



Village 21 Bairnsdale - install in action

# KIDS UNDER COVER ANNUAL IMPACT STATEMENT 2025

ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS THROUGH PREVENTION AND EARLY  
INTERVENTION

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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Kids Under Cover acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work and operate. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we honour the enduring cultures, storytelling, and knowledge systems of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## KIDS UNDER COVER

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**VISION:** To stop youth homelessness before it starts.



**MISSION:** We prevent and end youth homelessness by providing vulnerable young people the space and support to thrive.



# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO/CHAIR

We are excited to present to you our FY25 streamlined format for annual impact reporting.

FY25 was a year of both challenge and progress. Against a backdrop of worsening housing affordability, increasing concern about youth crime, and a stretched out-of-home care system, the importance and urgency of Kids Under Cover's work has never been clearer.

Despite these pressures, we continued to deliver strong impact, innovate in early intervention housing, and advocate for systemic change. We strengthened partnerships, expanded our housing programs, and elevated our national voice.

A major milestone this year was securing multi-year Victorian Government funding for our Studio Program for the first time. During the year, we delivered 55 studios, 35 in Victoria and 20 in South Australia, with only two builds remaining to complete our South Australian commitment under our SAHA funding agreement. Our Village21 model also continues to grow, with two First Nations-led projects progressing well in Bairnsdale (to launch January 2026) and Shepparton (to launch June 2026).

Innovation remains central to our approach. The Mobile Pod Program Pilot has expanded statewide, with pods being rolled out and additional units ordered to meet urgent housing needs on sites constrained due to access limitations. An independent evaluation is underway to measure impact and guide future scaling of the program and to form a basis for advocacy and business case to Government for funding to address critical housing needs for young people at imminent risk of homelessness.

Education remains a cornerstone of our homelessness prevention approach. In November, 305 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing scholarships, valued at \$335,500 were awarded across Victoria, following strong demand from schools and TAFEs, while 119 Kids Under Cover scholarships were awarded in the FY25.

Our annual Carers Survey reaffirmed the transformative impact of our work. Eighty-two per cent of studio recipients reported high satisfaction, describing the accommodation as life-changing. Carers consistently highlighted reduced overcrowding, with 35 per cent reporting household conflict was completely eliminated. Studios also supported independence, wellbeing and education, strengthening family relationships and helping young people remain safely at home.

Kids Under Cover has continued to strengthen its role as a thought leader, contributing to key advisory groups and establishing a Leaving Care Housing Incubator in partnership with Bridgeit to develop supported housing solutions for young people leaving care. We are also progressing plans to embed lived experience through a Youth Advisory Group and Young Ambassadors program.

We thank our Board for their guidance, the senior leadership team and all staff for their dedication and impact. We are deeply grateful to our government partners, donors, philanthropists and supporters, your commitment enables young people and families to access the stability and hope they deserve.



**Nathaniel Popelianski**  
*Board Chair*  
*Kids Under Cover*



**Stephen Nash**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
*Kids Under Cover*



# OUR ONGOING COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

In FY25, we continued to build on the foundations established through the launch of our first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Over the past year, the RAP has guided us to strengthen cultural learning across the organisation, deepen our understanding of First Nations perspectives, and ensure that respect and inclusion remain central to our work.

As our programs continue to grow in partnership with First Nations organisations and communities, Kids Under Cover remains committed to fostering genuine relationships built on trust, listening and accountability. We recognise that preventing youth homelessness requires approaches that are informed by, and responsive to, the lived experiences and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We extend our appreciation to Reconciliation Australia, our First Nations partners, and the community members who have shared their time, knowledge and guidance throughout the year. Kids Under Cover looks forward to continuing this important journey in FY26, working collaboratively to create safer, more supported futures for young people.



