



Contact Details:

P.O. Box 291

Narre Warren VIC 3805

p: (03) 9702 5528

e: enquiries@chips.org.au

www.chips.org.au



Chairperson's Report- Ross

As we reflect on the past year, it's clear that 2024 has been a period of significant adjustment and resilience for CHIPS. Our new facility in Hallam, the Life Gets Better Centre, continues to serve as a vital hub for our activities, providing us with the space and resources needed to support our programs and community.

This year, we had to make the difficult decision to scale back some of our programs to ensure we could focus on the well-being of our team and maintain the quality of our services. Despite these challenges (and the weather!), we successfully ran ten iBelong days and provided Chaplaincy services in seven local primary schools.

Our Board has seen some changes as well, as we warmly welcomed Jethro Fries to the team. The continued guidance and support from Doug and Neil have been invaluable, and we are deeply appreciative of their contributions.

The dedication of our staff and volunteers continues to be the cornerstone of our success. Eric, Cathy, our Chaplains, and all our volunteers have shown unwavering commitment to supporting children and our local school communities. Your efforts are truly making a difference, and we honour you for your hard work and dedication.

As we look ahead to 2025, we recognise the need to proceed with caution and focus on the well-being of our team. Hence, we are taking a slower pace to ensure we can continue to provide quality support and services. We look forward to taking a well-deserved break over the summer holidays and returning with renewed vigour to continue our important work.

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this journey. Your support, whether through time, resources, or prayers, is what enables us to make a positive, lasting impact in children's lives.





Treasurer's Report- Ross

I am pleased to report that CHIPS continues its stable financial position, thanks to the generous and consistent support from our donors and the careful management of our resources.

A major milestone for us has been the successful establishment of our new facility in Hallam. This new space has provided us with the necessary infrastructure to support our activities and has been a crucial investment. I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to setting up this facility. Your efforts have been invaluable.

Our prudent financial management has allowed us to maintain our operations without significant adjustments. This stability has been possible due to the diligent work of Cathy, supported by our bookkeeping services, Accountable Business Services and our external Auditors, Charles Wallace & Associates. Their meticulous work ensures that CHIPS remains compliant with all reporting requirements of the Australian Tax Office (ATO) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).

We continue to prioritise Child Safety, as we updated all of our Child Safe Policies this year. CHIPS also subscribes to Oho (weareoho.com.au) for the continuous validation of Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) teacher registration status and Working With Children Check (WWCC) status of all involved with CHIPS. This commitment is essential to our mission and the trust placed in us by the community.

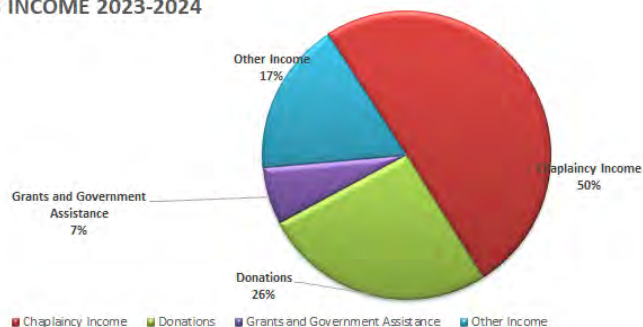
We are immensely thankful for the financial support from our donors, which allows us to plan and budget effectively. Your contributions are the backbone of our ability to serve and support our community.

Thank you, once again, to all our supporters, auditors, and the entire CHIPS team for your unwavering dedication and hard work. Together, we are making a lasting impact and creating a brighter future for the children and families we serve.

