

IMPACT REPORT

20 25





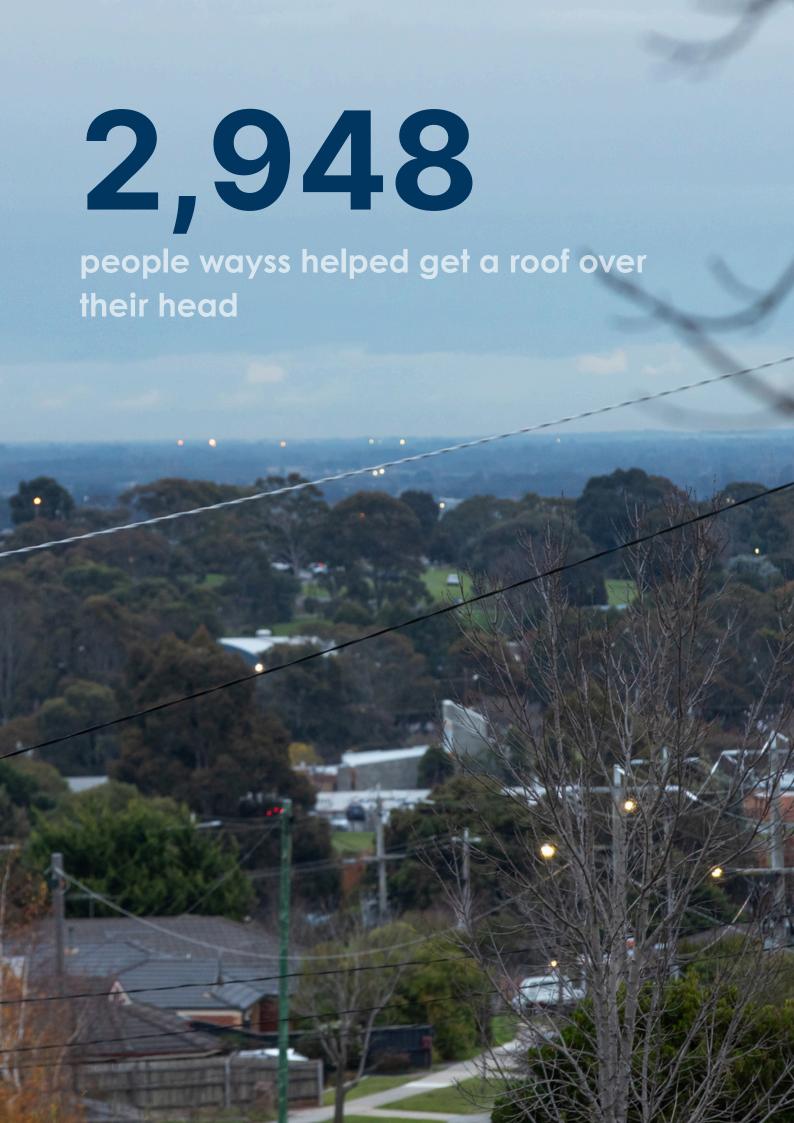












Message from the Chair

As Chair of wayss, I open this report by acknowledging the broader context in which we operate. Australia continues to face rising rates of family violence and increasing housing insecurity, challenges that demand unwavering commitment and strategic action. In this landscape, wayss stands firm in its mission to expand access to safe, affordable housing, paired with comprehensive wrap-around support. Our Safer Places initiatives exemplify our dedication to creating tangible, long-term solutions to the ongoing housing crisis.



This year marks a significant transition in our leadership. On behalf of the Board, I formally acknowledge Wayne Merritt's resignation and extend our deepest thanks for his dedicated service and leadership. We welcomed Interim CEO Robyn Hunter, whose steady, values-led approach has guided wayss through this period of change. We also look forward to the incoming CEO, Simon Ruth, confident in his ability to lead wayss into its next chapter.

The Board remains steadfast in its commitment to strong governance and strategic oversight, ensuring continuity and stability throughout this transition. Our focus is clear: to deliver more and higher quality housing, continually improve the safety and effectiveness of our vital supports, and uphold our north star goal of 1,000 homes. This target is crucial, as more homes create essential exit points for those seeking crisis support and transitional housing. Despite relentless and growing demand, the wayss team continues to deliver with remarkable courage and compassion. Our Family Violence team has recorded significant support periods, while our homelessness and renter services have achieved notable outcomes in both service delivery and renter satisfaction.

