

MEDIA RELEASE

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School Resilience Fund highlights growing pressure of school milestone costs

The cost of getting children back to school is only part of the financial pressure facing local families, with United Way Glenelg identifying the growing cost of milestone items such as Year 6 and Year 12 jumpers as another potential barrier to students feeling included at school.

United Way Glenelg's School Resilience Grants, established with the support of Beyond Bank, provides local schools with flexible funding to respond directly and discreetly when financial hardship is affecting a student's education, wellbeing or ability to participate.

While school uniforms, shoes, books and other essentials remain common areas of need, Term 2 reporting has highlighted another emerging pressure, the cost of Year 6 & 12 graduation jumpers.

United Way Glenelg Executive Officer Nicole Carr said the requests highlighted how the financial pressures associated with education extended well beyond the traditional back-to-school period.

"Back-to-school costs are something we hear a lot about in January and February, but the expenses don't stop once children are through the school gate," Ms Carr said.

"Throughout the year there are camps, excursions, sporting activities, new shoes and uniforms, and then milestone costs such as Year 6 and Year 12 jumpers.

"These jumpers are much more than another piece of clothing. They represent belonging, connection and celebrating an important milestone with your classmates.

"For most families it is an exciting purchase, but when household budgets are already stretched, it can become another bill to find money for. No young person should have to be the one student without a jumper because their family simply can't afford it."

The Term 2 School Resilience Grants evaluations showed clothing-related expenses continued to dominate requests for assistance, with uniforms, footwear and other essential clothing accounting for the majority of support provided.

Ms Carr said the findings demonstrated why giving schools discretion over how the funding was spent was important.

"Schools know their students and families. They can see when a relatively small amount of assistance will make a significant difference and can provide that support quietly and respectfully," she said.

"Whether it is a pair of shoes, a uniform, a Year 6 jumper or another unexpected expense, the purpose of this grant is to remove those small financial barriers before they become barriers to participation, confidence or connection to school."

Beyond Bank's support has enabled the School Resilience Grants to provide participating Glenelg Shire schools with discretionary funding to respond to individual student needs.

"Beyond Bank's investment gives schools the flexibility to respond to what is actually happening for families, rather than limiting assistance to a narrow list of expenses," Ms Carr said.

"The information schools provide through their evaluations is also helping us build a clearer picture of where financial pressures are emerging and how those pressures are changing throughout the school year.

"We are very grateful to Beyond Bank for recognising the value of putting resources directly into the hands of schools to support students when they need it."

The School Resilience Grants is available to primary and secondary schools across the Glenelg Shire, and opens in November.

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