



Adding up the costs

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CASH-strapped parents can dress their children for less than \$11 by shopping around for back-to-school bargains.

Parents can save hundreds of dollars on school uniforms, hats, socks, shoes, bags, lunch boxes and stationery.

Choosing second-hand books can also help slash costly textbook charges that in senior levels can reach more than \$1000.

Discount stores such as Savers and popular chain Dimmeys have reported strong sales in the lead-up

to the school year.

Savers this week dressed Grade 3 student Cameron, 8, in shorts, a shirt, hat, socks and shoes for \$10.95

His sister Kaitlyn, 7, managed to find a school dress, hat, socks and shoes for a total of \$13.95.

Savers Australia managing director Donna McMaster said the store, which sells clothes donated to charities including Diabetes Australia, sometimes carried specific school uniform items.

Dimmeys marketing manager Jeff Croft said

parents were taking advantage of specials including polo tops, windcheaters and track-suit pants in popular school colours.

Parents Victoria president Elaine Crowle said as well as meeting clothing, stationery and text book costs, parents were often being misled into paying high voluntary school fees.

She said requests for voluntary payments were often phrased in such a way to appear mandatory.

"Parents need to read between the lines and ask the question, 'Do I really

have to pay this?'"

The Australian Scholarships Group and Parents Victoria provided the following tips:

CHECK whether your school has a second-hand uniform shop or service.

CONTACT students in higher year levels to purchase used books.

LOOK for advertised bargains to take advantage of back-to-school specials.

DON'T purchase winter uniforms at the beginning of the year as children tend to grow quickly.

KAITLYN	CAMERON
Hat: \$1.99	Hat: \$1.99
Dress: \$3.99	Shirt: 99c
	Shorts: 99c
Socks: 99c	Socks: 99c
Shoes: \$6.99	Shoes: \$5.99
Total: \$13.95	Total: \$10.95

Ready for school: Kaitlyn, 7, and brother, Cameron, 8, in their bargain school uniforms.