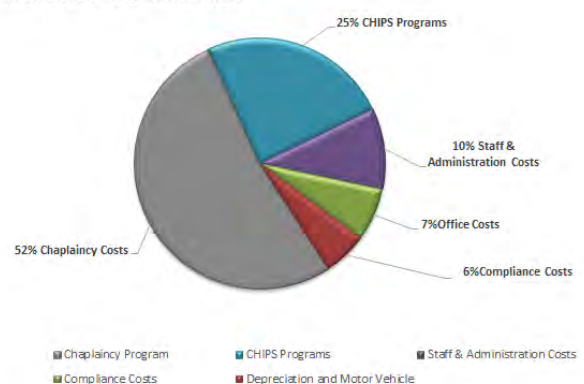
CHIPS is a not-for-profit charity with Deductible Gift Recipient status so donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

You can support CHIPS at: <https://www.givenow.com.au/CHIPS>

CHIPS INCOME 2023-2024



CHIPS EXPENSES 2023-2024





The view from in here- Cathy

2024 marked the 25th year of CHIPS!

We are so grateful for everyone's support, care and dedication in assisting children (and their families) who have experienced trauma, grief or loss in their lives, over so many years.

Through your continued support YOU have truly continued to change little worlds in VERY big ways over the past 25 years.

We had a great finish to 2023, with 115 Christmas Hampers being delivered around various primary schools in the Casey, Cardinia, Dandenong and Knox municipalities. Families who received them were thrilled with their Hampers, with many saying that the food provided was literally going to be the only "special treat" that they and their children would have on Christmas Day. Special thanks to- Neil, Marlene, Paul, Rod, Hema, Gill, John, David, Ray and Daniel for your help in either wrapping or delivering last year's Hampers. HUGE thanks to Sue, who helped price, organise, wrap and pack all the Hampers. (As I write this Report, we are preparing to sort, wrap, pack and deliver 100 Christmas Hampers this year. We are SO grateful to everyone who donated to our 2024 Hamper Appeal and helped us to reach our fundraising target in just over two weeks!!)

2024 started off with our long-time friend, supporter and volunteer, Peter Levi, being awarded an OAM (Medal of the Order of Australia) for service to business and to the community. Peter and his wife Jenny had a small gathering at their home on Australia Day to celebrate and we felt very honoured to be invited.

Below, is a small excerpt from a speech Peter made on the day:

"CHIPS kids are from the Casey area, which has more than 4,000 incidents of family violence each year- the highest number of family violence cases in Victoria. Children are often the main victims, so taking them out for a day's fun and giving them positive messages and coping tools makes a big difference. CHIPS saves lives by giving these children hope and showing them that they are loved."

We are so proud of Peter and Jenny and congratulate Peter on this wonderful recognition of his business and community work.

In February Eric was invited to go on a Mission Trip to the Philippines with the Ruel Foundation, who provide a loving home to infants and children in crisis situations, as well as free operations to children with cleft lip or palates. During Eric's time there he ran a Seminar for the Ruel Foundation's Social Workers, Volunteers and Staff and entertained children (and their families) who were in hospital waiting for their cleft surgery. Eric thoroughly enjoyed the trip and would like to sincerely thank the Payton Foundation for sponsoring him.



Looking back on the history of CHIPS, neither Eric nor I “planned” for CHIPS to start! Eric saw that primary aged children and their families, desperately needed wellbeing support and was able to respond to that need by becoming a “Community Pastor” through sponsorship from Winepress Church. Out of that need, the Life Gets Better camps were started, and CHIPS became an Incorporated Association in 2003. Eventually, CHIPS stood on its own, through the love, support and dedication from our faithful (and faith-filled) volunteers, supporters and sponsors.

Over the years, Eric and I have often looked at what CHIPS has been able to accomplish, and feel so incredibly humbled and in awe, with what YOU have done. The positive impact you have had on SO MANY children’s lives (literally thousands), could never be truly measured.

Unfortunately, this year has been incredibly hard for myself and Eric- both personally and workwise.

Eric has been unwell since the end of May and is currently off on indefinite sick leave. As you can imagine, this has meant that we have been unable to run the usual amount of iBelong Days and has greatly reduced the number of Seminars and PD’s we have been able to conduct this year.

