

# EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011

## **Travellers Aid Australia**

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## ABOUT TRAVELLERS AID AUSTRALIA

At Travellers Aid Australia:

**Our Vision** is for travellers at the point of need to have access to services which are relevant and to assist in providing solutions with dignity.

**Our Mission** is to assist travellers at the point of need and to ensure that travellers reach their destination safely and confidently.

**Our Purpose** is to provide support, advice and assistance at the point of need to the travelling public with special requirements and to those in emergency situations.

**Our Values** are compassion, integrity and fairness. We are governed by and believe in displaying these values at all times to users of our services, our clients, our members, staff and volunteers.

### About our organisation

Travellers Aid Australia is a not-for-profit organisation with a proud 95-year history.

We provide vital services and dignified outcomes to travellers in need, including those with special needs and those facing emergency situations. Our clients include seniors, people with a disability, people with mobility challenges, students and their families, general public transport users and people facing financial disadvantage or unexpected emergency situations.

With a strong sense of social justice, we are committed to changing attitudes towards travel access and equity. We know that practical travel assistance can make a large difference to a person's participation in their everyday life.

Since 1916 we have dedicated ourselves to innovating and developing our services so that they best meet people's needs. Today they include:

- **Emergency Relief:** Transport options and advice to help travellers in emergency situations feel safe and empowered through subsidised travel tickets for medical, family, employment matters and other reasons, as well as information and referrals onto crisis accommodation and other supports
- **Pathways to Education:** Provision of myki, Metcard and V/Line tickets to enable disadvantaged students to attend school
- **Buggy and Personal Guidance Service:** Helping ensure safe passage at Southern Cross station for people with mobility needs
- **Travellers Aid Access Service (TAAS):** Free personal care assistance to travellers with a disability or seniors
- **Medical Companion Project:** Assistance for travellers getting to and from medical or health appointments

- **Mobility Equipment Hire:** Assisting people who are frail, aged or living with a disability through mobility aids
- **Internet Access:** Internet access for the general public with JAWS software available
- **Transport Information:** We also provide transport information and rest facilities for people in transit, as well as a professional meeting room in the heart of Melbourne's CBD for hire.

We deliver our services from two primary locations: Southern Cross station and Flinders Street station.

Our **Emergency Relief** service operates out of Southern Cross station. The hours of operation for our Emergency Relief service are 9.30 – 4pm on weekdays and 12 – 4pm on weekends.

## **PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

### **What is Emergency Relief and who is eligible for it?**

Unexpected things can happen despite the best laid plans. Our Emergency Relief (ER) program provides assistance to travellers who are disadvantaged or facing unexpected emergency situations to help them feel safe, dignified and able to deal with the challenges they face.

Our ER program provides people, including those who are stranded, vulnerable, distressed, disadvantaged, homeless or at risk of homelessness with practical relief such as:

- Information
- Referrals onto crisis accommodation and other supports on a case-by-case basis
- Subsidised travel tickets for medical, family crises, court matters, employment and many other reasons.

Circumstances when people may use our Emergency Relief service include when they are homeless and need access to crisis accommodation and other supports, need information on where to find assistance and how to get there, are escaping the threat of domestic violence, need support for a job interview, do not have enough money to visit their family for personal reasons such as funerals, are stranded or isolated due to natural disasters, need to travel for medical reasons, court matters or when they are victims of crime and lose their belongings.

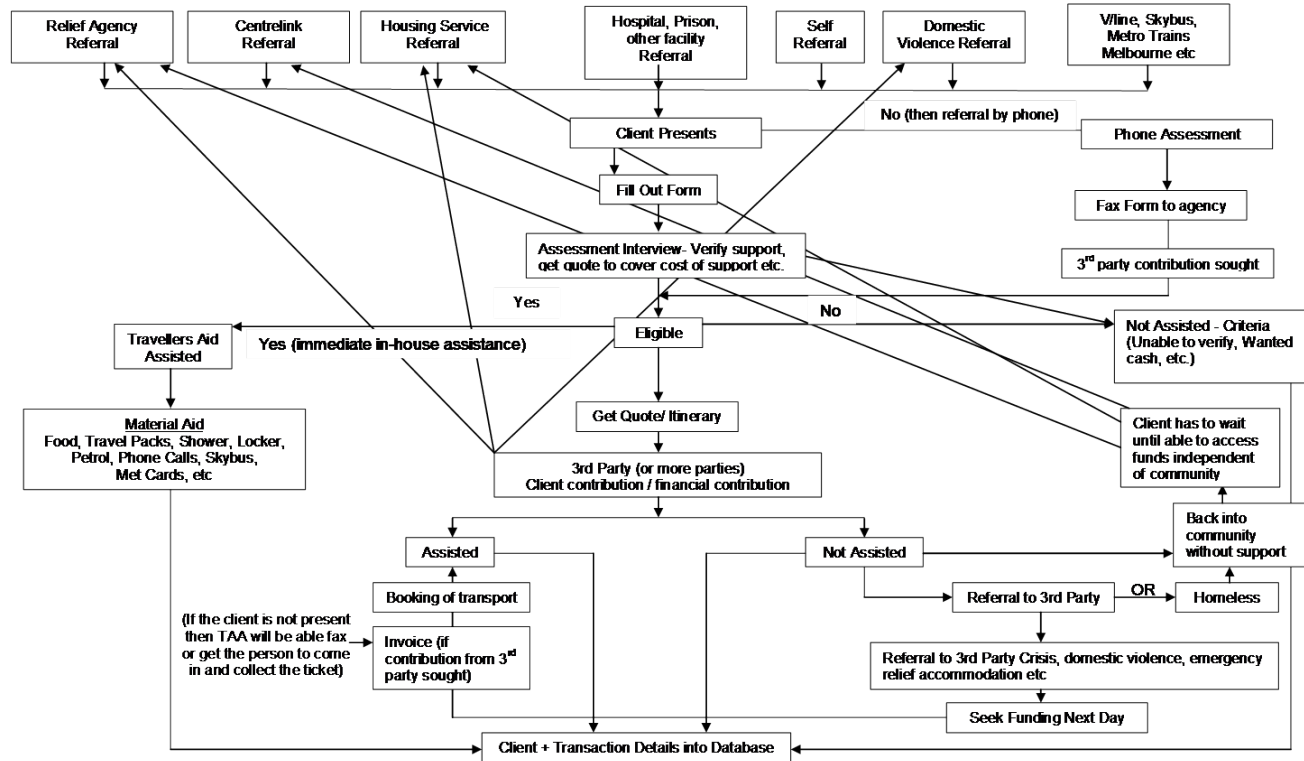
We generally require that clients or their referring agencies call ahead on an Emergency Relief specific phone number to discuss eligibility and appointment times.

### **What are the overarching objectives of Emergency Relief?**

The main objective of our Emergency Relief program is to get people to places of support. Re-uniting travellers and people in crisis with family, friends or other supports empowers them to deal with the hardships they are facing and fosters independence.

### **How does the program operate?**

Travellers Aid Australia's Emergency Relief service is an intensive program that assists people during their most challenging times. The service offered by our trained, expert staff varies depending on the need of the client who is presenting. The process is shown below:



### Who provides the service?

In 2010-2011 Travellers Aid Australia employed 1.3 EFT staff member to provide Emergency Relief advice and assistance over the available working hours of the service.

We employ staff who are skilled and experienced in providing our ER services. It is vital that they have a special combination of skills, expertise, approachability, resilience and empathy to provide assistance to people who are facing hardship.

The skills and expertise of our ER staff, including their qualifications in social work, community welfare and counselling are recorded in the *Our Staff & Support Services* section.

### How is the program evaluated?

In addition to month-to-month monitoring of the program, this report constitutes the end-of-financial year evaluation of the program. It helps ensure that program objectives are being met and patterns identified.

### How is the Emergency Relief program funded?

The program is funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), philanthropy, other agency and general donations. Notwithstanding V/Line who provide in-kind travel ticket support, we do not receive any funding from public transport operators or the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Southern Cross Station Pty Ltd and the Department of Transport also contribute to in-kind support via the provision of office and services accommodation at Southern Cross Station.