From a governance perspective, I echo and support the achievements highlighted by our Interim CEO. The stories and statistics in this Impact Report underscore the importance of our work on the ground. Our team is central to everything we do, and the Board remains focused on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff, so they are well supported in their roles.

I commend the unwavering dedication of our staff, whose impact in high-need areas such as Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia continues to grow in the face of unprecedented levels of help-seeking related to homelessness, family violence, and housing insecurity. Together with our key partners, our team delivers critical services with unparalleled thoughtfulness, compassion, and courage.

Looking ahead, the Board reaffirms its strategic priorities and expresses full confidence in the executive team's stability and forward momentum. We believe the leadership team is well-positioned to navigate future challenges and seize opportunities for further impact. In closing, I extend heartfelt gratitude to our leadership team, staff, clients, donors and partners including both State and Commonwealth governments. We also acknowledge and thank our directors, especially Nigel Neale and Rachael Kelly who conclude their significant years of service this year. The Board remains resolute in its commitment to ending family violence and homelessness, and we thank all who contribute to this vital mission each and every day.

Cath Evans - Chair

Message from the CEO

As Interim CEO at wayss, I am inspired by the resilience and dedication each and every day displayed by our staff. Their unwavering dedication, commitment and expertise is why wayss has the proven track record of delivering important work embedded in community.

I sincerely thank Cath Evans, our Board Chair, the Board, and the Executive team for their support during this transition. Our focus remains on the strategic priorities set by the Board: disrupting cycles of family violence and homelessness through integrated services and advocacy for systemic reform. These priorities guide our work and keep us grounded in our values: compassionate, courageous, and thoughtful.



The housing crisis is no longer just about affordability—it's about the lack of safe, secure homes. This shortage coincides with rising family violence and complex needs, placing pressure on systems and increasing homelessness. Despite these challenges, wayss continues to pursue its strategic goals, though demand means longer waits for safe housing and added strain on staff. Initiatives like Values in Action and the Staff Recognition Program help ensure our team feels supported. To respond, we've deepened collaboration between our Family Violence and Housing & Renter Support programs. This integrated approach improves outcomes for women, children, and others leaving violence—helping them secure stable housing and tailored support. Partnerships with local agencies and housing providers strengthen these efforts, enabling us to advocate and deliver sustainable solutions.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the future for wayss. Our strategic priorities remain clear: expanding access to safe, affordable housing, enhancing the safety and effectiveness of our supports and maintaining our unwavering commitment to the community. As we welcome Simon Ruth as our permanent CEO, I remain confident in the stability and momentum of our leadership team and staff. Together, we are poised to seize new opportunities, further innovate, and amplify our collective impact.

In closing, my heartfelt thanks go to our dedicated staff—especially our frontline workers—our clients, community partners, Board members, funders, and donors. Your support and belief in our shared vision make progress possible. I look forward with optimism and determination as we continue our journey towards ending family violence and homelessness, delivering on our strategic plan, and building a brighter, safer future for all.

Rob Hunter - Interim CEO

About wayss

wayss is a major provider of social housing services and leading client support programs embedded in the community of the Southern Melbourne metropolitan region.



Wayss is a leading provider of housing and family violence support services in Victoria. We exist to create pathways to safety, stability, and independence for people experiencing crisis.

Family violence continues to intersect with housing instability, creating a devastating ripple effect across our community. We see this reality every day: more young people experiencing first-time housing insecurity and homelessness, and a rising number of women and children displaced by family violence. These trends reflect a growing complexity in the challenges our community faces, and a system under severe strain to meet demand.

System bottlenecks and capacity constraints paint a stark picture. The homelessness and family violence service systems are operating under severe pressure, with increasing complexity and acuity in the cases we manage. People are often forced to bounce between programs, searching for safety and stability. Our specialist case management and crisis response teams consistently operate at full capacity, yet the demand continues to grow.

Our commitment is clear: to disrupt the impact of family violence and homelessness through integrated support and strong advocacy for urgent reforms. This has necessitated thoughtful integration of our service responses to optimise capacity without compromising quality and safety.

Who we work with

wayss supports a diverse range of people in the community, including families (36%), individuals (23%), children (17%), young people (15%), women older than 55 (5%), and men older than 55 (4%).