**Ricky Baldwin, a proud Gunai Kurnai man and Founder & CEO of Koorie Academy Basketball, joined Kids Under Cover staff during National Reconciliation Week.**

# YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN 2025



**Youth homelessness in Australia remains a growing and urgent challenge. The latest AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) 2024–25 data shows that increasing numbers of young people are entering homelessness alone, in crisis, and without the support systems they need to stay safe and connected.**

**This is the reality:**

**40,500** children and young people sought homelessness support alone in 2024–25.  
That is **1 in 7** people accessing homelessness services in Australia.

In **Victoria, 11,359** young people experienced homelessness, the second-highest number in the country.


**72%** were not enrolled in education or training.

Homelessness at this age fractures safety, learning, and connection, often at the moment they are needed most.

These are the pathways into homelessness for young people.

- Family and domestic violence.
- Relationship breakdown.
- Trauma.
- Transitions from care or the justice system.

Homelessness is not personal failure. It is a systems failure. And it is **preventable**.



## Our response

**Kids Under Cover exists to prevent and end youth homelessness before it starts.**

We do this by supporting young people to remain safely housed, stay connected to family, community and education, and in turn build pathways to stability and independence.

Preventing youth homelessness through early intervention and stable housing keeps vulnerable young people connected to education, work, and community, stopping crises before they begin. Programs like our Studio Program and Village 21 model reduce long-term social and economic costs, while protecting young people from lifelong disadvantage and supporting them to thrive.

## What the data shows

The 2024–25 SHS data highlights four clear themes:

- **Young people are entering homelessness alone and in crisis**, often after violence or sudden eviction.
- **Support is short-term**, offering safety in the moment but rarely long-term stability.
- **Education and opportunity are disrupted**, entrenching disadvantage into adulthood.
- **These are systemic gaps- not individual failings**. A lack of early intervention, youth-appropriate housing, and holistic support drives repeat presentations.

## Why this matters

- The trends are clear: the current system reacts to crisis rather than preventing it. Young people need stable housing, early support, and pathways that keep them connected to school, community, and opportunity.
- This context underscores the importance of Kids Under Cover's preventative work- helping young people avoid the crisis point altogether and build a safer, more secure future.

# OUR IMPACT IN FY25



## Studio program

Kids Under Cover's studio program continued to provide over 1000 young people at risk of homelessness with safe, stable accommodation every night. The program furthered its expansion into South Australia during the year, building an additional 20 new studios, bringing the total number of studios constructed in South Australia to 40. This expansion was made possible through funding from the South Australian Housing Trust, together with generous contributions from JB HiFi's Workplace Giving program and philanthropy such as Foundation Barossa.

## Mobile Pods

The Mobile Pod pilot continued to expand over the year through the generous support of the Paul Ramsay Foundation. The program provides a more rapid accommodation solution for young people at imminent risk of homelessness, with a focus on those who have experienced out-of-home care or engagement with the youth justice system. A new type of backyard pod has been designed to be constructed on site, in backyards where a pod on wheels could not access.

A real time evaluation of the pilot is currently underway and the impact of the pods is beginning to be seen, with early data demonstrating the benefits for young people and families. **Read more about this in section 9.**

## Scholarships

Kids Under Cover provided financial assistance to support **119 young people** currently accessing our studio program to better engage in learning and work towards their higher education and employment goals. Families report that KUC scholarships increased their ability to purchase necessary educational resources, with almost half also reporting that the scholarship increased the young person's desire to engage with learning, as well as to be inspired to make plans for their future learning or work pathways.

We also awarded a further **355 scholarships** as part of the DFFH Student Scholarship Program, assisting students who are at risk of homelessness or living in social housing to complete their Year 11 or 12 studies.

