

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**VICTORIAN PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO DRESS
CODES AND SCHOOL UNIFORMS**

SUBMISSION

STATE SCHOOLS' RELIEF COMMITTEE INC.

BACKGROUND

The commitment of teachers to Social Service early in the 19th century laid the foundations for the development of the State Schools' Relief Committee Inc. [SSRC]

“The need to assist families of Mallee farmers left destitute by the 1902 drought caused the State Schools' Teachers Union [VTU] to establish a State Schools' Mallee Relief Fund. Nine hundred and seventy schools raised £1,546 which was distributed through the Mallee boards of advice in co-operation with local head Teachers”[1].

In “1906, the Victorian Head Teachers' Association organised the Bush Fire Relief Fund.”[2] The Association and teachers maintained active commitment to Social Service Work and the plight of students attending inner urban schools was recognised during the depression of the 1930s' and the Department asked the Union to assist. The VTU forwarded the request to the Head Teachers Branch and the Committee was formed on 12th June 1930.

In the early days SSRC established soup kitchens, and provided mainly second hand clothing to students in need.

The Department of Education [DoE] supported the SSRC at both central and district level. Inspectors of Schools appointed district representatives. The Department and the Union provided publicity. After 1940 the Department provided salaries, facilities and a small administration grant. A Service Agreement between the Department of Education and SSRC maintains that arrangement today.

The State Schools' Relief Committee is a unique charity that operates within the framework and support of the Government of the day. We acknowledge the great support of successive Governments

1 & 2. Vision and Realisation A Centenary history of State Education in Victoria General editor : L.J.Blake. Volume 1 Education Department Victoria 1973

CURRENT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

SSRC, now located in Burwood has a Board [called the Committee] and 8 staff. The staff comprises of 2 full time staff – including the manager - and 6 part time staff.

The “Committee” includes members from various educational organisations; Department of Education, Victorian Principals Association, Victorian Association of Principals of Secondary Schools, Australian Education Union (Primary and Secondary), Victorian Council of State School Organisations, The Association of School Councils in Victoria Inc., and Parent's Victoria. The Committee may co-opt 6 persons to the Committee due to their expertise or experience.

TAXATION OFFICE ENDORSEMENTS

SSRC is a Not for Profit organization and has the following endorsements from the Australian Taxation Office: -

- Endorsement as an income tax exempt charitable entity
- Endorsement as a deductible gift recipient.

FUNDING

As mentioned above The Department of Education provides, under a service agreement, staff/salaries, facilities and an annual administrative grant. This allows us to ensure that all money donated goes to our charitable function. ***No donated money goes to the administration / promotion or other non-charitable function of SSRC.***

We rely on donations from schools, business/corporate organisations, philanthropic trusts and individuals for most of our funding and grants for our funding.

The Community Support Fund granted SSRC a \$300,000 grant over the 05/06 and 06/07 financial years. [See Attachment 1 Annual Report 2006 P19 Auditors Report Revenue From Operating Activity]

AGREED PURPOSE OF SSRC

We believe our purpose is to: -

Support Government Schools' in the wellbeing of their students, by providing quality school wear to those in need.

PROVISION

SSRC provides new footwear, clothing, undergarments and socks through the delivery of stock we have purchased or buying authorising schools to arrange purchases. [See Appendix 1 State Schools' Relief Committee Primary and Secondary Allocation Limits April 2006]

Note 1 – Committee Allocation Limits were raised considerably last year and are still current.

Note 2 – Allocations may be exceeded in necessitous circumstances eg house fires, emergency relocation of families, refugees, critical family illness/death.....

LIMITS ON AUTHORISED ITEMS

The "Committee" set limits on the cost of each item that we authorise.

Staff survey the costs of uniforms in approximately 100 primary schools and 100 secondary schools. An average cost of a uniform item is established for each sector. Committee is advised of average costs and sets a price considering issues such as cost of item, number of that items issued per year, projected cost to committee of raising item cost, and anecdotal evidence of expressed need. For example windcheaters and short-sleeved polo shirts are items that are often requested. Committee raised its limit cost above the average, on these items to give greater no cost access to families on these items. Blazers are a high cost item and Committee lowered the limit cost below the average.