Among those they assist, 5% identify as Aboriginal.

Our clients are predominantly women (60%), with men making up 39% of those they help. 36.5% of our clients come from the City of Casey and 29.8% from the City of Greater Dandenong.



What our clients say

"My experience with wayss was absolutely fantastic... Never once was I made to feel anything but important and cared for.

I am still taken aback at all wayss helped me with... unbelievable. I am now very happy and satisfied with my experience with wayss. I am living not just existing!

Thank you so much for everything you have done for me. "Forever grateful. Amina you are an angel on earth. You saved me. You cared."

Our Impact in The Community

Supporting family violence victim survivors to secure longer term housing

Enabling victim survivors to secure longer term housing is a priority area of our work. We understand the importance of safe and stable housing in their journey to recovery and thriving.

During the year, the wayss Home program assisted 13 victim survivors and their children secure and maintain private rental accommodation that provided the stability and safety needed to recover from family violence. Funded by Family Safety Victoria through the Exit Pathways from Refuge and Crisis Accommodation initiative, wayss Home has successfully piloted a rental subsidy approach tailored to each household's circumstances that has enabled tenancies to be secured in a highly competitive rental market.

The choice and agency of clients who engage with wayss Home is paramount. They are encouraged to be in control of all decision making around their next step into private rental and receive support for 12 months to ensure they are at the point where this can be maintained in an ongoing way.







Our Impact in The Community

Supporting the recovery of women and children at our family violence refuge

wayss offers a program of therapeutic interventions for children and women at SWISS refuge that aims to improve the safety, emotional health, wellbeing and sense of empowerment for victim survivors experience or recovering from family violence. During the year therapeutic support was provided to 16 women and 70 children, coordinated by Children's Practice Lead Veronika.

The diverse program included **creative arts therapy**, **sand therapy**, **group therapy animal-assisted therapy**, **somatic practices**, **yin yoga**, **music therapy**, **and child-led play therapy**. With high levels of engagement of SWISS families these therapies have collectively fostered a restorative environment where safety in relationships and surroundings is re-established.

Veronika reports a deep level of impact:

"These modalities have supported **children** and **women** in building **positive engagement**, **nurturing creativity and curiosity**, **and strengthening self-esteem and identity**. We are noticing significant and encouraging changes among women and children engaging in therapeutic services at the refuge. These changes reflect the deep impact of trauma-informed, relationship-based support in a consistent, safe, and nurturing environment."

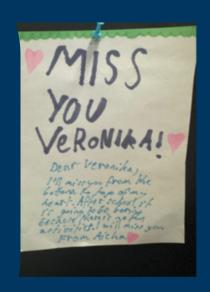






Feedback from participants

"Veronika was a massive help with my therapy that was given to me. She had always made special arrangements. I learnt so much for Veronica through art therapy. She has all the best advice to give and so much knowledge. She has helped me so extremely because of her therapy words can't express how much. Thank you for being there when I needed you."



"the art activities and other resources have helped me relax and find peace during difficult times. Your dedication have made a huge impact on my journey. Your services are truly life-changing, and I can't thank you enough"

Impact

Significant and encouraging changes among women and children engaging in therapeutic services at the refuge over the year have been noticed. These changes reflect the deep impact of trauma-informed, relationship-based support in a consistent, safe, and nurturing environment.

Emotional and Psychological Wellbeing

Stability and Future Orientation

Impact

Nervous System Regulation

Relational and Social Connection

Empowerment and Self-Esteem

- Reduction in anxiety, depression, and trauma related symptoms
- Improved emotional regulation and coping skills
- Increased selfawareness and self compassior
- Reduction in intensity of feeling of guilt, shame, and fea related to experiences of violence.

- Greater sense of safety and calm
- Reduced hypervigilance and startle response
- Improved sleep and physical relaxation
- Ability to recognize and soothe bodily stress responses

- Improved confidence and a sense of identity
- Strengthened boundaries and assertiveness
- Greater belief in one's capacity to make choices and decisions.
- Improved ability to trust and form healthy relationships
- Strengthened parent-child attachment and communication
- Reduced Isolation through safe therapeutic relationships
- Enhanced ability to plan, problem solve, and set goals
- Increased engagement with education, employment or community supports
- Development of hope and a vision for a safer future

25,321

people accessing housing services in the south east region through 2024-2025



Rooming House Taskforce

Deep collaboration between Peninsula Community Legal Centre and wayss is bridging a critical service gap for residents in unregistered and poorly managed rooming houses. Improved interagency coordination has been identifying and responding to unsafe housing conditions and unmet needs.