## SUMMARY

### Why is the program needed?

Research such as the report *Under Pressure: Costs of Living, Financial Hardship and Emergency Relief in Victoria (2009)* shows that people are suffering from increased costs of living pressures. Many people are seeking relief after having run out of food or money, while crisis and debt issues affect others who seek assistance. The need for affordable and sustainable public transport infrastructure is reinforced by the Whittlesea Community Connections *Emergency Relief Survey Report: A study into the reasons people seek emergency relief services*. This report notes that travel costs are the reason that 40% of surveyed respondents sought relief from their services, with debt repayments (20.8%) increasingly being another reason why people present for emergency relief. People and families are struggling with both ongoing and unexpected crises and financial hardship.

Reflecting this trend, Travellers Aid Australia has experienced an ongoing increase in demand for services in the Emergency Relief program with:

- **6,122** services provided in 2008- 2009
- **9,649** services provided in 2009-2010
- **11,541** services provided in 2010-2011

More and more people are facing disadvantage or circumstances that they are unable to rectify themselves without assistance. Positively however, while more funds are needed, Travellers Aid Australia's capacity to meet demand has also grown thanks to the generous support of multiple donors and funders of our Emergency Relief service.

### What are the impacts of not receiving travel-related Emergency Relief?

Being unable to access transport can lead to people facing restricted access to services and a limited ability to participate in activities (*Communities and Families Clearing House Australia, August 2011*). People are more likely to experience transport disadvantage if they are young people, women, families with young children, unemployed, on low incomes, senior citizens, culturally and linguistically diverse people, Indigenous Australians or people with a disability (*Communities and Families Clearing House Australia, August 2011*). As such, the ability to access services is further limited for groups who are already more likely to suffer inequity in the first place.

Elsewhere, the recent *Australian Community Sector Survey* (Australian Council for Social Services, 2011) shows that people who require Emergency Relief include those who are unemployed, those with mental health and relationship issues and those facing domestic violence. Increasing cost of living pressures have also resulted in more and more people seeking assistance with mortgage and utility costs. Without support in these areas people experience negative impacts on their health and finances. Subsequently, people in unexpected or prolonged crisis face increasing risks of poverty, debt, exclusion, poor health,

travel disadvantage, unemployment, potential criminality, even homelessness. This affects a person's mental health and wellbeing due to the additional anxiety and stress they experience. Elsewhere, as Guy Johnson and Chris Chamberlain have found in their report *From Youth to Adult Homelessness* the longer people are homeless the more difficult it becomes to "get out" without long-term support (2008).

Without travel-related assistance, people are prevented from getting to places where, if they could just get there, they would have access to the longer-term types of support, family or friends they need to help them escape their spiralling cycle of disadvantage. Often this is more cost-effective as well, since \$100 for a fare home, or a place where they have links to vital services or support networks is cheaper than the costs associated with, for example, putting someone up in crisis accommodation.

Throughout the report, we provide case-studies that highlight the difficult circumstances that our clients can sometimes find themselves in. These case studies also demonstrate how our assistance helps alleviate problems and disadvantages that would otherwise be faced.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

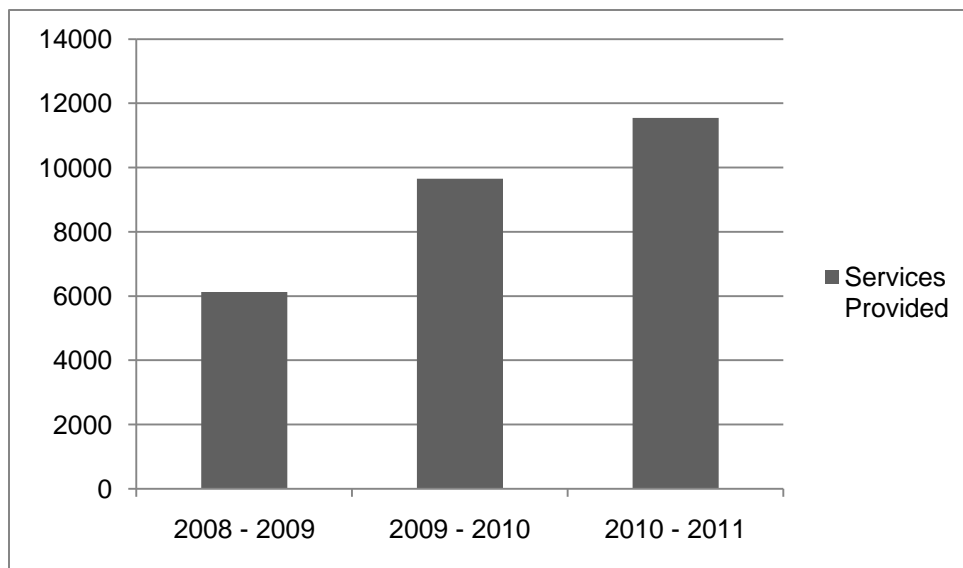
There is ongoing, increasing demand for our Emergency Relief services. This can be attributed to:

- The continuing effects of cost of living pressures, homelessness and other scenarios which affect people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.
- Our increased hours of service provision, where we provided ER assistance over the weekend from 12pm – 4 pm at Southern Cross Station as well as during weekdays.
- Continued sophistication, analysis of our recording and reporting on issues and trends.
- The marketing and awareness raising efforts conducted by Travellers Aid Australia and the other referral organisations that we collaborate with.

### Total services provided

During 2010-2011 the total number of instances of Emergency Relief assistance provided to people in need was **11,541 services**. This is a **19.6%** increase on services from the previous year.

**Chart 1: Total Emergency Relief services provided**



### Breakdown of total services provided

While demand generally increased across the board for key activities in line with the overall increase of **1,892** services from the previous year (see *Chart 1*), areas of interest include:

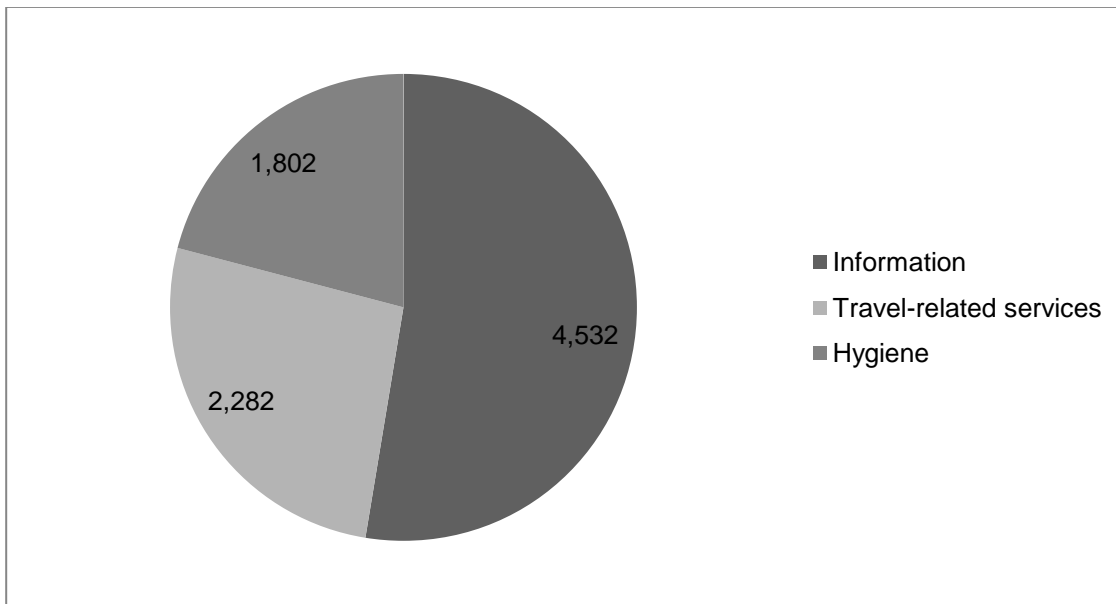
- Hygiene requests increased **59%** from the previous year.
- Travel services such as subsidised tickets increased **30%** from the previous year.

