

# UNDERCOVER NEWS

SPRING 2022



# CEO MESSAGE



STEPHEN NASH.

**Last month we farewelled our incredible founder, Ken Morgan who passed away peacefully after a long battle with illness. His passing marks a period of reflection here at Kids Under Cover – on how far we've come since Ken raised the funds to build the first home for a family in need more than thirty years ago. It also marks a period of great anticipation, as we continue to further our reach, providing better opportunities to more young people experiencing some tough situations.**

Ken was driven by his belief that he could create real change and offer hope to young people who were struggling to find any. Having experienced homelessness as a teenager himself, Ken knew the key to preventing young people from becoming homeless was to intervene early and keep those at risk connected with their homes, their support networks and their families.

The stories in these pages are testament to that belief. The stories of families who are given some breathing space with the relief their studio provides. Stories of parents and carers whose love for the young people in their lives is helping them thrive. And stories of young people who only need to be offered an opportunity to look ahead with excitement towards the next chapter in their lives.

**“As we reflect on our past, we also very much look forward to our future.”**

As we reflect on the past, we also very much look forward to our future. A strategy is in place to take us through the next three years, with plans to expand our reach, further develop our programs and break new ground in our ambition to support young people on their path to independence.

We look forward to bringing you with us as we unveil some exciting new plans and projects in the coming months. The need is as prevalent now as it has ever been with the damaging impact of the pandemic on young people and families only just beginning to emerge, while living costs and lack of housing are bearing down on the most vulnerable in our community. So as we mourn the loss of our great founder, we commit ourselves to continuing to fulfill his vision in which no young person spends a single night without a stable home.

Thanks for all your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Nash".

**Stephen Nash**  
CEO

# TOGETHER AGAIN

When Christopher came home to live with his mum Jessica, after growing up with his grandmother, she gave up her room so he could have his own.

At 20, Christopher is the eldest of five children Jessica is raising by herself. The others are 10,9,7 and 4-months old. At the time Christopher came home, they were living in a three-bedroom house and things were a little chaotic.

“The difficult thing is having to divide your attention,” Jessica explains. “You can’t divide yourself and conquer each thing by itself. You kind of have to multitask and do it all at once. It’s exhausting. You just get so tired and worn out.”

Three of Jessica’s kids live with ADHD which adds a level of complexity to the household. And when lockdowns and home-schooling were added to the mix, there just wasn’t anywhere anybody could go. Jessica knew that with the way things were, Christopher probably wouldn’t have been able to stay.

“I didn’t want that,” she says. “I lost a lot of years of him. And him being home now has made my family complete again.”

“Him being home now has made my family complete again.”

Thankfully, Jessica was offered a place to live with a Kids Under Cover studio out the back. It’s made a world of difference, for Christopher and for the rest of the family.

“Without the studio, my family would have been shattered again,” Jessica says.

“But now, Christopher can go out there and lock his door and have that time he needs for himself. It lets him be his own adult outside and not feel pretty much like a parent inside. He’s doing really well. He’s feeling



CHRISTOPHER – BACK HOME WITH HIS FAMILY.

healthy, confident and in control. He’s calmer around the children. He’s found employment and he’s got his own privacy to come and go whenever he pleases. That makes him happier.”

And for Jessica, things are still crazy busy at home. But she wouldn’t have it any other way.

“It’s changed everything for me because I haven’t had my boy home. I was so scared I was going to lose him again – it makes me really happy that I actually have all my kids in my home. To be able to walk out the back and see all of them playing on the trampoline together, that just makes me happy.

“Without the studio, I probably wouldn’t have that. I would not be able to see all my kids... together, the way they are. I’ve got all my kids and that just means the world to me. My kids are my everything.”

# VALE: KEN MORGAN OAM

**It's incredible to think that one man's passion and commitment to young people could make such a life-changing difference to the lives of so many.**

Ken Morgan was a much loved and admired figure within the automotive industry. But more than that, he was man of deeply generous spirit with an innate drive to improve the lives of people who – for whatever reason – had fallen on tough times.

At age 16, Ken hitch-hiked from Melbourne to New South Wales to escape an often crowded and turbulent life at home. He soon found himself adrift and without a place to call home. When a police officer found Ken sleeping in a park, he told Ken he could either continue on the path to homelessness or go home and “make something of himself”. Ken 's decision to return home, reconnect with family and find work was a decisive moment in his life; one that compelled him to create similar turning points for others.

Years later, the findings of an inquiry into youth homelessness inspired Ken to take action. So appalled was he at the numbers of homeless young Australians, he set about raising funds to provide more housing for those in need. The first tenant of the first house his funding built was a mother who'd been sleeping in her car.