Our Board has (consequently) had to make some hard decisions, one of which is that our Chaplaincy program will cease at the end of this year (after 18 years!). Although Eric and I are very sad about this, we feel it is a wise decision. Even though our Chaplains will no longer be CHIPS “Staff”, we look forward to continuing to connect with them and providing support when needed.

Thank you to everyone who has reached out to Eric and myself this year- your prayers and love have meant the world to us.

Thank you to the Board (Ross, Neil, Doug and Jethro) for your continued support, advice and words of wisdom.

HUGE thanks to Sue- my admin. offsider- you continue to make my role joyful and are an invaluable support to me, both professionally and personally.

I sincerely hope you enjoy reading the rest of the newsletter and that you get to spend time with those you love this Christmas and New Year.





iBelong

Our Term 1 iBelong Days were fully booked by the beginning of Term 4 in 2023, but the subsequent closure of Lysterfield Lake (due to the storm damage in February), meant that most of our Sailing Days had to be cancelled. We were still able to run all the Phillip Island Days, which the children thoroughly enjoyed.

Students and staff who attended the iBelong days this year, continued to say how wonderful all of the volunteers are (from CHIPS, PIAR and Lysterfield Sailability), and really enjoyed seeing the positive impact the days made on the children.

Below is a private Facebook message we received in May this year, from a past iBelong attendee:

"Hi CHIPS. I went on an iBelong Day with CHIPS almost 20 years ago! At the end of the day, we were provided with showbags. I remember cherishing the little soft toy and feeling special for being selected to go the excursion. I was given a CD with a slideshow of our day with 'Suddenly I See' playing in the background. To this day I hear that song and think of the excursion with CHIPS. As I remember that day, I feel hopeful. Thank you for providing me with such a positive memory in a difficult time of my life. Regards, C."

HUGE thanks goes to our wonderful team of dedicated volunteers- Ray, David, Steven, Peter, Mark, Melody and Sara. Thanks also to Jason, Lee and Anna from Payton, who volunteered with us during their workdays this year.

We wouldn't be able to run these days without you all and are extremely grateful for your help and support.





Chaplaincy- Cathy

Resilience and hope.

What another amazing year our Chaplains have had. The impact their presence continues to have on little one's lives could not ever be truly measured, but in reading their reports this year, you will get a small glimpse into how much they really are Changing Little Worlds in BIG Ways!

When the program first started in 2007, CHIPS was one of the original Providers of the program in Victoria. Initially we provided Chaplains in 4 schools, and gradually worked our way up to providing Chaplains in 20 schools! After a few years, Eric and I made the decision to decrease the number of schools we provided Chaplains in to around 10, as we wanted to be able to support our Chaplains as much as possible, and to create a sense of community and belonging amongst our team. (We also wanted to concentrate on schools within the Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia council areas.)

Over the years, our Chaplains have not only served selflessly but have had to cope with uncertainty (if the Grant was going to continue) as well as difficult working conditions (especially during Covid). ALL of our Chaplains have shown incredible resilience during hard times and have shared that they have a steadfast hope that God will continue to direct their paths- which He has!

Being a Chaplain really is a calling.

To Alice, Kerrie, Analy, Kylie, Ange, Monty, Laura, Baden, Lexie, Ben, Lyndal, Candi, Mandy D, Carmel, Mandy S, Cheryl, Margaret, Margarita, Connie, Matt, David, Mercedes, Deborah, Donna H, Donna K, Sam, Dylan, Sharon, Ele, Sophie, Gary, Glenn, Theresa, Graeme, Yohanna, Jacob, Yvonne, Jacqui, James, Jay, Jeannine, Jodie and Kathryn- we say a heartfelt THANK YOU. Your dedication, care, professionalism and support will be remembered by the students and families you connected, cried and laughed with, for the rest of their lives.

To Gary, Maree, Graeme and Julia thank you for your training, commissioning, love, support and prayers for our Chaplains over many years.

