

UNDERCOVER NEWS

AUTUMN 2023



CEO MESSAGE

This year at Kids Under Cover, we're all about expanding our reach.

With the cost of living soaring, housing availability declining and support services under the pump, the impact is being felt hardest by our most vulnerable.

So we've been doing a lot of thinking about how we can build on our model of support and take it to the families and communities who need it most.

We're working on plans to better support young people who are at risk of having or have had contact with youth justice. We are strengthening partnerships with our Indigenous communities to create culturally

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informed models of support. We've attracted funding to build new Village 21 sites in regional areas where the need is great. And we're building our connections interstate so our studios and scholarships can become available across the country.

We've set ourselves ambitious goals, but we've already achieved many and there's no reason we can't achieve them all. Especially with your support.

With nearly 1000 young people enjoying the stability of a Kids Under Cover studio every night, we have a strong foundation from which to build. So let's build more!

I'm excited about the growing impact we continue to have, as I hope you are when you hear the stories about the positive change to young people's lives you've helped create.

Thanks for all your support.



Stephen Nash
CEO

REBUILDING BROKEN BONDS

“All the connections that we had were broken.”



Three of Danielle's four children are living with autism. The other, Jacob*, has been going through more complex mental health issues and until recently was on the verge of leaving home. Jacob is the eldest of the four, he turns 18 this year.

The impact of the studio was immediate and far-reaching. The dynamics through the whole house changed and the bond between the siblings – once at risk of being torn apart – began to build again.

Jacob's younger brother found a freedom that allowed him to thrive. Even his school teachers said that his mood was more positive.

And for Jacob, the impact has been profound.

“He's so much happier,” Danielle says. “It's not just the space of the studio but also the fact that it's quite a comfortable place to live. He wants to be there. He's now doing landscaping with his uncle. And that was NEVER an interest before the studio. Ever.”

“I just think it's amazing. If we had have waited two years, I don't think our family would still be together...”

With four kids sharing two bedrooms, Danielle's household was at breaking point.

“It felt like we were living in a box,” she explains. “It was heartbreaking watching the children fight all the time, slamming doors and all that sort of stuff. There was no bond between any of the kids, whatsoever. I was losing my family.”

The biggest concern was Jacob.

He was sleeping in a loaned caravan in the drive. There was no toilet or TV. It was hot and horrible inside. At one stage Danielle set up a security camera to make sure he didn't leave in the night.

“He was going through a full-on time with his mental health. He was wanting to run away from home, didn't want to be here. He was fighting with his brothers, was arguing with me. It's a frightening thing for a parent. The feeling of him going out there at night and wondering whether he'd wake up in the caravan... or whether he'd be gone.”

When her application for a Kids Under Cover studio was approved, Danielle felt like finally there was some hope. Both for Jacob and for the fabric of her family.

“It's given him the chance to rekindle his bond with us. And the chance to be able to step back and ask 'am I on the right track? I've now got this roof over my head that is a safe space for me. I still have my family here with me – which is the most important thing – but I also have my independence.’

“I just think it's amazing. If we had have waited two years, I don't think our family would still be together, to be honest with you. So I'm just thankful to everyone who's made it happen.”

*Name changed to protect identity

WHEELS OF CHANGE

Behind every car, there's a story.



A car often holds a special place in one's heart. A reliable companion on the journey through life, enduring the bumps and scrapes and helping create cherished memories along the way.

So it seems like a lot to ask. To donate your car to help fund Kids Under Cover's work preventing youth homelessness. Yet since it began in 2006, our Donate Your Car program has been our most successful fundraising tool, raising millions of dollars to build studios and provide scholarships to help keep young people connected to their family, community and education.

Some donors are attracted to the fact that every dollar raised by the auction of their vehicle goes directly to our Studio and Scholarship programs. Others enjoy the convenience of having their car towed free of charge to the auction house to find a new home. Some enjoy the tax-deductible receipt. And many just enjoy the buzz of giving to a worthy cause when it comes time for their car to roll on.

“'Uco' as he is known in the family, was the first car we owned. We got him just in time for the birth of our daughter who is now 11. He's taken us all around town and on many a camping adventure. Our daughter is very sad to have to say goodbye to 'Uco' who is the only car she's known and loved, but we are all super pleased he'll go on to serve people in such a meaningful way.”

People donate their cars for all sorts of reasons, and we couldn't be more grateful. Here are just some of their stories...

Search KUC Donate Your Car to learn more.

“This was my Grandparents pride and joy. They drove from country Victoria many times to visit our family in Sydney in this car. They didn't have a lot of money so when they bought this brand new, it was probably their biggest investment besides their home. They looked after it like it was worth a million dollars. Up to the day I brought it home...

We'd like to donate the car firstly for the charity but also so hopefully someone else can get some use out of it. Fingers crossed.”

“This vehicle was owned by my grandmother and then until recently my late mother. It holds many memories of Nanny showing up with delicious home-made cakes and treats for her grandsons.”

“UEK (you-ik) is the best car!! He really got me through some tough times. I've owned UEK for over 16 years and I adore him. He really has served me well and I want to help other people who may be experiencing some tough times too. I lived in UEK for a bit while I finished uni. He was always there for me and helped me to get to work and uni and have somewhere to go. All the scratches and marks have a memory and it will be sad to say goodbye. But, if UEK can help a family or someone who needs a break in their life then it's a win..It will be an emotional goodbye.”

“I bought the car a few years ago and when I purchased a new car, I gave this car to my brother, Billy. He recently passed away, so I went back to driving it for the sake of his memory. My brother and I have always said that, when the time comes, we want to donate it to your organisation. I hope you can get something for it.”