This passion to create change led to the founding of Kids Under Cover which has since housed thousands of young people but, equally importantly, kept them connected with their family, their support networks and their homes. Ken's dedication to helping prevent youth homelessness came from such a pure place in his heart. He was driven by the simple notion that by creating stability and opportunity we could enable young people to achieve their hopes and dreams.



KEN MORGAN.

Ken's friendships extended far beyond the sales yard where he had enjoyed so much success. His charity led him to forge strong bonds within the entertainment industry and beyond where he was acknowledged by so many for his will to make a difference.

This month, the Kids Under Cover family mourn the loss of our founder. Yet we feel privileged to be able to build on the foundation he laid more than 30 years ago. Ken's legacy will live on through the generosity of supporters like you and through the success stories of the families and young people for whom he cared so deeply.

“ On behalf of the Board, staff and the thousands of young people and families touched by Ken’s passion, vision and generosity that formed Kids Under Cover over 30 years ago, we honour and thank him.

While the community was in shock about the extent of the youth homelessness problem following the Burdekin Report published by the Federal Human Rights Commissioner in 1989, Ken responded with a call to action that lives on today. Ken had a huge heart and he will be sorely missed by those who were lucky enough to know him. He is an inspiration and a role model. ”

– NATHANIEL POPELIANSKI, CHAIRMAN, KIDS UNDER COVER

“ It’s rare that a person’s selfless drive to make real change touches the lives of so many. The number of young people at risk who might have become homeless without Kids Under Cover’s support is difficult to measure, but there’s no doubt the work Ken started over 30 years ago has provided enormous relief for thousands of families over that time. Ken’s vision has enabled young people to focus on education, lifted their self-confidence and in many cases kept family units together. Our hearts go out to Ken’s family and his memory will live long through our work and the successes of the young people we work with. ”

– HEATHER FISHER, DEPUTY CEO, KIDS UNDER COVER

“ It is with sadness that I took the news of Ken finally going to be with God. But I know that my appreciation of such a friend will always bubble up in my life and remind me not to be afraid to reach out and try to help anyone in need, particularly children in trouble.

Ken showed me love, understanding and a kindness that helped me raise the standards of every part of my personal and professional life. He encouraged me to step out and be accountable for the need that was in front of our eyes. And to do something with the fortunate position I was in to be effective! I could tell you of the many times we reached out to each other for help and were part of a great team at Kids Under Cover.

Ken and his family were always solid people in my life and I say ‘THANK YOU’ from the bottom of my heart. Rest up Ken, we love you and thank you for your awesome commitment to all in need. ”

– TOMMY EMMANUEL OAM

# A GREAT GRAND-MOTHER'S GIFT

**Elsie's\* four great grandsons can't wait for their studio to be built. "They've been out there looking through the windows," she says. "The eldest already knows which room will be his."**

The two-bedroom studio is the fifth Kids Under Cover studio to be built in South Australia and the first in the Barossa where the number of young people sleeping rough or in cars is a growing concern. It's been funded by the South Australian Government in partnership with Foundation Barossa – a philanthropic organization focused on the social need in the Barossa community.

Elsie took the boys in after their parents were having some difficulties and struggling to give them the opportunities they needed.

"I said 'my word, I'll take them in!' They're my boys. I wouldn't think of anybody else having them."

For the past twelve months, they've all been sharing Elsie's small three-bedroom house. One of the boys sleeps on the couch and tension has been rising between the brothers.

"We're just flat out trying to fit a lounge suite in the lounge room," Elsie says. "We can't all fit around the table, there's not enough room. The cooking area's very short on space, the bedrooms are very small. So we're very cramped actually."

The boys are quiet and quite withdrawn. A trait Elsie puts down to the difficulties they've had at home in the past. Elsie says she's working on developing their independence. Encouraging them to make their own decisions and giving them a solid routine – taking them to Taekwondo, the movies or bowling as regularly as she can.



"The studio will be good training for when they do leave home. It'll help them be able to fend for themselves when they're out in the big wide brutal world."

The nearer the studio build comes to completion, the more excited the boys are getting. And while their great grandmother acknowledges the relief it will bring, she's also grateful the two moving in will still be part of the house.

"I'm going to miss them, being inside all the time. But you know, they'll be in and out. Because the food in the cupboards is in here. And wherever the food is, they're not far from it."

"I think it'll take the pressure of everybody else in the house. We're so thrilled and appreciate it so much. It's just going to make our life so much easier!"