Since July, the outreach team has visited 110 properties, engaging with 105 residents—many of whom were previously disconnected from local support systems.

The program has facilitated 32 support periods and delivered targeted referrals across housing, employment, legal, health, and emergency relief services. These engagements reveal a deeply entrenched affordability crisis: despite 57% of residents reporting employment, most remain in insecure housing, paying \$300–\$450 per week—often consuming 50–75% of their income. This far exceeds affordability benchmarks and underscores the inadequacy of current housing options for low-income earners.

The resident profile highlights systemic vulnerabilities. Nearly two-thirds rely on income support, and many older individuals are living in unsuitable shared accommodation. The average tenancy length of over three years confirms that these rooming houses function as de facto long-term housing, not transitional or crisis options.

Residents face multiple barriers to accessing support, including digital exclusion and complex bureaucratic systems. Outreach has proven essential in overcoming these barriers, with face-to-face engagement often the only viable pathway to assistance.

Physical conditions in many properties are concerning, with reports of mould, pest infestations, structural disrepair, and overcrowding. These environments not only compromise health and safety but also deter other service providers from attending. Our work demonstrates that proactive, place-based outreach is essential to reach hidden populations and respond to chronic housing stress.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Southern Melbourne Area Family Violence Regional Integration Committee

- Family Violence and
 Homelessness Collaborative
 Practice Series 2025
- Persons Using Violence Working
 Group and Community of Practice
 development

Southern Homelessness Service Network

2025 Regional Forum

Casey Futures Partnership

Strategic Plan working Group

Together We Can – Casey Family Violence Network

Walk Against Family Violence

City of Greater Dandenong

- Walk Against Family Violence
- **W**Harmony Day

Pharmacy Hardship Program

Pharmacy Hardship Program in partnership with Chemmart

Embedded Family Violence Specialists in Partnership with:

- City of Greater Dandenong Maternal and Child Health Supported 114 families in 21 months of operation
- Alexis Family Violence Response within Dandenong Family Violence Investigation Unit, Victoria Police
- ②Dandenong Family Law Court- Family Advocacy and Support Service funded by Victorian Legal Aid
- Southern Melbourne Area Child Protection (DFFH)

Case Studies

Paperbark Case Study



Safe and supported: A new beginning for two families

Two families recently moved into the first homes delivered under the Paperbark Project, a significant initiative that provides safe, fully furnished housing for women and children escaping violence. Located in Melbourne's southeast, these homes represent a critical step in addressing immediate needs while paving the way for long-term stability.

The Project

The Paperbark Project is part of the \$1.3 billion Safe Places Federal initiative, funded by the Australian Government under the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program. This initiative is strategically aligned with the goal of creating more places to stay in areas with the highest demand, with a commitment to providing 1,000 houses by 2035. It focuses on increasing emergency accommodation for women and children experiencing violence, particularly those from vulnerable groups, including CALD backgrounds, First Nations communities, and people living with disabilities.

The two homes – the first of twelve planned for the City of Casey – are a testament to the power of collaboration. This project is supported by a network of dedicated partners, including iHi, Soho, and Mirvac, who are overseeing the development. These homes are designed to cater to diverse needs, ensuring they provide not just shelter but a foundation for a brighter future.

Furnished by volunteers from Regenerate Org Ltd, a grassroots organisation committed to practical support for families leaving violence, these homes offer up to 12 months of stability, coupled with tailored support and housing pathways. Claire, General Manager at Regenerate, highlighted the program's significance: "We at Regenerate Org are committed to supporting this project and are very excited about the potential impact it will have on the community. Providing up to 12 months of stability, coupled with tailored support and housing pathways, aligns perfectly with our mission."

The Paperbark Project exemplifies wayss' dual focus: addressing immediate problems while creating long-term solutions. It is a significant step forward in delivering sustainable, agile, and impactful housing solutions for those who need them most.

A place to breathe again

A mother in her late twenties, 30 weeks pregnant, moved into one of the properties with her young child after spending 12 weeks at a shelter. She had endured an eight-year relationship characterised by coercive control, physical violence, and psychological abuse, including threats to her life and harm to her pet. She had been living in a constant state of fear.

