2010–11 tax year refunds may be as much as \$397 for every child at primary school, and up to \$794 for every child at secondary school. The amount of the refund increases each year by the Consumer Price Index.

For more information: www.educationtaxrefund.gov.au or phone the Australian Taxation Office on 13 28 61.

OTHER ASSISTANCE

State School Relief Committee (SSRC) Provides funds available for disadvantaged students attending government schools to purchase new clothing and footwear.

To apply an application form must be submitted by the school Principal

Eligibility: Children and families who cannot access clothing and footwear due to circumstances like poverty, neglect, family violence and natural disasters.

Amount: Varies depending on need

For more information: Consult with Welfare staff and Principal at enrolled school <http://www.ssr.net.au>



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Traveller's Aid: Pathways to Education Program this provides students travel passes for young people who are experiencing financial difficulties to enable them to travel to school. To apply students need to call Traveller's Aid to make an appointment at their Southern Cross Station office (99 Spencer Street, Docklands)

Eligibility: Students under 25 years and must have a student concession card

Amount: Varies depending on cost of travel.

For more information: <http://www.travellersaid.org.au/node/13> or Call: 9670 2873

Sustainable School Shop Is an online service for families or schools to trade second hand school items. Parents can register online in order to browse, sell or purchase second hand school item including books, uniform etc School's can register online to compliment or extend their second hand services

Eligibility: Website is available for anyone to access *Note: User needs basic computer skills.*

For more information: Call: 1300 683 337 www.sustainableschoolshop.com.au

A Start in Life-Compass Program this is an education based charity providing long term educational scholarships for school essentials as well as dental and optical. "A Start in Life" also offers other scholarships for Indigenous students and talent specific funds (view on their website).

How: Parents/carers can fill in an application form online

Eligibility: In order to apply for the program students must be: Australian citizens, Engaged in full time education from Pre to a Tertiary qualification, under the age of 25 years; Receiving Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY if attending an Independent secondary school or Tertiary setting. While being financially assisted by the Program, Tertiary students must meet their course requirements and achieve at least a pass in all subjects per semester Families must reveal extensive information about their financial situation.

Amount: Varies depending on age of child, varying from \$500-\$1000 per year

For more information: (02) 9264 3017 or <http://www.astartinlife.org.au/index.html>

School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) (State wide, delivered by various agencies) this is a scheme providing Individual funding focusing on student engagement, covering education related expenses; to apply contact your local area SFYS representative and complete the application form. This application must be filled out by a school or agency on behalf of the family

Eligibility: Ages 10-18 students showing signs of disengagement from schooling or risk factors such as school refusal, homelessness, violence, bullying, social isolation etc.

Amount: Up to \$500 per student. Funds open throughout the year depending on availability.

For more information: www.sfys.foxchange.net.au

The social justice committee hopes that the information provided is useful to conferences.