“I had bought Catalina with money left to me by my Auntie 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. So, the ideal solution: Donate Catalina to Kids Under Cover. This way I'd be passing on my good fortune to others in a way that my auntie would really appreciate.”

BACK ON TRACK

The best way to reduce the likelihood of a young person coming into contact with the justice system is to help them build strong connections to family, community and education.

During the height of Covid lockdowns, Jay made a decision that would change his life.

"I was missing out on work, had just broke up with my girlfriend and I was just going through some troubles, you know? It was just a drunk idea and... yeah, I stuffed up."

Jay's 'mistake' cost him 14 months in jail. It could easily have been longer. On release, he returned home to live with his mum and two younger brothers.

"The house only had three bedrooms, so I shared a room with one of my brothers. He's nine, so I was sharing just a bunk bed until I found something more

"I think having your own space allows for more quality time."

suitable. I couldn't imagine I'd be sleeping on a bunk bed at 20 years old. For three people, the space is OK but with another person it just wasn't enough."

Research shows that the best way to help divert young people from a cycle of contact with the justice system is to enable them to be close to family and involved in community, education and recreation.

Jay was a good kid growing up. Always highly motivated, active and 'a little bit OCD' when it came to how he wanted to set things up. So when a Kids Under Cover studio was approved for the backyard of the family home, he could start to think more clearly about his future.



JAY'S NEW SPACE HAS ALLOWED HIM TO FOCUS ON HIS FUTURE.

"I think I was getting a bit lazy," he says. "I was stressing out a bit because I needed things set up the way I want them. I wasn't really focused on my career... I think having your own space allows for more quality time. You know where you're at, you can do your own things... I feel like you're more comfortable with it. You just feel happier, you know?"

Jay continues to display a strong work ethic with a few irons in various fires – including helping manage a roof tiling business with his brother. He's close to his family and takes on responsibility for their wellbeing. Since moving into his studio, he's more driven, more positive and can better visualise a promising future.

"To have my own study and own space has enabled me to do more things and make better use of my time," he said. "It's given me more motivation to do more things. I've always had big dreams. I'm setting up a recruitment agency, working on a clothing brand and I've got my roof tiling. And once that's all done, I'll move on to other things."

"So yeah, I reckon a lot has changed. Without the studio I wouldn't be doing half the amount of work I'm doing now."

VILLAGE 21 — BREAKING NEW GROUND

Last month, Kids Under Cover received the heartening news that the Victorian Government will provide the funding to build two new Village 21 communities in regional Victoria.



MINISTER FOR HOUSING, COLIN BROOKS (SECOND FROM LEFT) VISITS ONE OF THE 173 STUDIOS HOUSING 268 YOUNG INDIGENOUS VICTORIANS.

This is in addition to our Village 21 in Preston and the second Village, Moorumbina Mongurnallin currently in development in Frankston.

Victorian Minister for Housing, Colin Brooks announced the funding would be granted as part of a \$50 million investment by the government to help prevent youth homelessness across the state.

"We are addressing youth homelessness," Minister Brooks said. "And this investment ensures that commitment continues and helps to give young people a place to call home. The stability of having a roof over their head will support these young people to learn and develop, setting them up for success in the rest of their lives."

The three latest Villages will focus specifically on Aboriginal communities and all are designed in

collaboration with leading Indigenous organisations and with First Nations cultural considerations as a priority.

Our CEO, Stephen Nash has every confidence in the program's ability to offer a positive path for young people:

"This is a proven model which enables young people to navigate the challenges of leaving Out-of-Home care. This funding will not only enable us to house more vulnerable young people, it will also help propel us towards our goal of eliminating youth homelessness in Victoria."

The Village 21 model of support is tested, proven and ready to go. We expect these initial project announcements to be the first of many and can't wait to share updates on the success stories of the young people who have been given the opportunity to imagine and shape their own positive futures.



MOORUMBINA MONGURNALLIN IS A NEW CULTURALLY INFORMED VILLAGE SITE CURRENTLY IN DEVELOPMENT IN FRANKSTON.

REFLECTIONS FROM LARAPINTA

STEPHEN NASH — FEBRUARY 2023



THE SPECTACULAR LARAPINTA TRAIL.

Having had the privilege of working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over the years, I've been able to gain some understanding of the significance of 'place' and the spiritual nature of connection to country.

There are only a few places on earth where I've felt something close to that connection. Where time seems to evaporate and there's a feeling of being somehow within reach of the traces of an ancient world.

The Larapinta Trail, just outside Alice Springs in the Northern Territory outback was one of those places.

Last September, our group of 20 set off on a five-day guided trek with the aim of raising funds to build studios for young people facing the prospect of homelessness.

When we left, I knew none of my fellow hikers. By the time we collapsed in awe and exhaustion at the end of our trail, I had made a new group of lifelong friends.

The trek itself was wonderful. Sometimes gruelling. Indescribable. But to share the time out there with a group driven by the idea of improving the lives of young people made it extra special.

The trekkers on the Hike for Youth Homelessness raised an incredible \$101,000 which will go directly to providing a Kids Under Cover studio for a young person in need. The money will help give them the sanctuary they need while keeping them connected to family, education and their community.

Right now, there's an opportunity for you to be part of the next Hike for Youth Homelessness. This time, through the enchanting wilderness surrounding Tasmania's Cradle Mountain. The five-day guided

“ I can promise it will be an experience you will remember forever. ”

trek will take you into a landscape of glacially carved valleys, ancient rainforests, fragrant eucalypt forests, and beautiful alpine meadows.

I can promise it will be an experience you will remember forever.

I suggest you register your interest early as places will go fast. Not only to help raise funds to build more life-changing studios for young people in need but also to challenge yourself. To re-connect with our wonderful country and allow time to stand still.

Get all the information and sign up on our website: www.kuc.org.au