Ongoing outreach support will help her achieve goals around mental health care, legal safety (including an intervention order), and preparations for her newborn. Once in, she described the home as exceeding all expectations:

"It reminded me that I'm worthy of safety and a better life. The space is more than just housing – it's a fresh start. Not having to pay bond or rent in advance has taken huge pressure off. I finally feel like I can breathe."

With nearby access to schools, childcare, medical services, and shops, she feels supported to rebuild daily routines and reclaim her role as a parent.

A home that heals

The second home was offered to a mother in her mid-twenties from a CALD background, along with her two young children.

She had lived in a refuge for 11 weeks after escaping a violent relationship that began when she was just 16. For more than a decade, she experienced physical and sexual abuse, coercive control, and threats of honour-based violence. She was isolated from her community and denied opportunities to study or work.

Although her initial case plan goals have been met, she continues to receive outreach support as she transitions into longer-term housing.

On receiving the keys, she shared:

"For the first time, I feel like I have choices. The home is safe, beautiful, and close to everything I need. It's helping me feel in control again."

She identified the home as a critical turning point in her recovery, offering not only physical safety, but the dignity and stability required to heal and rebuild her life.

Beginning again

These two homes mark the first step in a much larger commitment. As part of Project Paperbark - one of three initiatives under the \$1.3 billion Safe Places program across the southeast - a total of twelve homes will be delivered to support women and children experiencing family violence.

This is more than just a housing project. It reflects wayss' long-term strategy to create safe, purpose-built homes in areas with the greatest need. We are focused on practical, scalable solutions that meet both immediate needs and support long-term recovery and independence.

Backed by government, partners and philanthropists, and designed to support diverse needs, these homes lay the groundwork for a safer future, offering not only shelter, but the stability needed to heal, rebuild and begin again.

Miguel Alapont from Alapont Developments – Giving back to Dandenong

Miguel Alapont, founder of Alapont Developments, has donated a newly built home in Pakenham to wayss as part of his company's broader subdivision and development work. It's a significant contribution, but for Miguel, it's personal.



His parents migrated from Spain in the mid-1980s, settling in Dandenong and running a small bakery. "I'm lucky," Miguel says. "But I know what it's like there." Growing up in the area, attending Lyndale Primary and Lyndale Secondary, he saw firsthand both the challenges and resilience of the community. Now a successful developer, he's motivated by a simple principle: helping one family at a time.

"If we can help one family... it feels a little clichéd to say that, but I guess it's just one family at a time, isn't it? I believe it's important my children understand the value of giving back, especially to the community where I grew up" he reflects.

This donation reflects that commitment. The house has enabled wayss to provide a family experiencing homelessness with secure affordable housing; a place to call home, and with support, start to rebuild lives.

Partnerships with Regenerate Org Ltd

Established in 2022, wayss partnership with Regenerate has continued to grow from strength to strength, providing direct and practical benefit for our family violence clients. Regenerate provides 'Duffels' to families at SWISS refuge that include essential personal care items, sheets and towels, activities for children and even products for accompanying pets.

Regenerate's Homes Packages provided essential furniture and household items for families who moved from refuge to a wayss owned property, providing the safe and homely environment needed to enable their recovery from family violence.

Claire Bauska, Regenerate's General Manager writes
"We are proud to continue our strong partnership
through our vital Homes and Essentials Program, and
we value the impactful approach your leadership and
team take to your work."

Over 12 months Regenerate:

- Provided 10 home packages and 56 essential duffels to wayss family violence clients
- Direct donations to wayss family violence clients are valued at \$98,746
- Regenerate's dedicated volunteers contributed a remarkable **336 hours of service**, equivalent to 44 standard workdays.
- 77 children and 28 adults were provided with essential items, including 20 Joy
 Packs

This highlights the significant impact we've achieved together and is testament to the benefit to clients of our ongoing collaboration.

Dr Fleur Nicholson donation- how this has assisted family violence clients

We have been very thankful once again for the generous donation from Dr Fleur Nicholson. Feedback from our family violence case managers shows the impact this has on the lives of victim survivors.