- Requests for petrol vouchers more than halved – in part because it is usually more cost-effective to provide a client with a bus ticket than purchase petrol for a car.
- Provision of information to people in need continued to rise, with an extra **1,311** information requests being handled. This reflects increased service awareness as well as the times when, due to financial constraints, we can only provide referrals or information about other organisations to clients.
- While the number of travel passes we could provide to low-income students was reduced by 18 due to changes in the types of tickets we provide – i.e. monthly, half-yearly – at one point we had up to **350** students on our waiting list for our Pathways to Education program.

**Table 1: Breakdown of Emergency Relief services**

Emergency Relief Service	2010-2011	2009-2010	% increase / decrease
Information	4,532	3,221	41%
Travel-related services	2,282	1,759	30%
Hygiene	1,802	1,132	59%
Metcard	933	887	5%
Referral to other agencies	440	563	-22%
Pathways student pass	382	397	-7.5%
Phone (including phone cards)	306	280	9%
Travel pack and other food	448	462	-3%
Airport shuttle	232	157	47%
Storage locker	63	68	-7%
Other	52	127	-59%
Sleeping rooms	51	41	24%
Protected travel service	51	78	-35%
Use of office equipment	32	16	100%
Petrol	24	65	-63%

**Chart 2: Top three Emergency Relief services provided**



Our busiest period remains Quarter 3, which includes January 2011, February 2011 and March 2011. This period is marked by summer school holidays and an increased number of people seeking to visit family and relatives or being stranded after visiting family over the holidays. The school year also commences at this time of year. As such need for our Pathways to Education program is high during this quarter.

### **Non-assistance**

We were unable to assist **98** people who presented to our Emergency Relief Service. While this figure was reduced **28%** from 137 people in 2009-2010, the reasons for non-assistance are unchanged. They include:

- The smaller pool of funds available for Emergency Relief across the whole sector.
- Circumstances where the costs of assistance needed exceeded our budget, as well as those of other organisations, clients themselves and their family and friends.

In particular, while Travellers Aid Australia has been able to assist more clients this year service requests are increasingly made by clients who are unable to contribute financially to their support. This affects Travellers Aid Australia’s time, finances and resource capacity to provide Emergency Relief services to all who need it.

## **CASE STUDY 1 - NAZIMAH'S STORY\***

Nazimah presented to our office with a piece of paper from the police as she did not speak English very well. She was crying and unable to say a word. She had bruises on her face and other parts of her body and was obviously in pain.

Travellers Aid Australia's Emergency Relief (ER) Officer made her a cup of tea and sat with her until she calmed down. Her jaw was dislocated so she could not talk very much but managed to explain her situation. Her husband had beaten her badly and locked her in a room for two days without food or anything else. Finally, she managed to escape with the help of one of her step children and ran to the police who referred her to Travellers Aid Australia.

She had been in Australia for the last six years but was never allowed to go anywhere and was submitted to violence nearly every day. She did not have any friends and her only family lived in Western Australia. She had left her house with a little bag and no funds. She desperately needed help to get to her family in Western Australia.

We contacted the family and they immediately asked us to help her get to their house. They had not been aware of her situation but were ready to support her. She was booked on the next flight to Western Australia for the same day, medical attention was provided and Nazimah was safely escorted to Skybus. The airline was contacted for further assistance when Nazimah arrived at the airport. When Nazimah arrived in Western Australia, the family let us know that she had reached her destination safely. Both Nazimah and her family were very grateful for our help.

\*Names and identifying information have been changed for each case study

## WHO AND HOW WE ASSIST

### Gender of clients assisted

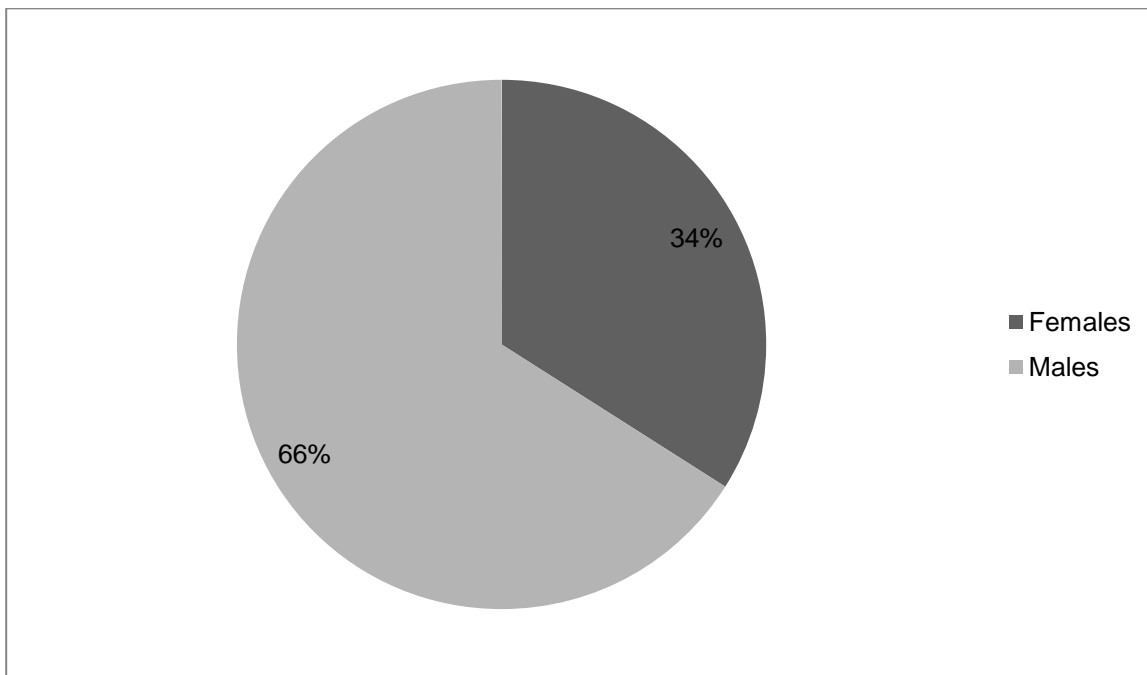
In 2010-2011 we assisted **1,708** women and **3,272** men in our Emergency Relief service.

This ratio of males (**66%**) to females (**34%**) is similar to those from previous years. The exception is ratios between men and women for young persons under 18 years of age. These ratios continue to be relatively even, as do ratios for older people over the age of 55.

The higher proportion of male clients may be due to the following factors including:

- More transiency being experienced by men, who subsequently require more travel assistance than the female population.
- More and longer periods of primary homelessness for male populations. Women are more likely to stay with friends or family in times of difficulty.
- Men are more likely than women to be the victims of “street crime” such as assault and robbery. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, men have higher victimisation rates than females in all age groups.

**Chart 3: Clients assisted by gender**



## **CASE STUDY 2 - TERRY'S STORY\***

Terry was referred to Travellers Aid Australia by the Sale Police Station. According to Police Officer Harry, Terry had spent two days at the Station for stealing fruit at the local market. He also had an alcohol problem and had been in and out of local rehab programs. Terry had no money and his Centrelink payments had been stopped as he was recently in prison.

The only place of support he had was with his mother who lives in Mackay in Queensland. With the help of St Kilda Crisis Centre, Travellers Aid Australia arranged for Terry's ticket to go to Mackay. A Skybus ticket and a V/Line ticket were also obtained to help him get to Melbourne and then to the airport.

When Terry arrived at Travellers Aid Australia, he was tired and very emotional. He had a shower and made his way to the airport. He also received a food pack.

Thanks to the support of the Emergency Relief Officer on duty, Terry flew to Queensland. This meant he could go and live with his mother in Mackay until he was back on his feet – thereby helping prevent homelessness and further criminal activity.

