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# A direct way to raise funds

Two Brisbane mums, Helen Creswick and Mandy Stevens, started the *Fundraising Directory* in its current form more than two years ago, but it has existed in more basic forms for more than 10 years.

It is a comprehensive directory of fundraising products and services in Australia and has both a detailed searchable website, and an annual printed book. "It was created to fill a need within schools and community groups to have their fundraising research made easier," Ms Stevens said.

"The hardest part should be running the fundraiser – not finding the information in the first place. The book is sent free every February to all schools in Australia, as well as many kindergartens, charities and sporting clubs."

The *Fundraising Directory* lists only reputable suppliers, refusing to include suppliers with a questionable operation. Although it does not exclude chocolate fundraisers, the directory is divided into categories, and the 'Food and Lollies' category is only one category out of a total of 39.

"Schools make up only a quarter of our circulation, and so we make it as comprehensive as we possibly can for the benefit of all community groups," Ms Stevens said.

The book is published annually with 40,000 copies printed and is sent free to every school in Australia. A working partnership with ACSSO, the national P&C body, allows the *Fundraising Directory* to provide the free resource to parenting groups across Australia, and they have also recently received corporate support.

"Microsoft has also come on board as sponsor of the *Fundraising Directory*, which allows us to provide more resources to more people. Microsoft, in turn, is keen to educate parents on how to keep the internet safe for their children, and sees its support of the *Fundraising Directory* as allowing it to communicate this message directly to parents," Ms Stevens explained.

The website has more detail than the listings in the book and is updated constantly. Each supplier has a full page of information to describe their fundraising program, and to save parents time, an information request function, and links to the suppliers' website are also included.

"In addition to the book and supplier listings on the website, we also provide information resources on our website. We write and gather articles that will help those involved with grassroots fundraising in Australia," Ms Stevens added.

"We are also launching a Fundraising Wiki, where fundraisers will be able to contribute their own ideas and resources, and learn from others. We offer a free monthly e-newsletter that keeps fundraisers up to date with the latest articles, and also the latest in fundraising products and ideas," Ms Stevens said.

**"The hardest part should be running the fundraiser – not finding the information in the first place."**

Traditional fundraisers such as read-a-thons, book week fundraisers, discos, mother's day stalls and Christmas raffles remain strong, but Ms Stevens believes the number and diversity of businesses offering fundraising programs has increased.

"The decline of chocolate fundraising in schools has contributed to this, but overall it is due to the increasing needs of schools and community groups to raise more funds, and in more creative ways.

"We have found that popular fundraisers include items made out of children's artwork such as cards and tea towels, custom-labelled water or wine, silicon wristbands and toy catalogues," Ms Stevens said.

The amount of money a school can raise does depend on many different factors. Yet the *Fundraising Directory* has found that there is potential for schools to generate a large amount of revenue through a fundraiser.

"We conducted a survey in 2007 that received more than 1000 responses, and the average amount raised per fundraising group was \$40,000. A medium-sized school of 200 families can expect to raise between \$10,000 and \$20,000 and sometimes more, depending on how active their parents are and how supportive the school community as a whole is towards fundraising," Ms Stevens said.

The *Fundraising Directory* will continue growing this year and offer more free resources to schools and parents. It has already prepared a comprehensive state-by-state 'Raffle Guide' detailing all the relevant regulations for running a raffle in each state.

The *Fundraising Directory* is free and additional copies can be ordered for the cost of postage through the website [www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au](http://www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au) or calling 1300 653 305. It also has a website dealing with just school fetes at [www.fetesandfestivals.com.au](http://www.fetesandfestivals.com.au).

