

Emergency Relief



GETTING STARTED EMERGENCY RELIEF & FOOD

What is Emergency Relief?

Material aid or emergency relief services provide basic everyday items. Things like food, clothes and furniture. Aid does not come in the form of cash. It is generally food parcels, cheap or free meals, cheap groceries, food vouchers, public transport tickets, clothes, household goods or furniture.

Emergency relief services have limited funding. They need to make choices about who they help and how often. Sometimes they can only help people from their local area.

They may only target particular groups of people or only provide assistance once every 6 months.

Where to find Emergency Relief

Local churches, community centres, housing services (THMs), Neighbourhood Houses, Centrelink Social Workers, op-shops and community health centres are good places to find information. If they don't have emergency relief themselves, they will know about services in the area that do. Councils and community health services often produce booklets about local sources of free or cheap food. Keep an eye out for these in waiting rooms and information centres.

How to get Emergency Relief

When you find a service it's a good idea to ring first for more information. Check that you are eligible. Ask what you have to do and when. They may not be able to help you on the day that you ring. Sometimes you will have to make an appointment.

Arrive early in the day or at the appointment time. Take ID with your address on it. They usually ask to see a Health Care Card or Pension Card. If you need help with utilities, take the bills with you.

If they can't help you, be polite – don't 'burn bridges' you might need to cross later. Ask if they know any other services that could assist.

Food

After getting three square meals each day in prison, making choices about food can be overwhelming. Where you shop and how will have a big impact on your hip pocket.

Eating out and packaged meals may be easier, but it costs too much to do every day. At the end of the day, cooking for yourself is always the cheapest option.

Knowing where to shop is half the challenge. This will depend on where you live, but the following general advice will help cut down costs.

- Think before you buy.
- Go for the cheapest item. This is often the shop's home brand. The price per kilogram or litre will be displayed on the shelf at Supermarkets.
- Convenience stores are the most expensive places to shop. Wholesalers are the cheapest.
- Markets are the best option for buying fruit and vegetables. Prices will be cheaper at closing time. Look out for local community markets.
- Specials and buying in bulk can save money but only if the food is used before it expires. Don't buy anything past its use by date. Don't buy food you can't store. Throwing away food is like throwing away money.
- Make a list before going shopping and stick to it. This helps to avoid impulse buying and will make shopping quicker.

If you don't have a proper kitchen you can still cook for yourself. You can do a lot with a health grill, microwave and kettle. You can also use public BBQs.

Free or cheap meals

If you are hungry and low on cash there are lots of ways to get free or cheap meals.

- Soup vans travel in the evenings to some inner city areas. They have hot food and drinks.
- Some homeless services or drop in centres have free or gold coin donation meals.

Emergency Relief



- Neighbourhood houses and community centres often have regular BBQ or social meals. They also run cheap or free cooking classes.
- You can get dry foods and canned goods from places like churches or community centres.

Emergency Relief Agencies

Emergency relief services change frequently. The Salvos and St Vinny's are two of the major statewide providers.

Salvation Army

The Salvos provide a range of emergency relief services. To get help, you need to go to the nearest branch. Look up 'Salvation Army' in the White Pages or phone 13 SALVOS (13 72 58).

Society of St Vincent De Paul (SVDP)

St Vinny's provide a range of emergency relief. Look up your nearest centre under St Vincent De Paul Centres of Charity in the White Pages or call 1300 305 330.

Community Information Centres

Community Information Centres (formerly called Citizen's Advice Bureaus) are located across Victoria. They offer a range of information and advice about the local area. Some will provide limited emergency relief, usually in the form of public transport tickets or food vouchers. Community Information Centres can also provide referrals to other useful services, including free or low-cost meal services in your area. To find the nearest one to you, look up Community Information Centres in the White Pages.

You can also call **CIVic (03) 9672 2000** for details of your local centre.

Travellers Aid Australia

Travellers Aid can help people in crisis with travel related needs. Call (03) 9670 2873 or look at their website for more info:

www.travellersaid.org.au

Financial Counselling

Emergency relief is not a long term solution to financial difficulties. If you frequently need emergency relief then it may help to speak to a financial counsellor.

They can also help with advocacy and advice about a range of debt and credit issues:

- Debt Renegotiation
- Debt Recovery
- Gambling Debts
- Budgeting
- Bankruptcy
- Superannuation

Credit Helpline 1800 803 800

(toll free)

They can provide general advice about credit and debt related problems, as well referring you to a free financial counselling service in your area.