[See appendix 2]

LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE

Applications have increased this year by 341 when compared with the same period last year: -

- Number of applications Jan –April 06 – 3354
- Number of applications Jan – April 07 - 3695

Table 1

ACTUAL AUTHORISATIONS MADE AND STOCK DELIVERED

	2006	2007
AUTHORISATIONS PROMISED	\$298,033.90	\$412,074.80
STOCK ISSUED	\$65,714.96	\$59,602.58
TOTAL	\$363,748.86	\$471,677.38
	DIFFERENCE	PLUS \$107,928.52

The above figures are GST Exclusive

Total difference in authorisations and stock between 06 and 07 demonstrates an increase of \$107,928.52.

Authorisations

[What SSRC authorises retail outlets or school uniform shops to provide students]

- A significant increase of \$114 040.90 over the 4-month period.
- The increase in cost is attributed to: -
 - Committee increasing limits on item costs
 - Committee increasing quantities available for students.
 - An increase of 341 applicants over the period
 - Move from school shops to retail outlets [eg PSW]
 - An increase in the size of individual applications – i.e. each application requesting more items. - Need of families appears to be greater.
 - Fashion – a move to more expensive attire, resulting in more authorisations over stock issue.
- **The average cost rise per application over this period is \$19.20**
 - **Average cost per student 2006 - \$108.54**

- Average cost per student 2007 - \$127.65

Stock Issue

[What we supply to the student from our stock.]

Stock issue demonstrates a decrease of \$6,112.38. Reasons for the decrease may include: -

- Fashion, as above.
- Specific nature of uniforms – greater range of materials and design mitigates against us carrying stock.
- Schools being less flexible, eg design of grey trousers.

Since 1/7/2003 SSRC has provided over 74 000 items of footwear and clothing to students in Government schools.

[See Appendix 3 Summary Of Stock Supplied to Schools 1/7/2003 to 24 May 2007]

APPLICATION TRENDS – LAST 10 YEARS

Apart from 2006 applications have increased each year. Last year's reduced applications was as a result of a letter from the president and previous manager requesting compliance with our procedures and financial support.

Need is the reason for the increase in the number of applications so far this year and for the increase in the number of items requested in each application.

Table 2 below demonstrates the increase over the last 10 years.

Number of Student Applications Processed over the past 11 Calendar Years

Year	Primary	Secondary	Total
2007 (to 24/5/07)	1,619	2,661	4,280
2006	2,806	4,485	7,291
2005	3,103	4,320	7,423
2004	2,955	4,019	6,974
2003	2,912	3,951	6,863
2002	2,677	3,747	6,424
2001	2,418	3,873	6,291
2000	2,500	3,320	5,820
1999	2,318	3,048	5,366
1998	2,656	3,308	5,964
1997	2,500	2,989	5,489
Totals	26,845	37,060	63,905

If current trends continue we may be supporting in excess of 7500 applications. If cost per application continues @ \$128 [approx] the cost would exceed \$960 000.

ASSISTANCE BY REGION (FIRST FOUR MONTHS)

Table 3 & Table 4 - by region in the first four months of 06 and 07.

Region Assistance for period 24/1/06 – 24/5/06

Table 3

Region	No. of Applications	Value of Stock	Value Authorised	Total
Barwon	144	\$4,352.10	\$12,838.00	\$17,190.10
Eastern Metro	631	\$11,117.69	\$54,714.00	\$65,831.69
Gippsland	244	\$3,811.66	\$23,654.50	\$27,466.16
Grampians	89	\$3,301.98	\$6,212.45	\$9,514.43
Hume	135	\$2,334.17	\$10,145.00	\$12,479.17
Loddon Mallee	103	\$1,846.59	\$10,800.50	\$12,647.09
Northern Metro	997	\$14,844.34	\$94,215.95	\$109,060.29
Southern Metro	963	\$19,194.70	\$80,039.00	\$99,233.70
Western Metro	716	\$21,303.12	\$66,284.00	\$87,587.12
	4022	\$82,106.35	\$358,903.40	\$441,009.75

