

Twenty things you should know about Emergency Relief

- 1 People on low incomes are disproportionately affected by any price rises in housing, utilities and food prices.
- 2 FaHCSIA use a funding formula based on Centrelink numbers and Local Government Areas. Some geographic areas with high demand for ER, for example, St Kilda, are inversely affected by the funding formula. The area funding does not take account of the high numbers of aged pensioners, homeless and transient people. And funding has been moved from inner city to suburban LGA areas.
- 3 There is currently no money from FaHSCIA , available for agencies administering ER; for the costs of training, supporting and co-ordinating volunteers and staff.
- 4 First introduced by the Fraser Government, the amount of ER available, has not kept pace with Australia's growing population, or the increased costs of food and housing, growing faster than CPI. This results in a decrease, in real terms, of ER.
- 5 This effective decrease in funding is exacerbated further by the funding formula used by FaHSCIA .
- 6 Training volunteers and paid staff so they can administer, to a common standard, (ER Programme Guidelines 2007 Appendix B) adds expense to provision of ER. Common standards enhance outcomes for recipients but add pressure to underfunded agencies.
- 7 Volunteer agencies are absorbing the added costs of ER distribution, while at the same time producing a high quality service that respects the rights of the clients. This puts pressure on agencies, often dealing with diminishing numbers of ageing volunteers.
- 8 The provision of ER gives volunteers the opportunity to operate at a grassroots level, strengthening communities.
- 9 Improved funding of ER, both as an absolute amount, and in costs for support, training and co-ordination, will deliver better outcomes for clients.

- 10 Funding formula does not account for aged pensioners, transient or homeless people, or people on no income, for example people on e-bridging visa.
- 11 \$31.989 million Australia wide, \$7,257,111 (22.7%) for Victoria, with no money allocated for support, training or co-ordination of service delivery.
- 12 Training of volunteers and staff who distribute ER, have a better understanding of the causes of poverty.
- 13 In order for the ER fund to remain relevant, responsive and effective, meeting the community's expectations and needs, the funding formula should be investigated and increased.
- 14 ER can be given as:
 - Cash**, usually in the form of a cheque made out to cash,
 - Cheques/vouchers** made out to creditor on behalf of client, eg Telstra vouchers,
 - Food vouchers**, these sometimes have restrictions such as no cigarettes, (not FaHCSIA guidelines)
 - Food in kind**,
 - Transport assistance**,
 - Material aid** such as clothes,
 - Information and referral**, debt negotiation or advocacy services.FaHCSIA prefers funding through the ER Program to be distributed as cash/cheques or food vouchers.
- 15 90% of ER clients are of working age, with the largest group 25-29 years.
- 16 91% of ER clients are in receipt of income support.
- 17 60% women, 40% men apply for ER.
- 18 Young people, 10-17 years make up 7.5%
- 19 More than 80% ER applicants born in Australia.
- 20 Single unemployed people are the biggest number of clients followed by single parents.

Information sourced from:

ACOSS – Emergency Relief Handbook Version III
FaHCSIA presentation on ER 2007-2008, Paul Meertens
Course in Emergency Relief.