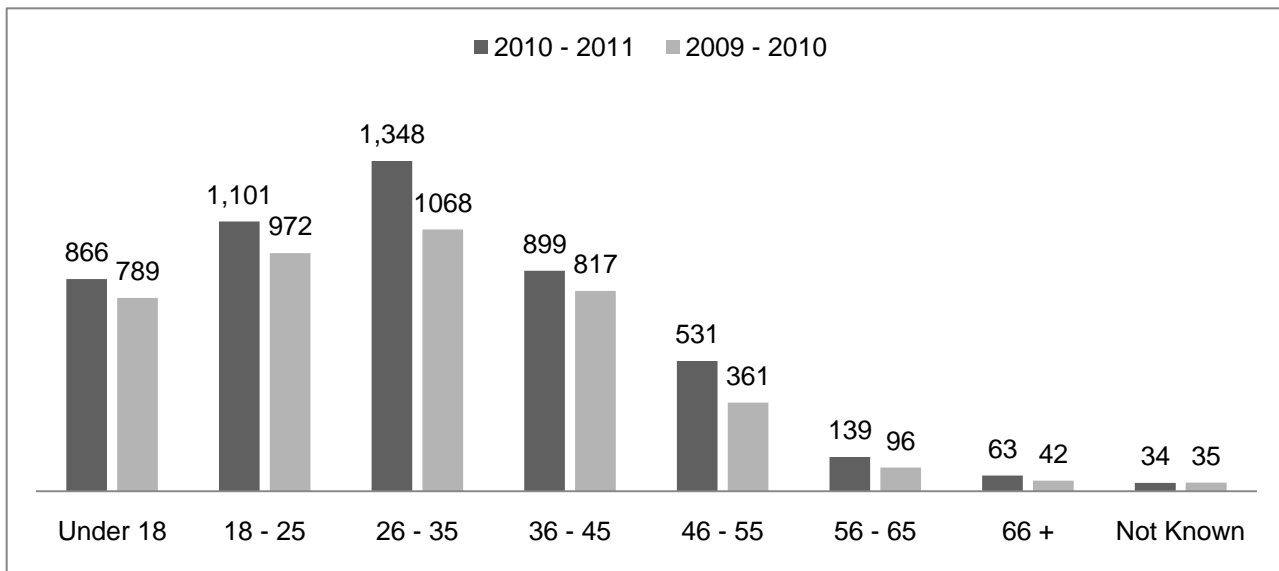
\*Names and identifying information have been changed for each case study

### Age group of clients assisted

Due to the overall growth in services we provided over the year, we also experienced increases in demand for our services across all age groups. However:

- Most requests continued to come from 18-25 year olds and 26-35 year olds.
- The 26-35 year old age group contained the largest number – **1,348** – of people needing Emergency Relief assistance.

**Chart 3: Clients assisted by age group**



As with last year, males between the age of 18 and 45 remain our main client group, with 990 of these being between the ages of 26-35. Many men tell us they access our service because of job losses, housing issues, a need to look for work, inadequate incomes, the high cost of living and the absence of financial resources such as insurance, savings or assets.

**Table 2: Clients by age and gender**

Age group	Female	Male
Under 18	412	454
18-25	424	677
26-35	358	990
36-45	286	613
46-55	137	394

56-65	44	95
66 and over	35	28
Age not known	12	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,708</b>	<b>3,272</b>

### Family composition of clients

The largest number of people using our service continue to present in the “alone or unrelated” category. There was a **21%** increase in this category from the previous year, perhaps due to the number of transient males we assist. People from multigenerational family units increased from 28 to **121** in 2010-2011 and the number of children with parents or guardians more than doubled from 54 to **118** this financial year. These statistics suggest that despite general improvements in employment Australia-wide, families continue to experience financial difficulties and travel disadvantage. The costs needed to be independent or to support a family continue to exceed many peoples’ available income.

**Table 3: Family composition of clients**

Category	2010-2011	2009-2010	% increase/decrease
Alone or unrelated	3,803	3,136	21%
Person with child(ren)	418	394	6%
Couple no child(ren)	240	217	10.5%
Multigenerational family unit	121	28	332%
Child(ren) with parent, guardian or grandmother	118	54	118%
Siblings no child(ren)	116	100	16%
Couple with child(ren)	78	148	-47%
Other family unit	28	36	-22%
Not known	34	34	0%
Siblings with child(ren)	13	14	-7%
Parent with adult offspring(s)	12	19	-36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,981</b>	<b>4,180</b>	

### Cultural identity of clients

As with 2009-2010, the biggest group of clients we assisted were “Anglo-Australians”. There were approximately 700 more clients in this category this year.

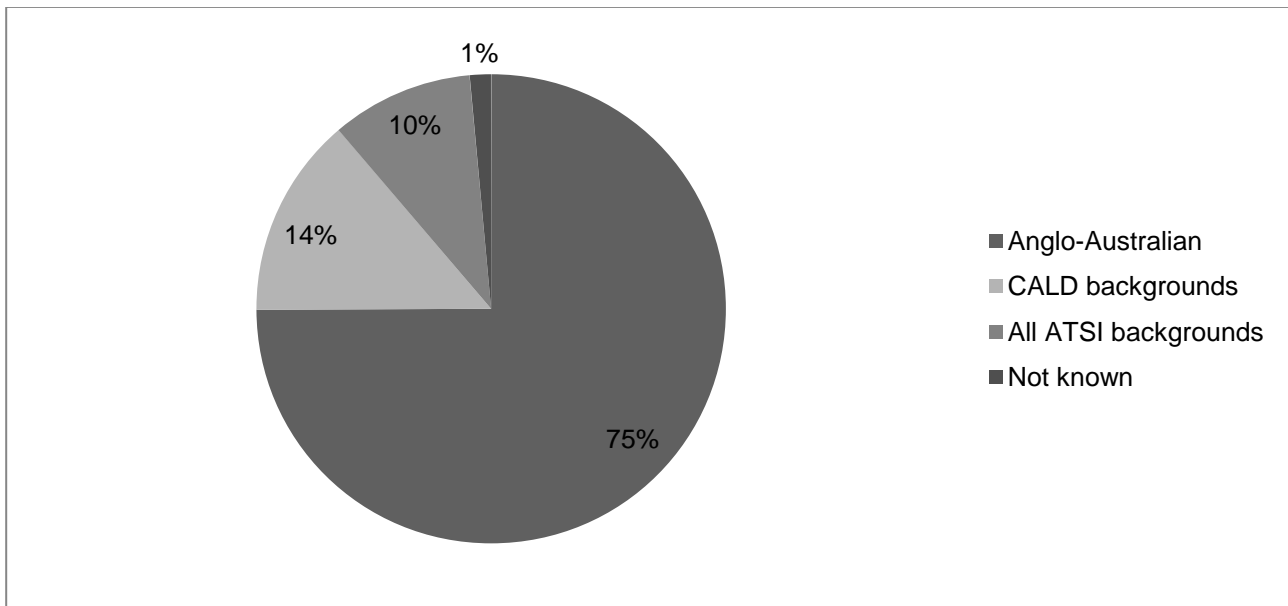
At **14%** of the total, there was a slight reduction in the number of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people assisted this year. Positively however there was an increase in the number of “Aboriginal”, “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” and “Torres Strait Islander” people we assisted in the program. Combined, the total number of people assisted in Indigenous categories was **487**, an increase of **61%** from last year. This can be attributed to the work that Travellers Aid Australia has done in communicating effectively about our services to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander groups and individuals.

**Table 4: Clients by cultural identity**

Background	2010-2011	2009-2010
Anglo-Australian	3,732	3,033
Aboriginal	274	n/a
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	147	303
Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	62	n/a
Torres Strait Islander	4	n/a
CALD	689	736
Not Known	73	108
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,981</b>	<b>4,180</b>

**Note:** Categories this year were redefined. The original “Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander” category was broken into new categories of “Aboriginal”, “both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” and “Torres Strait Islander.”

**Chart 4: Clients by cultural background**



For information about our Cultural diversity initiatives at Travellers Aid Australia, see **Appendix 1**.

### **CASE STUDY 3 – PAUL AND LINDA’S STORY\***

Paul and Linda presented themselves at Travellers Aid Australia.

They were very scared and Paul had a swollen face, they had both been referred to Travellers Aid Australia by St Kilda Crisis Centre. They were originally from a region of Australia that had been affected by a natural disaster. They had an argument with their friends who they were staying with and during the fight Paul was stabbed and all his money was stolen.