We hope you enjoy reading Carmel, Connie, Graeme, Mandy D, Mandy S and Yvonne's Reports and we pray that God will continue to bless them all in the future.





Carmel-

It has been such a privilege and so rewarding to serve in the role of Chaplain at my school for many years. I have especially loved the sessions with the children – doing activities together that encourage them and build their self-esteem. I have loved seeing the positive effect of this child focused attention for them. This is seen through improvements such as feeling happier at school, wanting to be there, growing in their friendships, being able to focus on their learning and responsibilities, and having more positive relationships with adults.

The National Student Wellbeing Program at my school this year has again involved:

- Individual student support sessions with:
 - o Play therapy, games, music, stories, and art and craft activities, which have enabled children to express their feelings and experiences, learn more about who they are, and have some choice and control.
 - o Encouraging children to grow in their wellbeing skills, in areas such as: confidence, self-esteem, resilience, friendship, social skills, problem solving, making good choices, and managing emotions.
 - o Listening to children's concerns and working together with families and staff to solve problems and make improvements in difficult situations.
- Small groups focused on building self-esteem, using Gary Lewis' book *Olivia's Jar of Pickled Inspiration* to encourage them to think more positive thoughts about themselves.
- Seasons for Growth groups, for children who have experienced loss and difficult changes, where they learnt that change is part of life, their story is special, they grow and change, and that they can care for their feelings, solve problems, make good choices and talk to someone when they need help.
- Parent/carer support conversations and receiving positive feedback from them.
- Staff support and providing input into their strategies and activities.

I have really appreciated being part of the Wellbeing Team at my school and working together with them to support the needs of all the students who are referred. They do an excellent job and make a real difference for the students and families. I want to thank them so much and the other staff for all their support and encouragement. It has been such a joy to serve at my school.

I also want to thank my prayer supporters who have been so faithful over many years. I'd also like to thank CHIPS- for giving me the opportunity to serve, their support of me, their heart to care for families in need, their wonderful programs, and the difference they have made to so many people over so many years.



Connie-

2024 went by in a flash. In the blink of an eye, I completed my first year as a school Chaplain at two primary schools.

When I first started the role, I was not sure if I could fill the shoes of the departing Chaplain, who had many years of experience working as a school Chaplain. In addition, I was concerned that people may expect me to be a replica of the previous Chaplain. I am thankful that both school leadership teams empowered me to meet the growing needs for school Chaplaincy services in both schools, using my unique gifts and talents.

Several group programs were implemented in both schools this year, with the support of the school leadership teams, to increase student access to the Chaplaincy service and alleviate the waiting lists. Drumming for Resilience, Interpersonal Skills, Art, Make a Difference in Your Community, and CHIC (Choice, Hopes, Identity, and Connections) were among the programs offered. These engaging programs addressed: separation anxiety, social skills, resilience, teamwork, identity, confidence, and making connections with the community. It was a joy to see the students grow through the programs.

Positive feedback this year has included: Students expressing that the group Chaplaincy sessions were their "favourite" class, with one student saying, "I am so glad we were chosen for the program!"; two students being content to go to school, now that they had overcome their separation anxiety; participating in the drumming program helped another student who was experiencing anxiety and having trouble regulating her emotions; a very shy student grew eager to offer their thoughts; and in addition to making new friends, the group program taught students to value their uniqueness and take care of their friends who were struggling.

I also met one-on-one with students when I wasn't running the group programs. The sand tray was a hit amongst the students, including the sixth graders. (Sometimes I forget that the sixth graders are still children, as some of them are as tall as me!) One student commented that playing with the sand was "mesmerizing", while another asked if she could play with the sand tray in the administrative office when she is not meeting with me! I am glad that they find the sand tray helpful in regulating their emotions and processing their life challenges.