\*Name changed to protect identity

# FOR SAIL!

The Kids Under Cover Donate Your Car program has been running for 16 years and has been a hugely successful fundraising initiative to help build more studios for families and young people in need.

The program relies on the incredible generosity of people who no longer have use for their vehicle and encourages them to donate them to be auctioned to raise funds for Kids Under Cover. All proceeds from every sale go directly to our Studio Program.

This year we've had an amazing number of contributions including a Maserati, a Mustang and, for the first time anybody here can remember – a yacht!

Our generous supporter, Peta, explains her decision to part ways with her beautiful 'Catalina' and donate to a cause in which she feels especially connected.

"I had bought Catalina with money left to me by my mother's ex-dancing partner, my "aunty" Pauline. It wasn't a huge sum but just enough for a small yacht(!) – something I had always wanted. After some wonderful years together, Catalina eventually remained parked unattended in St Kilda while I was mostly parked in Castlemaine (a fair distance and well inland).

So I was sailing her less and less (and repairing her more and more!) and spending a lot too on the mooring and yacht club membership – I got to the point where I just couldn't really afford to keep her. I figured, if I sold her, I would never be able to recoup the amount I'd spent on her over the years plus I thought I would probably begrudge anyone who bought her so preferred to stay out of the selling process!

Also, Catalina had been a gift to me from a beloved aunt who was an absolute doyenne of secondhand and charity shops. So, the ideal solution: Donate Catalina to Kids Under Cover.



CATALINA IS UP FOR AUCTION.

This way I'd be passing on my good fortune to others in a way that my aunty would really appreciate. I'd also feel the great satisfaction of giving and would have zero resentment towards the eventual buyer. The buyer would also get to feel great about themselves because their money would be going to an exceedingly worthwhile charity and Kids Under Cover would (hopefully) get a decent return.

Some credit too must go to the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron who have demonstrated wonderful generosity in donating the time and skills of various mechanics and administrators to facilitate preparing the boat for resale - something that I hope they have been able to use to generate positive publicity about themselves to the boating and wider community."

## SO WIN-WIN-WIN-WIN ... WIN!



PETA AND CATALINA SHARED SOME WONDERFUL YEARS.

# FOSTERING HOPE

For the most part, foster carers have a spirit of generosity that seems to come from somewhere beyond the realms of standard human character. It's as if the act of opening their home and their hearts to young people adrift is not so much a choice but just the obvious right thing to do.

Karen and her partner have three biological children (20, 15 and 9) and two they foster (7 and 4) and will foster for the long term. The four-year-old arrived as a new-born – one of fifteen newborns Karen and her family have cared for over the years.

"We never intended to do just long-term care," Karen explains. "We've had so many newborns and toddlers coming and going. Some might arrive in the middle of the night, so the kids would wake up and there'd be new faces at the breakfast table. But now we're in our forties, we just can't cope with getting up in the night so often anymore. And it was pretty hard on our own kids. So we took an opportunity to foster long-term because it gave our kids the same stability, and they're very much a part of our family now. I think that's what we're all about, trying to find that stability for everyone."

But for Karen, it's not as simple as just adding two more kids to the mix. She's not working because of the amount of running around she has to do. When asked what sort of person it takes to take on that kind of responsibility, Karen answered quickly and with one word – "crazy".

Her eldest is at Uni and found the additional siblings a challenging adjustment to begin with. When a Kids Under Cover studio was offered to her about 18 months ago, she couldn't wait to enjoy the extra space. Karen saw the change in her daughter too.

"Having that separation of the house and the Kids Under Cover studio has been a blessing from that point of view.



ON THE PATH TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE.

She was very, very excited at the thought of being able to have that bit of independence, but still being close to us, still being able to be at home, still having mum doing her washing and cooking dinner. It gives her that, you know, little bit of independence. And the younger ones, they have their little meltdowns, so it's important she's able to have some escape from that."

Karen is driven by the opportunities she had growing up. And by the idea of giving young kids from difficult backgrounds the chance to get back on track. She's no longer surprised about how people can treat their

children or the stories of mistreatment she hears. After years of bringing those stories into her house she just hopes that by doing her bit she's been able to change the trajectory for some.

"If I can take a little bit of that heartbreak from that child or a little bit of that pain and hold that as an adult who can cope with that, I've given that child some stability for that short time they've been with us," she says.

And if Kids Under Cover studios help to enable that kind of care, it's another way they help facilitate a path to a brighter future for young people who have done it tough, too early in their lives.

"At the end of the day," Karen insists, "we would not be able to have two children live with us long-term if we didn't have that extra space. We just physically couldn't accommodate them. So for us, it means we can take another child, keep another child safe. Yeah, we can give another child a home."