These scholarships were reported to relieve financial stress for almost all recipients, **with over 70% also reporting that the scholarships assisted in improving the student's attendance and future career aspirations, and over 80% agreeing it had a positive impact on academic performance, social inclusion and well-being of the young person.**

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2025

SINCE THE PROGRAM BEGAN IN 2006



**976**

TOTAL CARS SOLD  
AT AUCTION in FY25



**\$1,651**

AVERAGE SALE AMOUNT



**32,552**

TOTAL OF VEHICLES SOLD



**\$1,640,924**

RAISED IN FY25



**\$23,015,299**

RAISED FOR KIDS UNDER COVER



## Village 21

Kids Under Cover is excited to be partnering with GEGAC (Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative) and Rumbalara to deliver two new Village 21s for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Bairnsdale and Shepparton. Both projects are well underway, with young people and local community contributing to the design to ensure the spaces are culturally tailored. We look forward to the opening of these Villages in February and July 2026.



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL CARER SURVEY

Each year, Kids Under Cover commissions independent feedback from carers to understand how our studio program is supporting young people and families at risk of homelessness. The 2025 Carer Survey, conducted by RFI Global, demonstrates that Kids Under Cover programs deliver substantial benefits for vulnerable young people and their families, reinforcing the value of early intervention.

Together, these insights reaffirm the Kids Under Cover Studio Program as a critical intervention in preventing youth homelessness and promoting long-term wellbeing for young people and their families.

**61%**

are better able to focus on their health and wellbeing since receiving the studio



“

*It has been amazing having a space for her to call her own and somewhere safe for her and lots of privacy which a teen really needs*

”

**KIDS UNDER COVER**

“

*The fact is she would be homeless without it  
Having a place of her own keeps her safe and allows her to see how life can be. She has good support just a few metres away*

”

**50%**

carers believe the young person in their care is receiving support that meets most of their needs



**68%**

of carers state that all overcrowding issues were resolved due to the studio



**82%**

studio recipients reported being highly satisfied with their studio accommodation



“

*Kept him from being homeless due to housing crisis he would've been in a tent on the river*

”

**92%**

More than 9 in 10 young people are developing skills necessary for independent living



## Impact on Young People

**Personal Space and Mental Health:** The studios provide young people with personal space, which reduces family conflict and improves mental health. Many respondents highlighted increased independence, improved relationships, and a safer, more stable living environment.



***"Our Studio has kept this person alive, it's given this person security a safe space to cope, process, learn how to be enough and accomplish life skills."***

**Educational engagement and achievement:** Having a quiet, dedicated space has led to improved study environments, better school attendance, and greater engagement in learning and career development, especially for those aged 18 and under.



***"School attendance has improved and also socialising better with her peers. Willing to do school events. Also doing work experience"***

**35%**

felt it completely resolved household conflict. The program also improved family relationships and provided carers with greater peace of mind



**40%**

of young people showed increased engagement with their communities, often through sports, church, or local groups



**“**

***The studio has provided stability, safety and reassurance for a very unstable young man, and has enabled tremendous growth in independence, confidence and Identity***

**”**





***"Less stress in the home, Siblings are starting to form a relationship with each other. Less aggressive behaviour in the home. Mental health is a lot better through the home. Bonding better with their surroundings. Studying better."***

***"The impact on our family has been immeasurable, we went from possibly having him removed to finding connection and repair to our relationship. We cannot express our gratitude enough to KUC for the difference they have made in our Lives."***



## **Educational Support**

About one-third of studio recipients have used KUC scholarships, which have helped them purchase essential educational resources, reducing financial stress and supporting continued learning. Households with multiple scholarships describe significant educational gains across siblings



***"The scholarship has made a massive difference for my young person. There was no money stress around technology required to complete his VCE. Books and stationery were purchased without financial stress to the household. And he was able to attend school camps etc."***

One in five young people had contact with the youth justice system, but most carers believe **the studio helps reduce the risk** of further involvement by providing a safe, stable home and positive role models.

Carers reported that a studio reduces the likelihood of out-of-home care intervention. Some Carers described the studio as **life-saving** and essential for keeping young people safe at home.