Noa's Client

Noa's was working with a client who had sold all of her household furnishings so she could afford to pay for rent in advance in a private rental property she had secured. She had sold her fridge, washing machine and beds. The client and her children were sleeping on the floor when they first moved into their home. When Noa their case manager was informed of this she reached out to see if we could assist as a matter of urgency. Because of the Nicholson donation we were able to purchase and have items delivered quickly to the client's home. If we had used other sources of funding this support could still have been provided, but time constraints around approval for funding would have delayed delivery of the items needed by weeks.

Elizabeth's Client

Elizabeth's client living with a disability had received a notice that the rent on the property she had been living in for the past six-years was going to increase by \$400 per month, which would have significant impact on her ability to maintain her housing, afford food and pay bills. The client works part-time and receives a disability pension. The flexibility of the Nicholson donation allowed us to support the client over 3-months, paying the additional \$400 to help client maintain their housing whilst supporting them to find another property that is more affordable and other strategies to assist them to stay where they are. With the financial pressure relieved for a period, the client pursued increasing her hours of work and income so she and her son, also living with a disability, can stay in their home.

Amina's Client

Amina's client needed to obtain a roadworthy certificate and have her car serviced, both of which she was unable to afford. Importantly, the client's car was part of her exit strategy from family violence and her safety plan. With the assistance of funds from the Nicholson donation Amina was able to quickly organise vital repairs, servicing and a roadworthy certificate so that ultimately, the clients safety plan was not compromised.

Other partnerships we'd like to thank

RSPCA: wayss provided Family Violence Awareness training for RSPCA Veterinary and Support Staff. RSPCA provided Pet Packs for wayss clients experiencing challenges with meeting the costs of caring for a pet. RSPCA Pet packs supported 17 Families with pet food, litter, bowls, blankets, toys and treats.

City of Greater Dandenong: wayss provided family violence awareness training to approx. 100 staff across all areas of Council services.

wayss supports a diverse range of people in the community, including families (36%), individuals (23%), children (17%), young people (15%), women older than 55 (5%), and men older than 55 (4%). Among those they assist, 5% identify as Aboriginal.

Our clients are predominantly women (61%), with men making up (39%) of those they help.

34% of our clients come from the City of Casey and 33% from the City of Greater Dandenong.





City of Greater Dandenong 33%

This year, we've expanded our reach to 34 suburbs and added 16 new properties, creating more opportunities for safe and stable housing.

We supported 252 new tenancies and heard from 115 renters in our recent survey—a 31% response rate.

The results are encouraging: 88% of renters are satisfied with wayss services, and 84% believe we listen and act on their feedback.

Our respondents reflect a diverse community, with 6% identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 13% as LGBTIQ+.

These insights help us strengthen our commitment to inclusion and continuous improvement.

Philanthropic and Funding Support

Wayss has a long-standing tradition of community engagement through partnerships, fundraising, and sponsorship. Over many years, these efforts have supported a range of initiatives that strengthen our connection with the community and enhance our capacity to deliver vital services. This commitment reflects our belief that collaboration and shared responsibility are essential to creating meaningful impact.

Key points to note in the year ending June 2025.

In addition to regular and once off cash donations, wayss has benefited from the following major initiatives:

- The Karinya housing development project resulted in 4 brand new homes for women and children delivered through a partnership with philanthropist Margo Hartley and the City of Greater Dandenong. We look forward to working with Margo and her family in the future.
- Peter and Lyndy White Foundation have been long standing supporters of wayss, kickstarting our owned property portfolio with the donation of 11 homes of enormous benefit to wayss renters. 2 of these properties, most recently valued at a combined \$1.4m were used as leverage/land contributions for a new and exciting housing development project funded by \$5.7m of government funding. This project commenced in the year ending June 2025 and will conclude within 18 months. It will provide 12 new family homes. An uplift in housing of 600%.
- As of June 2025 wayss has been advised of / gifted some 9 properties due to section 173 of the environment and planning act. Of these properties 4 were house and land ready immediately to make a difference to ways Clients and 5 are vacant blocks for which funding is being sought. Thanks to local property developers Alapont and Galilleo for their remarkable contribution.

Beyond these very generous property donations, wayss has a range of partners who provide tangible assistance by way of goods, services and donations. The support of Dr Fleur Nicholson, Queens Fund, minta group are of particular note as are the supplies of goods and services by Atlassian, Keeper, Microsoft, Action1, VMIA, Regenerate Org, Homes Trade Hub Australia and Powerhouse Heat Pumps.