After presenting at Travellers Aid Australia, our Emergency Relief staff booked Paul and Linda a ticket back home where they had family to return to for support.

\*Names and identifying information have been changed for each case study

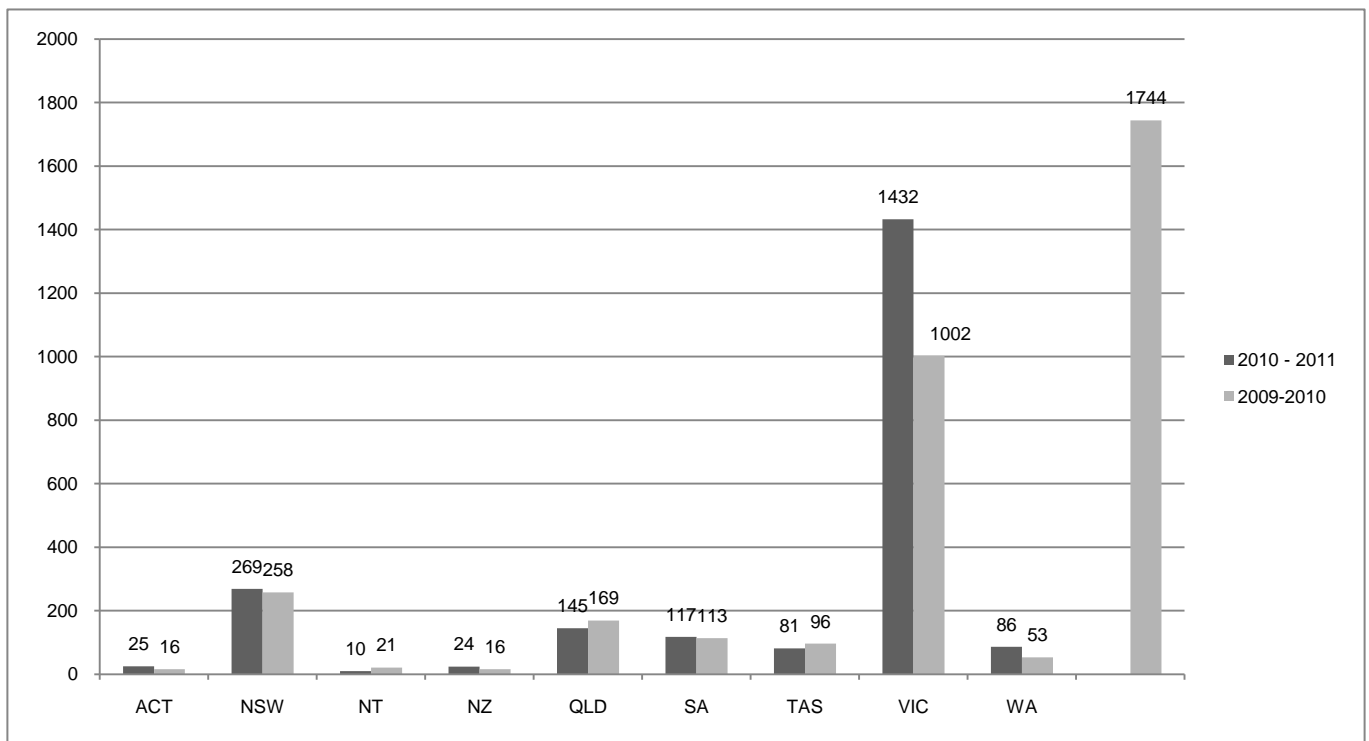
## Destinations

Each year we help clients to travel state-wide, nationally and in limited cases, internationally to New Zealand and to Pacific Island nations.

Our program is unique in that it is nation-wide. It is not restricted to a particular place of residence or destination, notwithstanding constraints on international travel due to its cost. We have regularly assisted people across Australia get from one state to another without any need for them to present or arrive in Victoria, working in partnership and collaboration with other not for profit organisations. At least **19%** of those who used our Emergency Relief service in 2010-2011 had an address outside of Victoria. Elsewhere, **16%** of people we assisted with travel did not reside in Victoria and were travelling to destinations outside of Victoria. Providing people with the means to get to a place of safety is one way of preventing downward spirals into disadvantage.

As with last year, most travel was in Victoria with over **1,400 destinations** in this region. In 2010-2011 we also helped 24 people return to New Zealand.

**Chart 5: Travel destinations for Emergency Relief clients**



Travel around Victoria was primarily provided by V/Line whilst interstate travel for relevant clients included bus, plane, ferry and train options.

#### **CASE STUDY 4 – DEAN’S STORY\***

Dean presented himself at Travellers Aid Australia on a Sunday afternoon. He was hungry, thirsty and tired and wanted to go to his mother’s place in Queensland. He had been released from jail some months ago and has mostly been staying with friends in Melbourne since then. He went to his mother’s place twice but had to come back due to a court order. He had accessed nearly all the services around Melbourne for accommodation, food vouchers and meals, showers and laundry.

Only a short time ago he had started receiving a Newstart allowance, but this was not enough for him to pay for rent and food. Some nights ago, he had been kicked out of a friend’s place and had been sleeping rough since then. Because he was hungry and did not have any money left, he had stolen food from a retail store. He was charged and was now expecting a new court case and a heavy fine. He was also exhausted after a night spent on public transport to be safe and escape the cold.

When Dean visited us he was feeling very low and desolate. All he wanted to do was go back to his mother’s until he had to come back to Melbourne again for his court case. As he had received extensive help from a range of services and only very few services were operating on the weekends, it was impossible for the Emergency Relief Officer to find an agency to contribute to Dean’s fare. However, as Dean’s risk of re-offending was high the Emergency Relief Officer decided to pay more than the normal share we would contribute to his transport, relying on Dean to pay back his proportion of the fare at a later date.

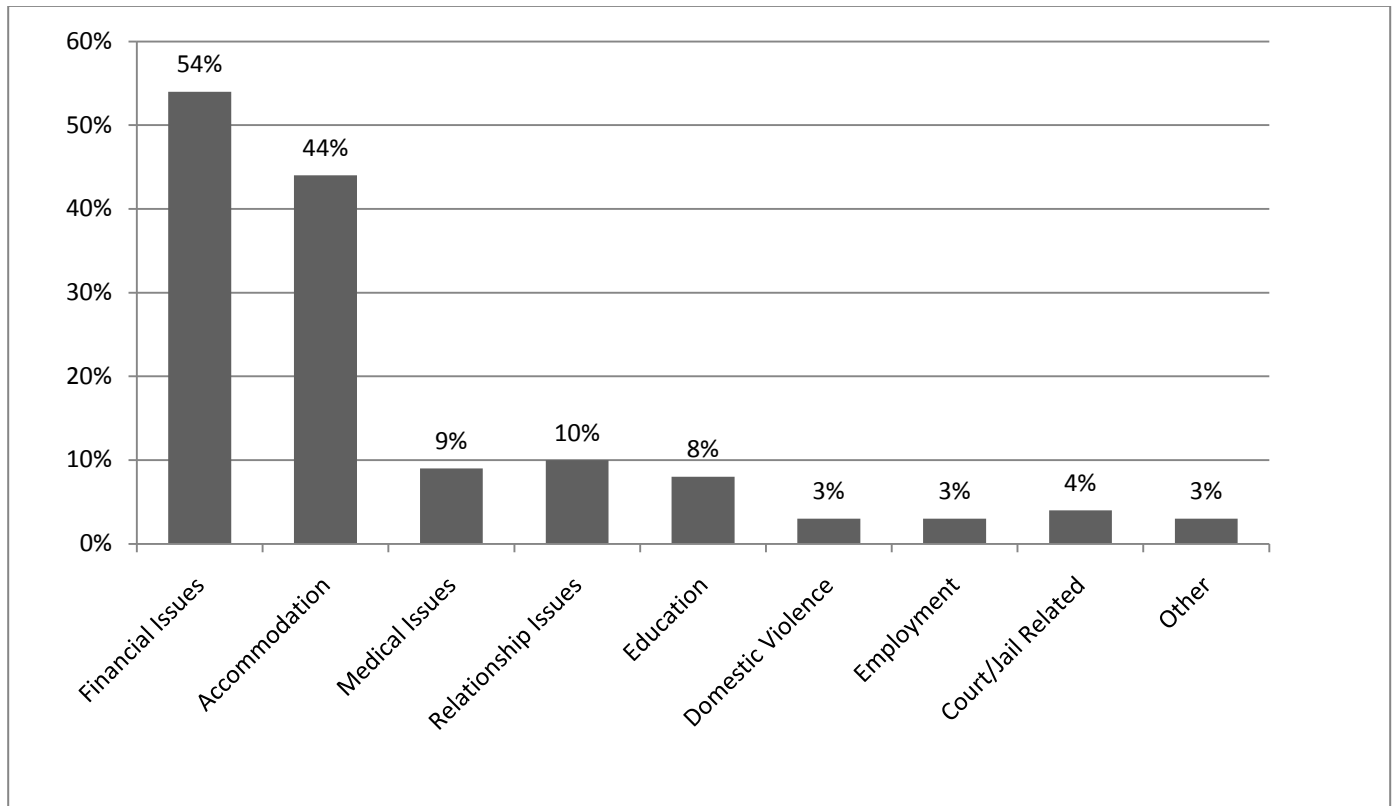
Dean was extremely happy with this outcome and Travellers Aid Australia received Dean’s contribution from his following pay.