This year I also had the privilege of journeying with a sixth-grade student who is experiencing grief over their mum's recurrent cancer. Leaving all their friends when they move to high school next year adds another layer of grief. At one of our sessions, I felt prompted to ask her if she enjoyed writing. Her eyes lit up, and she told me she loved writing. We talked about using her love of writing to write her mum's biography. She bought a journal with her birthday money to start the project. She has since interviewed her mum and grandmother, and, in the process of writing the biography, has discovered stories of her family that she never knew. Furthermore, she was excited to continue discovering her heritage. I hope that through writing her mum's biography, she will be able to process her grief and create a priceless treasure that she can pass on to future generations.

Thank you to the school leadership team, Cathy, Eric, my faithful prayer warriors, and our heavenly Father for giving me the opportunity to transform young people's lives in my capacity as a school Chaplain.



Graeme-

So far, in my Chaplaincy journey, something new and different happens every year. This 'new' brings with it the joy, the difficulties, the happiness and the stresses.

With the Government funding our program in a three-year cycle, unfortunately, the school I was at wasn't successful in the last round of applications and so were not allocated the funding to continue with the Chaplaincy Program for 2024.

Thankfully, when one door closes another opens. I am now so grateful to be serving at another Primary School, where I am known as the Wellbeing Mentor. Regardless of the title, I continue to be very grateful for every opportunity to serve and assist.

At my new school I work closely with the leadership team, and they have welcomed me with open arms and gone out of their way to make sure I am resourced and supported. It is in a "high needs" area, so our program is fitting in well with their strong wellbeing focus. The school has valued the experience that I have through CHIPS and are putting me to good use.

With this fresh start, I have been able to assist 23 students from Grades 1 to 6, on their well-being journey. Tailoring their sessions individually, I continue to instigate a Strengths-based approach and unpack their **Character Strengths** and how they manifest these in their lives. We talk about working in their strengths, rather than getting trapped in the spiral of negative thoughts and emotions. The students have been able to take home a laminated 'Strengths' A4 poster which we created together, to remind them of the positives in their lives.

Another big focus has been finding our **Gratitude**. We've been looking at four areas which can improve our gratitude, while trying to make some changes that will see us focusing on what we have, rather than what we don't have.

In 2025, alongside my two days as a Wellbeing Mentor, I will be working at my new school on the other three days in a well-being support role. The focus during those three days will be on small group projects (woodwork etc) which will engage disengaged students. This will allow me to continue the one-on-one conversations in the 'Mentor Role' and be much more engaged in the school community, in general.

Amongst my other roles, I am a husband, Father and Pop, who enjoys building and creating stuff, babysitting, and sport. My lovely wife and I also enjoy walking or a social bike ride on the weekends.

As 2024 nears its conclusion, I continue to be so thankful that God gives me the opportunity to help and serve in the local community as a School Chaplain.



Mandy D-

Reflecting over this year it has been one of many ups and downs. There have been many challenges, both as a Chaplain as well as personally, but as always, God has continued to be faithful in guiding and directing me, as I've continued to learn what it means to trust in Him with ALL my heart.

Staff have been utilising my role very well and over the five years that I have been working at my school, I have established a good rapport with them, and they have often shared their gratefulness for my presence there. This has made me overly busy (at times), so prioritising student needs has been important, as well as putting out "spot fires" when needed.

Every morning, I pray that God will order my day, which He does so beautifully, because the majority of the time everything flows perfectly. There are so many positive, sometimes "life changing" moments with both students and staff which makes my job such a fulfilling one.

Because of my busy workload, I choose to come to school a bit earlier so I can visit classrooms and talk to the teachers. I've also been doing my best to support and encourage teaching staff who often feel overwhelmed and exhausted.

Many parents that I've spoken to, also feel overwhelmed, especially around the issues associated with social media and trying to maintain a sense of control with what their children are accessing.

In all of this I have felt that my role as a Chaplain has been more important than ever. I believe that we are more than just a listening ear- we are the light that shines in the darkness, a beacon of hope in what seems to be a very confused, broken world.

One of my students (who has been struggling with feelings of depression and low self-worth) said to me a few weeks ago, "Do you know what I think?" "I think Jesus is God and He is the answer to all our problems!"

