

ZEPHYR EDUCATION INC - 2024 GCC

My name is Carmel Martin, co-founder and treasurer of Zephyr Education Inc. For the few who don't know, Zephyr helps those affected by domestic and family violence to resume their education – usually within 24 to 48 hours of receiving a request for assistance.

We provide (mostly) children in Domestic Violence shelters, Family Service organisations and outreach services with some or all of their school needs - as and when required – on approval only, which approval is frugally and carefully assessed. We don't pay into any private accounts. The range of what Zephyr pays for includes: the full book list specific to the child's year and school; full uniform including shoes, socks and hats; swimwear; lunchbox and water bottle; resource fees, iPads and laptops - expensive, yet indispensable learning tools.

Our aim is solely to have that child - the saddest and most vulnerable victim of domestic violence, look like every other school child, so they do not feel out of place, nor appear less valuable than others, nor attract the eye of a potential bully. This is all in the hope that they can resume their education successfully.

11 years ago, Isabella Bevan, Zephyr's President and my sister, read Kathleen Noonan's article about children arriving at school from shelters without shoes or school bags... and Zephyr was born. On that memorable day, she informed me that "she thought WE – she and I and our poor long-suffering husbands, could do something about it". For many reasons, I groaned (inwardly, I hope).

She thought that she and David, Terry and I could fund this enterprise, and with my reluctant acquiescence, which she mistook for enthusiasm, she set out to approach domestic violence refuges to ascertain exactly what their needs were and if anyone else was fulfilling them. They weren't according to the model she had in mind i.e. IMMEDIATE, PRACTICAL, UNCOMPLICATED access to assistance -all provided ENTIRELY BY VOLUNTEERS with MINIMAL OVERHEADS AND EXPENSES.

Zephyr very quickly became an ACNC registered charity with tax deductible status – and I'll say it again - run entirely by volunteers and with overheads of less than 1% making virtually all of your tax deductible donation work for our cause. This is how we started and this is how we've continued.

The bridge community, starting with my home club QCBC, has been right beside us from the very beginning. The wider bridge community continues to support Zephyr with club charity days and individual donations. The QBA again has Zephyr as its charity at the 2024 Gold Coast Congress. The value of this exposure is incalculable and I can't begin to thank you for your unstinting support.

I've given up believing Isabella that she'll stop registering shelters and outreach organisations. Last year the number was 170. As I write this in late January 2024, the number has grown to 208.

We now support 139 organisations in QLD, 12 in Tasmania, 29 in WA, 23 in NSW, 3 in the ACT, 1 in Darwin and 1 in SA.

In the 2022-2023 financial year, Zephyr Education paid for uniforms for 1379 children and resource fees for 355 children.

Some of what we also supplied were:

- 396 laptops and iPads;
- 2712 school bags; and
- 1999 pairs of school shoes

School stationery expenditure was \$146343 up from \$116114 in 21/22.

We also provide swimwear, pay camp fees etc, so that child is not missing out.

In the 2022-2023 financial year, the total expenditure including cost price stock, uniforms and resource fees amounted to \$745,061 which was an increase of 33% on the \$560,124 spent in 21/22 which was an increase of 19.6% on the previous year. Yes, heartbreakingly our numbers are increasing.

Zephyr now supports more than 3000 children each year and has become an acknowledged game changer in the sector. The best evidence of Zephyr's impact is receiving unsolicited praise, so I've again set out some excerpts as follows:

Hi Isabella, how are you? Thank you for your phone call this morning, it was lovely to speak with you and hear about the wonderful work that Zephyr does. It is so great that we have wonderful people in our community who think about and really understand what our kids go through when they experience DFV and are forced to suddenly leave their homes and come into a crisis refuge away from other family, friends, pets and forced to change schools and not know anyone. It is so important for them to try and fit in and feel part of it all as quickly as possible so thank you for what you do, it is absolutely amazing.

Another: ***Just a brief line Isabella to thank you so much for meeting our request this morning and so promptly too. We are left breathless by the abilities and generosity of Zephyr. Please thank your team.'***

Another: ***A Mother said her kids had never had new uniforms before and that they "won't know themselves in new uniforms." She then broke down and cried.***

Another: ***I hope this short piece can support you to continue make big things happen, we all appreciate you and everything Zephyr does to support our work and clients.***

Our partnership with Zephyr Education has been blossoming for 2 years now. In that time Zephyr Education has provided support with an enormous amount of generous materials and resources that assist a child escaping DFV return to school with the equipment and uniforms they need to remove some of the barriers children experience during this unfortunate and often unpredictable journey.

Beyond the materials though is the social and emotional wellbeing that is improved for families thanks to the assistance of Zephyr Education.

And I love this one which has stuck with me and which I know I told you about last year:

Thanks Barb, for everything. Kelsey, Isabella and yourself have been amazing. Myself and the family have been very grateful. Wish you could have been there to see the smile of the youngest girl when she tried on her uniforms.

I hope you could feel it though, I'm sure it beamed all around the world

I read somewhere that 'great things can be accomplished when no one wants to take credit'. Zephyr personifies this ideal and is the closest thing to 'egoless' that I have had the privilege to be a part of.

The heart of Zephyr is an incredibly selfless, generous, motivated team of over 50 volunteers working daily to ensure that we are responding to and completing every request as quickly as possible, raising funds, delivering to all corners of the country (thank you Followmont Transport and all the suppliers

who deliver free of charge) and attending to the myriad logistics which come with operating what is now a sizeable business.

Zephyr wouldn't exist without the hugely compassionate contribution of these tireless good men and women some of whom you will find as partners or opposition at this very congress. On top of all this is the support and motivation received from everyone who supports Zephyr's vision – you're an indispensable part of the team.

Our focus is, and always has been, on the children and their education. But this, of course, also assists the carers of all children who fall within our scope, including Mothers, Fathers, Grandparents, foster carers and guardians.

We weren't looking for something to do – we stumbled on the need and thought we could do something. You've all got behind us and huge numbers of children have felt less alone and a little more loved.

If you would like to make a donation, we will be rattling collection boxes and have Eftpos machines on hand. Kim Ellaway in the main office has kindly volunteered to accept donations as well.

All donations are tax deductible and for those of you who may wish to donate by bank transfer – Zephyr's bank account details are:

NAB Zephyr Education Inc **BSB: 084-004; ACC: 15-629-0526**

Please Reference Your Name and send your email address to admin@zephyreducation.com.au so I can forward your receipt.

And to repeat what I said last year - have a safe, brilliant congress. We're so lucky to have this fabulous game in our lives - non bridge players have no idea what they're missing.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Carmel Martin

Co-founder and Treasurer

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