



Federal Election Ask:



Funding for Workers

Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic) is the peak body representing local community information and support services. Our local services assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support services including Emergency Relief (ER).

Provide funding for professional staff in ER agencies

CISVic is asking for the federal government to provide funding for professional staff in every agency to support delivery of Emergency Relief programs.

The pandemic exposed the vulnerability of the predominantly volunteer workforce and we continue to experience significant staffing challenges, meaning that many sites are still not able to operate at pre-pandemic capacity.

While the large volunteer workforce of the Emergency Relief sector is a strength, it is also a challenge in a variety of ways. This has come into high prominence during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of an older cohort that is particularly vulnerable to the virus, there has been a decline in volunteers by almost 70 per cent.

Organisations that depend on volunteers continue to face challenges in attracting new volunteers, and in ensuring that rates of participation are adequate to provide a stable volunteer workforce. The sector is under resourced to support vulnerable people. A concern is that there may be compromises in the quality of support due to the lack of skilled staff, considering the complex social and health needs of some people seeking assistance.

There may also be time constraints in adequately supporting people who come to ER services for assistance. Many people seeking help are experiencing a myriad of complex and interrelated issues impinging on their health and wellbeing, and thus may require skilled staff who have the time to work with them. In this context it is important to note that ER funding does not usually cover operating and staffing costs.

The Victorian State Government initiative *Working for Victoria* enabled CISVic to employ 52 full-time professional staff to support the delivery of the ER programs for 6 months during the height of the pandemic. Our formal evaluation of this project demonstrated how this significantly increased agency capacity to meet individual and community needs and the clear need and value of such workers.

Costings

Annual cost: \$3.5 million

Costings based on 1 worker across all of CISVic's DSS funded ER agencies.

Annual cost of 1 Support Worker: \$100,000

CISVic's DSS funded ER agencies: 35