What a privilege it is to be a part of God's plan.





Mandy S-

Another year has flown past, and I have now been working as a Chaplain for over 10 years! It feels almost like yesterday that I stepped into this role, uncertain how it would unfold. What I found was a welcoming, supportive leadership and staff, and an amazing school community. This continues to be the case.

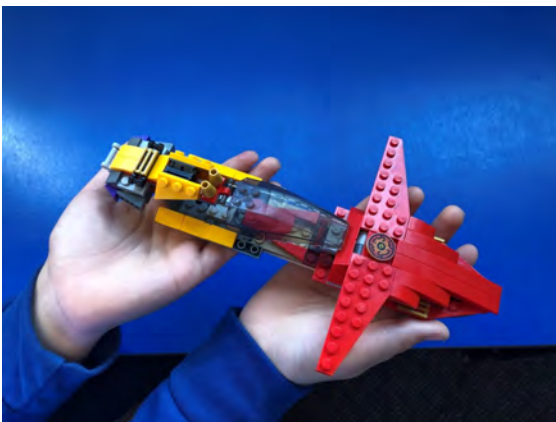
As always, the children are the highlight of my work, and I am constantly amazed at how these gorgeous children can often have such complex lives but manage to come to school with a bright smile and an upbeat attitude. They teach me so much about resilience and making the best of life.

Chaplaincy provides a safe place for children and an opportunity to be deeply listened to. During our sessions together, we work on many issues, such as: social skills, building resilience, learning different coping strategies, learning how to regulate emotions or working out ways to solve issues in their lives. These are all important, however, I think the greatest benefit for most children is to have someone to listen to them and focus just on them.

Trust is built over time, and it so wonderful to watch children grow and to know that I have been part of their lives. Watching the Grade 6 Graduation each year is now quite emotional, as I have walked alongside these children from a very young age.

A day of Chaplaincy is so enjoyable, as it is filled with craft, art, games and other types of play to explore strategies to help build children's social and emotional wellbeing. I also enjoy working in partnership with families to develop strategies for managing these issues at home. As always, children never cease to inspire me with their thoughtful, articulate, insightful and often joyful take on the world.

I am so blessed to have this role and to work at such a supportive school with outstanding leadership and staff. It is also wonderful to be part of such an ethical organisation as CHIPS, which is a testament to the faithful service of Eric and Cathy over so many years. So many children and families have benefited from the work done by this extraordinary organisation and the wider community which supports it.





Yvonne-

This year I have had the privilege to be able to work 4 days a week at my school, which has created many opportunities to connect with the school community in deeper and more meaningful ways:

- I have worked with the wellbeing teacher (in social groups of 8 to 10 students), providing experiences and activities to help the children develop their skills and abilities, to work better with other students.
- We've focused on building students' capacity to regulate their behaviour in a small group setting.
- I attended school staff training with Berry Street and MHIPS - Mental Health in Primary School Training, which has been beneficial with supporting children in the classroom.

My school purchased additional Lego sets for the Relaxation Room this year, which means students now have an amazing whole Lego corner, which is used during Chaplaincy sessions and the lunchtime Club (once a week). It has created a lot of imagination and connection across the different class levels, with no children being excluded.

During my Chaplaincy sessions in 2024, we have played many games which have supported children to "lose gracefully" and win (just as gracefully!). We have been creative with painting, drawing and construction, while building our skills making different paper planes- discovering that you can make a cylinder-shaped plane... and it really does fly!

I have also supported a couple of students this year with the BRAVE program, which they have found helpful. In this program students learn about worry and anxiety, and the steps that they can take to help them work through what they are feeling, as well as strategies to better manage their thoughts and feelings.

To finish the year, we are making a Gratitude Tree, which all the students can contribute to.

Thank you, Cathy and Eric, for giving me the opportunity to take on a Chaplaincy role and for your support over the years.