Region Assistance for period 22/1/07 - 24/5/07

Region	No. of Applications	Value of Stock	Value Authorised	Total
Barwon	179	\$4,473.63	\$15,250.00	\$19,723.63
Eastern Metro	527	\$8,138.57	\$53,268.00	\$61,406.57
Gippsland	183	\$1,713.56	\$21,245.40	\$22,958.96
Grampians	95	\$2,707.71	\$9,308.50	\$12,016.21
Hume	150	\$3,034.06	\$18,198.00	\$21,232.06
Loddon Mallee	139	\$2,496.15	\$16,490.50	\$18,986.65
Northern Metro	1203	\$13,546.10	\$136,511.40	\$150,057.50
Southern Metro	978	\$18,538.99	\$99,555.00	\$118,093.99
Western Metro	826	\$19,167.72	\$99,479.50	\$118,647.22
	4280	\$73,816.49	\$469,306.30	\$543,122.79

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE (SCHOOLS)

Table 5

Patterns of Income from Schools vs Expenditure on Footwear & Clothing over Recent Financial Years

Year	Income from Primary & Secondary Schools	Expenditure on Footwear & Clothing (GST exclusive)
2007 (up to 24/5/07)	\$190,144.00	\$631,012.00
2006	\$211,519.00	\$483,839.00
2005	\$144,139.00	\$532,435.00
2004	\$154,659.00	\$402,076.00
2003	\$159,969.00	\$382,713.00
2002	\$144,264.00	\$336,380.00
2001	\$107,470.00	\$303,263.00
2000	\$160,982.00	\$299,237.00
1999	\$227,971.00	\$251,640.00
1998	\$102,837.00	\$298,887.00
1997	\$120,361.00	\$219,974.00

SAMPLE SCHOOL UNIFORM COSTS

For the Inquiry's information we have included a sample of uniform costs from 6 primary and 6 secondary from both country and metropolitan schools. (See appendix 4)

The range in prices on an item may indicate the quality of the item, the type of branding eg, iron on logo, printed logos, embroidered logos, profit policy of school council, paid/unpaid staff etc.

NOTES

- SSRC believes costs are rising at an unsustainable (for us) rate. We also believe the rate is increasing with need.
- Some rapid increase in metropolitan areas can be attributed to the increase in refugee from the Horn of Africa and other places. SSRC believes if this is to continue, these costs should be covered by Immigration Department.
- It appears – through anecdotal evidence – that family/ carer needs are increasing as the apparent gap between the “haves” and “have nots” expands. This includes the new poor and previous clients. SSRC would appreciate support through Community Services.
- Non metropolitan regions use us less, as there is less connection with country regions. There may be a number of reasons for this, including the possible greater support in rural areas through community and government funding programs. Figures above (table 3 & 4) indicate an increased use
- Schools are compliant with our processes and use SSRC only when needed.
- SSRC believes that many worthy cases are not adequately attended to.
- SSRC believes it is the school council's responsibility to set uniform policy, including pricing, and support programs for families who are experiencing financial difficulties.
- SSRC receives many requests for support in the area of books. Given current financial constraints, SSRC is not in a position to expand its services at this stage.

- SSRC believes that with modifications to its operations (currently under review) we will have an efficient statewide network capable of delivering statewide services to all government schools in Victoria.
- SSRC is willing to work closely with other agencies for the efficient delivery of our services and in support of other agencies' services. For example, an agency may be working with a school and providing a number of services. We could attend to uniform probably at less cost than other agency practices, thus enabling financial resources to be utilised in other family support areas.

The Committee and Manager thank the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Dress Codes and School Uniforms for this opportunity. We wish the Inquiry well and remain happy at all times to attend to any queries you may have.

David Schmidt
Manager
State Schools' Relief Committee Inc.

Attachment 1. Annual Report 2006
Attachment 2. Brochure