***"A 100% difference as they now have a place to call home as far away from homelessness and toxic /domestic violence and other negative experiences that have negatively impacted their short lives."***





# STORIES OF IMPACT

## Mobile pod pilot case study

The provision of a mobile pod created an opportunity to safely trial family reunification for a 15-year-old male following time in out-of-home care. This reunification would otherwise not have been possible due to concerns about his influence on the safety and well-being of his siblings.

Over the course of its six month placement, KUC's mobile pod provided a separate dedicated space for this young person to return home, offering privacy and a secure environment where he could better regulate his emotions. It also helped reduce tension and conflict within the household, while supporting the young person's progress toward stability, independence and building his capacity to make better life choices.

Since living in the mobile pod, the carer has observed noticeable improvements in the young person's behaviour and emotional wellbeing, and was pleased to report that he was not engaged in any offending. He is looking for work and is focused on improving his health and wellbeing. He is enjoying an improved relationship with his mum and her partner, has had an opportunity to undertake work experience and has more time to think about what he would like his future to be like. He believes he is making more positive decisions for himself and managing how he lives. He is spending more time doing things that interest him and is feeling like he has greater peace of mind.

The young person's caseworker shared with KUC that the mobile pod has helped the young person break out of his cycle of criminal offending and encouraged him to start focusing on his future. He is no longer associating with peers he was committing crimes with and is building resilience to better cope with life challenges. He is also building independent living skills and relationships with friends. The caseworker also reported that the mobile pod has greatly supported her work by enabling higher quality tailored support to be provided to the young person and the family, and freeing up her time and resources spent trying to source an alternative accommodation solution. She felt better able to meet the range of needs of the young person once they had safe and stable accommodation in place, and that she was able to focus on and strengthen (service delivery) partnerships, to increase positive outcomes for the young person and all the family.

All of these factors have contributed to diverting this young person from future incarceration and formed the foundations to create a brighter future. The mobile pod was in place and used by the young person for almost six months. Following its deployment and success in enabling family reunification, Child Protection were able to source a long-term housing solution for the young person. This mobile pod can now be re-deployed to help the next young person in need.



# LOOKING AHEAD

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As we move into FY26 we are focused on building momentum and preparing for the next phase of our work. A key priority for the year ahead will be the development and adoption of a new Strategic Plan, which will guide our future direction through four proposed pillars: ***Focused Sustainable Growth; Co-design and Youth Voice; Innovate for Impact; and Thought Leadership and Advocacy.***

This work will strengthen our commitment to growth, inclusion, innovation and influence in preventing youth homelessness.

We have many existing and new trusts and foundations supporting our work and innovation. We will also actively pursue government investment to assist another 450 more vulnerable young Victorians in 300 new studios, secure resources to support studio relocations, and expand our Village21 and Cluster Model projects through federal funding. These priorities will enable Kids Under Cover to scale our impact and provide more young people with the safe, stable housing they need to thrive.



# THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS



## **Founding Patron** • The late Ken Morgan OAM

### **Life Ambassadors**

- Brian Chenu
- David Lee
- George Ermer
- Trevor Fasham

### **Platinum**

- Corrs Chambers Westgarth
- JB Hi-Fi Helping Hands
- Manheim
- Paul Ramsay Foundation

### **Gold**

- Brian M Davis Foundation
- Joe White Bequest
- TEAM Miller

### **Silver**

- Anthony Costa Foundation
- Barr Family Foundation
- Bowden Marstan Foundation
- BB&A Miller Foundation
- Campbell Edwards Trust
- Collier Charitable Fund
- Computershare Change a Life Foundation
- Danks Trust
- Eric and Elizabeth Gross Foundation
- Foundation Barossa
- Half Dome
- Homes for Homes
- Insignia Foundation
- Mary Harrison
- Marian & EH Flack Trust
- Mark Luff
- Norman, Mavis & Graeme Waters Charitable Trust
- Officeworks
- Pitcher Partners
- Shine On Foundation
- Suitters Foundation
- The Flora & Frank Leith Charitable Trust
- The Raymond E. Purves Foundation
- The Vernon Foundation
- Unltd:

### **Bronze**

- Australian Communities Foundation
- Australian Philanthropic Services Foundation
- Barbara Luree Parker Foundation
- Bellwether Foundation
- Builder Insurance Services
- Datt Family Foundation
- Dimmick Charitable Trust
- Fred J Cato Charitable Fund
- Giant Leap Philanthropic
- Jack and Ethel Goldin Foundation
- Jack Moody Charitable Foundation
- Jennie Hill
- Kamener Foundation
- Kimberley Foundation
- Lawrence & Hanson
- Link 21 Foundation
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- Metamorphic Foundation
- Morgan Le Tet
- Mortgage Choice Charity Foundation
- Nicholas R Taylor Fund
- Paulusz Family Foundation
- Persephone Foundation
- Rowan Wyborn Family Foundation
- Sambrook - Gething
- Silver Gold Fund
- Spencer Street Outlet
- The Ambrose Foundation
- The CommBank Staff Foundation
- The Junola Foundation
- The Philanthrope Foundation
- The Radford Foundation
- The William Angliss (Vic) Charitable Fund
- Trinity Families
- VGI Partners
- Women of the University Fund
- Wood Family Foundation
- Yancoal

## **Studio Program Partners Victoria and South Australia**

- Aboriginal Housing Victoria
- Aboriginal Family Support Services
- Anglicare Victoria
- Anglicare South Australia
- Berry Street Victoria
- Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Services
- Beyond Housing
- BuildSurv
- Centacare Ballarat
- Centacare SA
- Child and Family Services Ballarat
- Dardi Munwurro
- Department Families Fairness & Housing Child Protection
- Family Care
- Foundation Barossa
- Fusco Construction
- Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative
- Harris HMC
- Healthcare Australia
- Homes Victoria
- Junction Support Services
- Meli
- Mallee Family Care
- Melbourne City Mission
- Merri Outreach Support Services
- MF Com
- Mission Australia
- Moira Disability & Youth Services
- MPower
- Neami National
- Ortech Industries
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative
- SA Department for Child Protection
- South Australian Housing Trust
- Upper Murray Family Car
- Uniting Communities
- Uniting SA
- Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency

# THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS



## Village 21 Partners

- Anglicare Victoria
- Art Courts
- Benchmark Heritage Management
- Botanix
- Bunurong Land Council
- Bush Projects
- City of Darebin
- David Parsons
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Transport and Planning
- Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Grimbo Building Surveyors
- Homes Victoria
- JY Cranes
- Lend Lease
- Macutex
- Milliken
- NH Architecture
- PPDM
- Protest Engineering
- Ratio
- Re-Love (Built)
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative
- Todd Devine Homes
- Town Planning Co
- Tree Projects
- VACCA (Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency)



## Scholarship Partners

- All secondary school participants
- DFFH – Statewide Disability and Housing Operations
- Lenka Morgan
- Sarah Davies

## Mobile Pod Pilot Partners

- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Youth Justice and Community Safety
- Iconic Tiny Homes
- MCM Detour Program



# WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

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## **MAKE A DONATION OR BECOME A KUC REGULAR DONOR**

A simple way to support our work,  
donate your car and your vehicle donation  
is 100% tax deductible.



## **BEQUEST OR GIFT IN WILL**

Leave a lasting impact by including  
Kids Under Cover in your Will.



## **DONATE YOUR CAR**

Your gift directly supports  
Kids Under Cover's  
housing solutions  
and education programs.



## **CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS**

Engage your business in creating  
social change through sponsorship,  
volunteering or workplace giving.



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can get involved with Kids Under Cover.**



**TOGETHER WE CAN PREVENT  
AND END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS**



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