Future Priorities and Strategic Focus

wayss ambition remains focused on expanding quality housing options, strengthening breadth of services, deepening partnerships and enhancing organisational sustainability.

We have a plan to deliver specific housing projects, strengthen the voice of people using our support services, and increase funding and efficiency improvements to ensure continued growth and impact.

- Expand quality housing options: Targeted construction of additional crisis and transitional housing options, including family violence refuge.
- Tailored wrap-around supports through diverse therapeutic interventions.
- Support 45 households through housing pathways and 22 households via home assistance programs, aiming to stabilise housing for clients.
- Strengthen leadership, advocacy and active participation in key advisory committees and working groups to influence sector reforms and secure future funding.
- Support and invest in staff and uphold rigorous occupational health and safety support and training.
- Ensure financial and operational sustainability.
- Leverage innovation and partnerships with philanthropic and corporate relationships for increased housing support.

Davy - Turning Data into Purpose

When Davy Duong first joined wayss in 2020, the timing was unforgettable. "I do remember my first week at wayss involved coming to a near empty office to collect my laptop, circumventing the 20km rule to visit our other wayss' sites, and meeting everyone virtually. Weird times."



Despite the unusual start, Davy quickly found a sense of purpose. Having never worked in the not-for-profit sector before, he was inspired by the impact wayss has on people's lives. "We take for granted the safety of four walls and a roof, so for an organisation helping people at their most vulnerable was very inspiring."

In his role, Davy makes sense of the numbers. He works with large amounts of data, simplifying the complex so teams across wayss can make more informed, data-driven decisions. "Help solve people's problems with the skills you have," is advice he received early in his career, and it's become the mantra that shapes his work.

Davy's motivation is also deeply personal. As the child of refugee parents who were helped with housing when they first arrived in Australia, he understands what it means to be without a secure home. "I find it rewarding to be able to give back and serve people in the same situation."

Looking to the future, he sees wayss continuing to make an impact close to home. "Think global, act local has always resonated with me. wayss can't solve the entire world's homelessness or family violence problems, but we can aim high and make impactful differences to our patch for generations to come."

Anne - Supporting Young People to Thrive

When Anne Casey first joined wayss more than 15 years ago, she was "young, naive and eager to get a job working with young people." Fresh out of her studies, she saw working in homelessness as the best way to gain exposure to the sector. What she found was a career of deep purpose and growth.



Anne now oversees the Service for Young People programs, which include the youth refuge (EYA), transitional housing program and Step Ahead. What she enjoys most is the continuity of support. "It's great that we have the opportunity to meet a young person in refuge and refer them into our transitional housing program or Step Ahead, where we can continue supporting them to develop their independent living skills and see them getting closer to reaching their aspirational goals."

Her long journey with wayss has shaped both her professional and personal outlook. "When I reflect on when I first began working at wayss, I was such a baby. I have grown and learnt so much over the past 15 years, which has informed and shaped the way I work with both young people and staff."

For Anne, the most rewarding part of the work is the young people themselves. "Their resilience, self-determination, motivation and ability to still be polite and have a good laugh, despite everything that they have been through" continues to inspire her every day.

She still recalls the nostalgia of her early days: the old blue building, '90s couches, and moments with colleagues as they wrapped up each day. From those beginnings to now, Anne's story is one of dedication to helping young people find stability, independence and hope for the future.

Angelika – A Temporary Start to a Lasting Impact

What began as a six-week temporary placement in Property Services back in 2009 has grown into a deeply fulfilling career. With a background in banking, the transition into the housing and homelessness sector was unexpected - but transformative. "I was fascinated by how this sector worked," they reflect, "and had my eyes pried open during that short time."



Now leading a diverse and experienced team, the role centres on providing housing support to some of the most vulnerable members of the community. It involves close collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to support tenancies and improve outcomes for those living in Wayss-managed properties. "We apply a social lens to everything we do," they explain, "to give clients the best possible opportunity to access safe, stable and affordable housing—and to help them overcome the barriers that put their tenancies at risk."

Personal experience has played a significant role in shaping this approach. Having migrated to Australia as a young child without speaking English, there's a deep empathy for the challenges many clients face. "I understand how difficult it can be to start over in a new country," they share. "That's why I try to educate others about these struggles—because sometimes, offering a different perspective can make all the difference."