\*Names and identifying information have been changed for each case study

### Reasons clients present for Emergency Relief

The reasons why clients require emergency-related travel assistance are many. However financial issues – i.e. an inability to afford travel costs – are the reason that **54%** of people present to our Emergency Relief service.

**Chart 6: Reasons why clients present for Emergency Relief**



**Note:** Some people may have experienced more than one of these reasons to present.

The second-largest reason for why people request Emergency Relief assistance at **44%** is to ‘get to accommodation. This year, this category also experienced a significant jump of **560** instances. People presenting for court or jail related issues also increased from 76 to **215** instances. This is likely to be the result of a presentation given to prison officers.

Table 5 lists the most common reasons influencing our client’s need to present to Travellers Aid Australia. Some people may have experienced more than one of these reasons to travel.

**Table 5: Reasons for presenting for Emergency Relief**

Presenting Issues	2010-2011	Percentage	2009-2010	Percentage
Financial issues	2670	54%	2287	55%
Accommodation	2198	44%	1638	39%
Medical issues	473	9%	510	12%
Relationship issues	481	10%	367	9%
Education	394	8%	307	7%
Domestic violence	169	3%	170	4%
Employment	133	3%	77	2%
Court or jail related	215	4%	76	2%
Other	140	3%	45	1%

**Note:** Some people may have experienced more than one of these reasons to present.

### **CASE STUDY 5 – REBECCA’S STORY\***

Rebecca called Travellers Aid Australia from a regional Centrelink office asking for help to return to the Northern Territory.

Rebecca had come to Victoria some months ago and had been living with her partner in a small town in the country. Her partner became increasingly abusive and when Rebecca rang police after he attacked her physically, she was told to leave their home for the night.

She stayed in crisis accommodation and went to Centrelink the next day to ask for a crisis payment to help her to return home to family in the Northern Territory. This was initially refused on the grounds that Rebecca did not have a police report outlining the nature of the abuse.

Travellers Aid Australia advocated on Rebecca’s behalf for a crisis payment so that she could contribute towards her transport fare. When this was successful, we organised a V/Line ticket to help Rebecca get from regional Victoria to Southern Cross station where we met her and had her flight booked and a Skybus ticket waiting for her.

Without this seamless assistance and advocacy on our behalf, Rebecca might have ended up returning to her violent partner as so many others do due to the lack of alternatives. Rebecca was able to safely travel to the Northern Territory within hours.

\*Names and identifying information have been changed for each case study

## Costs

In 2010-2011, the total cost of Travellers Aid Australia's Emergency Relief service was **\$238,550** inclusive of GST. This was an increase of approximately \$10,000 from the previous year.

Travellers Aid Australia is committed to co-contribution and working with other Emergency Relief agencies to cover the costs of travel and travel-related expenses. This is so we can assist as many people as possible by using a wider pool of available resources.

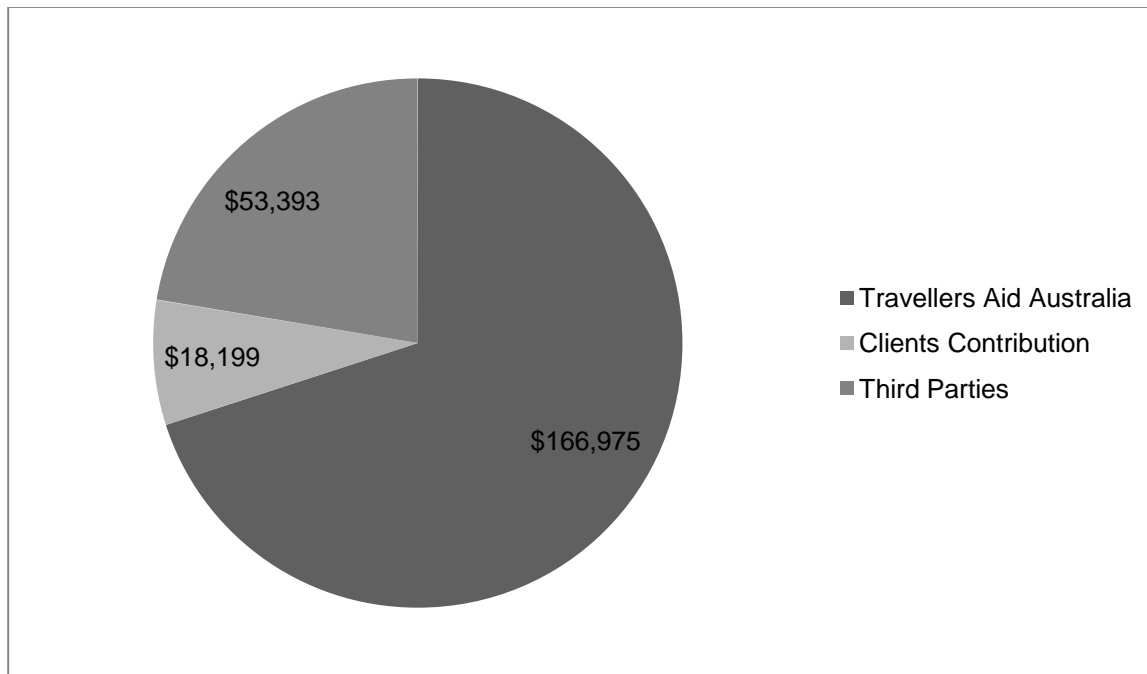
In 2010-2011, approximately **70%** of this cost was covered by Travellers Aid Australia. Unfortunately client co-contributions continued to decrease this financial year, resulting in additional costs for both Travellers Aid Australia and our third party Emergency Relief partners. It also increased the time and resources that we must spend sourcing funds over and above our own.

**Table 6: Breakdown of Emergency Relief costs**

Associated Costs	2010 - 2011	2009 - 2010
Cost to Travellers Aid Australia	166,974.94	159,962.39
Clients contribution	18,198.77	20,902.35
Third parties paid (other agencies)	53,392.83	47,863.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>238,550.34</b>	<b>228,727.79</b>

**Note:** Amounts are inclusive of GST

**Chart 7: Breakdown of Emergency Relief costs**



**Recognition from peers**

More than 200 agencies across Australia actively provide their clients with referrals to Travellers Aid Australia for travel related Emergency Relief. They include organisations such as the Salvation Army, Homeground Services and the Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service. This year, there was an increase in referrals from the education sector. Hospitals and community service referrals also increased from the year before.

