

a fairer victoria achievements so far

Strategy Six Making services more affordable

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Making services more affordable

Aim

Disadvantage and lack of opportunity is often accompanied by financial hardship, and this can compound day-to-day issues by making it difficult to access basic services and other essentials. A Fairer Victoria has provided additional assistance in meeting energy, travel and education costs. It has also helped people develop savings plans and get access to information online.

Helping reduce energy costs – now and into the future

Financial hardship can prevent families accessing essential utilities and can impact on children's wellbeing. We are providing rebates for the cost of replacing greenhouse-intensive and high cost heating, and helping low-income families pay their energy bills. So far, we have:

- provided over 4,000 low-income households with free energy efficient renovations that will help them save energy and money
- funded energy audits and retrofits of 1,000 homes occupied by pensioners in the *Neighbourhood Renewal* areas of West Heidelberg, East Reservoir, Delacombe, and Hastings
- assisted 753 families since 1999 with utility grants to help pay their energy bills, and
- provided 1,000 capital grants to assist with installing or replacing appliances.

New financial help and reducing costs

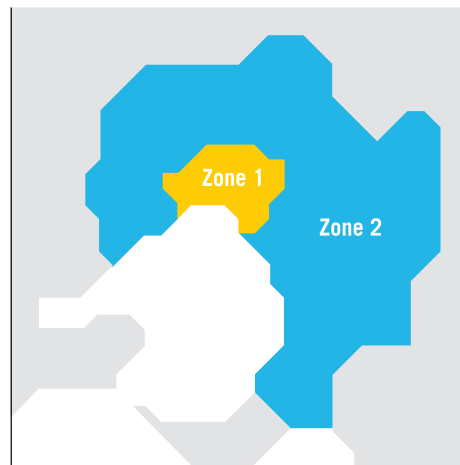
Many families struggle to manage money, save and meet basic living costs such as transport. Through A Fairer Victoria we have:

- helped 351 low-income families save for their children's education through the *Saver Plus* initiative with the ANZ Bank and the Brotherhood of St Laurence
- helped 16,333 primary and secondary school students obtain uniforms and footwear through the State Schools Relief Committee between 2005 and May 2007
- provided over 12,000 hours of free or affordable public internet access since November 2005 as part of the *Public Internet Access Program* by funding 88 different community organisations to upgrade internet services, and
- provided financial counselling to 38,000 people through the Department of Justice and the Financial Consumer Rights Council in 2006/07.

Reducing the costs of public transport

Victoria has the most generous public transport concessions in Australia. The extension of concession benefits to health care card holders ensures that people on low incomes can get cheaper public transport. Since March 2007 the *Fare Go* package has made public transport more affordable by:

- providing free travel in Zones 1 and 2 on public transport services across Melbourne for purchasers of a V/Line ticket to central Melbourne
- lowering public transport fares across regional Victoria, with an average 20 per cent reduction on V/Line tickets, and
- abolishing Zone 3 fares for public transport services across Melbourne, delivering savings to train users in outer Melbourne of between 21.4 and 45.7 per cent.



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