**Table 7: Snapshot of agencies referring clients onto Travellers Aid Australia**

<b>Government</b>	
Centrelink	69
Department of Justice and Correctional Facilities	31
Department of Human Services	18
Police	26
<b>Transport</b>	
Metro Trains Melbourne	10
Skybus	32
V/Line	139

Others	15
Total	196
<b>Health Services</b>	
Hospitals	81
Community Health Services	64
<b>Educational Institution</b>	
All institutions	86
<b>Not for Profit Organisations</b>	
Anglicare – all locations	13
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre	34
Diversitat Geelong	14
Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Service	11
Front Yard	11
Hanover – all locations	23
Homeground	69
Melbourne City Mission	66
Migrant Information Centre	32
Ngwala Willumbong	37
Australian Red Cross	12
St Kilda Youth Service (SKYS)	12
St Mark's Community Centre	13
St Vincent de Paul Society	22
The Salvation Army – all locations	406
Uniting Care – all locations	29
Victorian Aboriginal Health Service	12

WAYSS	17
Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service	69

**Note:** This table only lists organisations that have referred 9+ clients in the past 12 months.

Feedback from referring agencies continues to be positive. Where possible, they are prepared to provide funding for tickets and to allow Travellers Aid Australia to use their existing processes and knowledge to make the client's experience more seamless. The collaborative relationship between Travellers Aid Australia and other service providers is also demonstrated by our Emergency Relief (ER) Travel Online project (see next section).

## **Emergency Relief (ER) Travel Online Project**

The innovative Emergency Relief (ER) Travel Online project is a world-first. It gives community service organisations the capacity to easily book cost-effective emergency travel across Australia for clients in need all in one easy-to use online environment.

### **Benefits for clients**

Often inadequate coordination in cross agency response efforts can result in a client's travel needs being unmet. Our project will increase the number of Emergency Relief clients who can be helped. It will also help reduce waiting times and provide people with a more immediate response. We already minimise the need for personal presentation at Travellers Aid Australia, but clients sometimes have to wait a long time at our centre at Southern Cross station while staff make travel arrangements and ensure clients have support at their end destination. This can increase the anxiety that a client feels.

### **Benefits for Emergency Relief service providers**

The project will streamline Emergency Relief provision. It will simplify processes and eliminate duplication of administration work by giving all parties use of one centralised system. It will also enable agencies to book their client's travel online themselves. This will lessen a client's need to present in person to Travellers Aid Australia and increase dignity for clients who will not have to repeat their story one more time. By moving our Emergency Relief services online, it will also be more easily available nationally, outside of Melbourne and Victoria.

### **Progress to date**

In the second-half of 2010-2011, Travellers Aid Australia developed and released a request for tender and commenced project implementation. Major progress on the project includes:

- The identification of two travel booking partners and a data collection system that can share relevant client information across approved community service organisations
- The commencement of internal testing and trialling of available travel systems to identify which tools best meet the emergency sector's pricing and travel booking needs
- The development of an ER Travel Online resource manual to assist with roll out when the project is implemented in its final form.

Once internal trialling and testing of the travel booking system is complete, the 16 community service organisations who have signed up to participate in the "pilot" phase of the project will be trained to use the system. They will then use the systems prior to the anticipated sector-wide deployment of the project in December 2011.

We would like to acknowledge the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation (Eldon and Anne Foote Trust), Victorian Government Department of Transport, Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, Sidney Myer Fund and Myer Foundation - Commemorative Grants Program for their assistance with this project. Pro bono legal advice has also been provided by Francis Abourizk Lighthouse Lawyers, arranged via PilchConnect.

## **CASE STUDY 6 – CHO’S STORY\***

Cho came to Australia from Korea as a backpacker intending to travel our country for six months on a working holiday. After spending some time travelling Cho reached Adelaide and she was down to her last dollars. Cho managed to secure a job fruit picking in Mildura just in the nick of time. With her remaining funds Cho booked a train to Melbourne, which was to connect up with the train to Mildura. Unfortunately however, the train from Adelaide was late and Cho missed her connection. With her last funds, which had been set aside for the Mildura train, she secured accommodation for the night. The next day she sought assistance at the Visitor Information Centre at Federation Square in Melbourne who subsequently referred her on to Travellers Aid Australia

Positively, Travellers Aid Australia was able to provide Cho with a V/Line train ticket to Mildura where she was met by her new employer and begin work straight away. By providing immediate support, we were able to prevent a small emergency from spiralling out of control. Had Cho not been able to get to her place of employment, she would have had no other choice but to cut her holiday short and head home to Korea. With the practical assistance we provided, Cho went on to complete her working holiday, and contributing to regional and rural economies by staying longer. Cho sent a donation to Travellers Aid Australia after she got on her feet, covering the cost of the transport as a token of her appreciation.

\*Names and identifying information have been changed for each case study

## **OUR STAFF AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Marketing and promotion**

In addition to increasing need in the Emergency Relief sector, the growth that Travellers Aid Australia has experienced can be linked to our community engagement and promotional activities. However while we target Emergency Relief communications to relevant individuals, community service organisations, groups donors and funders, broad-ranging promotion of the Program is not a core focus for Travellers Aid Australia. Promotion of the program needs to be balanced against demand, as well as the safety of our clients who include people facing domestic violence.

Nevertheless over the year, marketing and promotions for the program have included:

- Developing new marketing collateral that better explains our services – including Emergency Relief – to all our audiences
- Implementing our Community Education program which includes information about our Emergency Relief services. We gave 72 talks to 1,527 people in 2010-2011.

- Developing a donations envelope that promotes the Pathways to Education program and provides donors with the opportunity to fund students or general programs such as our Emergency Relief service. Our new website also provides an online donations tool
- Media coverage in the Herald Sun in November 2010 relating to Travellers Aid Australia's Emergency Relief (ER) service
- Promotion of our Emergency Relief services at community, state and federal levels through our Emergency Relief (ER) Travel Online project
- Formalised partnerships with organisations such as V/Line and Destination Melbourne which provided in-kind sponsorship and other benefits such as travel tickets for Emergency Relief.

### **Our staff**

Our Travellers Aid Australia Emergency Relief employees have many years experience in the sector.

In addition to their Emergency Relief specific skills and experience, our staff have received training in First Aid, cultural diversity, Indigenous Cultural Awareness and Deafness Awareness Training. They are fully capable of assisting a cross-section of travellers and clients in need.

### **Karen Lovell, ER Officer - Emergency Relief (ER) Coordinator from December 2010**

Karen started with Travellers Aid Australia over 20 years ago. As a mother of a teenage son she is a caring and empathetic woman who loves her job and the satisfaction she gets from making a difference to someone else's life. Karen has completed a wide range of different roles at Travellers Aid Australia. In December 2010, Karen was appointed Emergency Relief Coordinator after the departure of Maria Groner.

### **Maria Groner, ER / Social Worker - Emergency Relief (ER) Coordinator until November 2010**

Previously CEO of a small Family Education Centre in Germany, since arrival in Australia, Maria has had major involvement in sector development activities such as the CBD Homelessness Health Access Protocol and the review of the ACOSS Emergency Relief Handbook. She is also on the Victorian Branch Management Committee for the Australian Association of Social Workers.

After her departure from the role of Emergency Relief coordinator, Maria was contracted for the development of the ER Travel Online Manual for Travellers Aid Australia. Maria also has:

- A degree in Social Work
- Completed a post-graduate course in Counselling
- Completed the Leadership Victoria Board Orientation Series.

Maria returned to Travellers Aid Australia one day a week in April 2011, with her days increasing to three from October 2011 onwards.

### **Marie Rachelle Chiffone - Emergency Relief (ER) Officer**

Rachelle arrived in Australia from Mauritius. She has a strong commitment to assisting the most disadvantaged in our community. Rachelle is fluent in English, French and her native Mauritius dialect. She also has:

- A diploma of Community Welfare
- A Certificate III in Aged Care
- A degree in Social Work (to be completed)
- Completed Motivational Interviewing training.

### **Priya Juggernaut - Emergency Relief (ER) Officer**

Priya grew up in Quatre-Bornes, Mauritius before coming to Australia. She is fluent in French, Hindi and English. Priya has a Diploma in Community Welfare.

### **Our training, networking and sector involvement**

Travellers Aid Australia is actively engaged in the Emergency Relief sector. Our employees take every opportunity to up-skill themselves, network with other agency employees, share and disseminate information. In 2010-2011 relevant Emergency Relief staff also:

- Attended a seminar on Privacy that was provided by PILCH (Public Interest Law Clearing House)
- Participated in training for managers in Financial Management Program (FMP) services that will be provided by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and rolled out to a number of local Emergency Relief networks
- Attended a sector briefing on the Victorian Government Vulnerable Youth Framework which outlines the government's new approach to improving services for vulnerable young people
- Met with workers from 'Kids Under Cover' and 'Skyline Foundation' to discuss opportunities for assisting young people.
- Liaised with the Department of Health and the Health Issues Centre who launched the 'Resource Kit for Consumers Travelling for Health Care'. The resource kit is targeted at rural consumers who need to travel for medical reasons and comprises a range of checklists and information on services including Travellers Aid Australia. Travellers Aid Australia was part of the working group developing the resource kit under the leadership of the Health Issues Centre.

- Shared specialist knowledge with other agencies, including through the Melbourne Youth Support Services interagency protocol and inclusion of Travellers Aid Australia support services in collaboration with the CBD Homelessness Health Access Steering Group who launched its revised edition of the *Guide to Accessing Services – CBD Homelessness Access Protocol*.

Travellers Aid Australia is also part of a range of networks including Emergency Relief Victoria (see **Appendix 2**), the CBD Services Network, Darebin Emergency Relief Network and the Asylum Seekers Emergency Relief Working Group. Jodie Willmer, our CEO continues to be a representative on the State Consultative Committee for Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), is the President of ER Victoria Inc, the peak body for Emergency Relief and is also a board member of Victorian Council for Social Services (VCOSS)

Elias Lebbos, Travellers Aid Australia's General Manager is a member of the Ministerial Public Transport Advisory Committee (PTAC) where he represents the interests of vulnerable persons. Travellers Aid Australia also participates in the Victorian Council for Social Services (VCOSS) Transport Disadvantage Strategic working group and provides strategic advice to the Department of Transport (DOT) Social Transit Unit. We have also developed a relationship and referral protocol with the Public Transport Ombudsman to assist our clients in passing on complaints about public transport operators.

## THE YEAR AHEAD – OUR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The major challenge for Travellers Aid Australia’s Emergency Relief services program continues to be the acquisition of adequate funding to address ever-increasing need. Demand for our services has increased substantially, with demand from last financial year to this financial year increasing **19.6%**.

Challenges for the year ahead include:

- The trend of low client co-contributions continuing. Limited funds re-inforces the need for Travellers Aid Australia look at alternatives to make the program sustainable in the future
- The price increase for metcards announced in March 2011 will continue to have a cost impact on our metropolitan Emergency Relief assistance and our Pathways to Education program. The implementation of myki is likely to pose operational challenges for community services that provide transport tickets to clients
- In general, the lack of affordable housing, rise in petrol and energy prices and the increase of other costs of living such as food and transport will act as contributors to the steady and continuous rise in demand for our Emergency Relief services. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, two out of three homeless people are being turned away from crisis accommodation each night, leading to a larger transient population seeking our services, particularly for travel, food packs, showers, storage lockers and referrals to other agencies
- High ongoing demand for our Pathway to Education program needs to be addressed. We are receiving referrals for the next school year now and anticipate demand will exceed currently available funding
- There are still some sector misconceptions about what assistance we provide and how referrals can be made. While a referral protocol was developed with the Centrelink call centre staff for example, there is further need for working agreements with agencies whom we work with closely
- Requests for international travel assistance over and above New Zealand and Pacific Island countries provides Travellers Aid Australia with challenges. With few services around that assist with international fares, it can be frustrating for staff to deal with these requests without being able to offer help
- On a strategic level advocacy will play an increasingly important role to make sure that vulnerable groups do not miss out on social inclusion.

Positively however, these challenges come with exciting opportunities. To ensure we are around to assist clients for many years to come, we have renewed our commitment to diversifying and making use of alternative revenue streams. On top of our fee-for-service initiatives in the areas of mobility equipment hire and traveller rest facilities, we continue to develop our fundraising capacities including through the Vulnerable Groups Funding from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA),

partnerships that provide in-kind travel tickets for our program from V/Line, a long term fundraising plan, the exploration and implementation of fundraising initiatives such as “Adopt a School” or “Adopt a Student” corporate programs and a micro-finance no-interest-loan scheme for our Pathways to Education program.

We will also continue to roll out our Emergency Relief (ER) Travel Online project so that there is improved accessibility for referring agencies and clients, faster processing times, reduced amounts of manual handling, duplication of data entry and other paperwork. This project will ultimately make Travellers Aid Australia more sustainable in the long term through improved online service delivery and cost effectiveness.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Travellers Aid Australia would like to sincerely thank the following supporters and funders who have made our work possible over the year:

- The not-for-profit community service organisations who referred clients and contributed to travel fare costs
- Australian Government – Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs – Financial Management Program – Emergency Relief Funding
- Backpackers World Travel
- BHP Billiton
- Mr B Delaney
- Dawn Wade Foundation
- Victorian Department of Justice - Magistrates' Court of Victoria
- Victorian Department of Transport
- Victorian Department of Health
- Destination Melbourne
- FCM – Flight Centre Management
- Foodbank Victoria
- Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
- Infoxchange
- Joe White Bequest
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, including the Youth in Philanthropy program
- The Mackie Bequest
- Peter Wright
- Skybus
- Southern Cross Station Pty Ltd
- The R E Ross Trust
- The William Angliss (Vic) Charitable Fund

- V/Line
- Website travel
- Wright Express Australia (Motorpass)

We also appreciate the tireless work of our dedicated volunteers. Without their compassion and ongoing support, our service delivery would not be so seamless.

## APPENDIX 1 – CULTURAL DIVERSITY AT TRAVELLERS AID

Travellers Aid Australia's dedication to cultural diversity has resulted in the implementation of specific measures during 2010-2011. Some of these initiatives are part of our Cultural Action Plan (CAP).

- Over half of our employees come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- We have employees who can converse fluently in 12 different languages including Cantonese, Urdu, Punjabi, Arabic, Spanish, Dutch, Mandarin, German, Polish, French, Hindi and Australian Sign Language (Auslan)
- We provided brochures to clients in six different languages including Polish, Vietnamese, Somali, Burmese, Italian and Sudanese (Arabic) and distributed these to key community organisations
- We developed and distributed 8,000 brochures catering to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users and Victoria-wide Aboriginal organisations
- We promoted Travellers Aid Australia's services on SBS Radio via four interviews held in German, Hindi, Dutch and Arabic.

This work reflects our commitment to embracing the diversity of all our staff and clients.

## **APPENDIX 2 – ER VICTORIA**

Jodie Willmer, Travellers Aid Australia’s CEO has been President of ER Victoria since its incorporation in October 2008.

This meets Travellers Aid Australia’s strategic direction of growing solutions for travellers through partnership and collaboration. It has helped us achieve more complete service options to customers, an increased range of services/choices for customers, increased customer satisfaction and improved funding opportunities.

### **About ER Victoria**

ER Victoria Inc. is the state peak body for the Emergency Relief sector. The aim of ER Victoria is to bring Emergency Relief agencies together to support their work as providers and advocate on issues effecting disadvantaged people. Members currently comprise of 89 agencies throughout Victoria who provide or fund the provision of Emergency Relief and the Committee of Management currently has seven members and the Secretariat is currently contracted to CIVic. CIVic manage a project officer on behalf of ER Victoria Inc.

### **Planned activities for 2011-2012**

ER Victoria is developing a Strategic Plan to guide the development and expansion of the organisation over the coming years. The Plan will be a key tool to broaden ER Victoria’s profile and thus improve its effectiveness, reach and overall service. ER Victoria Inc. has been funded by Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) for a three year period for sector development activities in Victoria. A consultant will deliver the following project objectives:

1. Strategic Plan: Create an ER Victoria Strategic Plan for the years 2012-2014
2. Program Plan: Ensure that there is an appropriate Program Plan flowing from the Strategic Plan, so that the ER Victoria appointee’s work reflects the work required in support of ER Victoria’s Strategic Plan.

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## Thank you for your help

To donate or find out more ways that you can assist travellers in need, visit

[www.travellersaid.org.au](http://www.travellersaid.org.au)

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