Looking ahead, there's a strong hope that wayss continues to empower clients to break the cycle of homelessness. "We want to stop the revolving door," they emphasise. "By teaching people how to sustain successful tenancies, be good neighbours, and use their time with us as a stepping stone to long-term housing, we can help more vulnerable members of our community. That's the kind of lasting change we're working toward."

Jasmina - Driven by Experience, Dedicated to Change

A personal history of witnessing family violence as a child planted the seed for a lifelong commitment to social justice. "At the time, I didn't understand why it was happening," they recall, "but deep down I knew it wasn't OK." That early experience became the foundation for a career focused on supporting women and children impacted by family violence—through education, empowerment, safety planning, and risk mitigation.



Since joining Wayss in 2010, shortly after completing a Social Work degree, the journey has been one of growth, learning, and impact. "I'll never forget the overwhelming feeling walking into the old Wayss office for my interview," they share. "Four people around the table—including the CEO—ready to interview me. I was so nervous I don't even remember how I got through it!" That moment marked the beginning of a career dedicated to making a difference in the lives of those affected by violence.

In their current role, they supervise Specialist Family Violence Practitioners, providing guidance, case consultations, and promoting best practice principles. The work also includes inducting new staff, leading team meetings, and managing administrative tasks such as SHIP reports and file audits. But it's the human impact that drives them most. "What I enjoy most is making a difference in people's lives, finding solutions, and building a positive team culture," they say. "My team loves a fun work challenge—especially when dress-ups are involved!"

Supporting vulnerable people in the community brings a deep sense of purpose. "There's real satisfaction and accomplishment in helping others," they explain. "Especially those who are most at risk. It's why we do what we do." That passion is evident in every aspect of their work—from mentoring staff to advocating for better outcomes for families.

Looking ahead, there's hope that wayss continues to evolve and expand its impact. "I'd love to see more housing stock, the continuation of the 'no wrong door' approach, and the implementation of a therapeutic program for children," they say. These aspirations reflect a vision not just for service delivery, but for systemic change—ensuring that every person who walks through Wayss' doors finds safety, support, and a path forward.

Trudy - Response and Recovery with Heart

Drawn to work that makes a real difference in people's lives, the decision to join wayss was rooted in a desire to be part of something meaningful for Trudy. "When I came across wayss, I could see how committed the organisation was to supporting people through incredibly tough situations," they share. "That really resonated with me. I wanted to be part of something that wasn't just about services, but about advocacy, compassion, and long-term change."



Since joining the organisation in 2015 as an intake worker with the youth team, their journey has been shaped by both sector-wide transformation and personal growth. "It was a big year," they recall. "Rosie Batty had just been named Australian of the Year, and the Royal Commission into Family Violence was announced. There was a real sense of hope that things were shifting." That sense of purpose was matched by the warmth and support of the team. "Anette, the Youth Team, and the IAP crew made me feel so welcome. It was busy, but it felt right."

Now serving as Team Leader for Family Violence Response and Recovery, the role involves supporting the team, ensuring safe and effective service delivery, and managing day-to-day operations. "What I love most is seeing the team grow," they say. "When someone finds their stride or has a breakthrough moment with a client, it's really rewarding." Their leadership style is grounded in empathy and clarity, shaped by years of experience across different roles. "Starting out in intake taught me the importance of listening and being present. Over time, I've come to really value trauma-informed practice and collaborative leadership."

The most meaningful moments come from witnessing transformation in the lives of those supported. "It's when someone starts to feel safe again—when they begin to see a way forward," they explain. "You see the shift from being a 'Victim' to becoming a 'Survivor.' It's not always big or dramatic; sometimes it's just a quiet shift, a bit of hope returning. Being part of that journey, even in a small way, is incredibly meaningful."

Looking ahead, there's a strong hope that Wayss continues to push for systemic change. "I hope we keep growing, building partnerships, and making sure the voices of the people we support are heard loud and clear," they say. "We've got such a strong foundation, and I'd love to see us keep advocating—not just for better services, but for better systems."

Julz - Turning Lived Experience into Lasting Impact

Julz is a frontline worker whose lived experience of homelessness deeply informs her professional practice. Reflecting on her childhood, she shared, "I was a child when a lot of this was happening, and my mum worked really hard to keep my brother and I quite sheltered."



While she didn't always understand the full impact at the time, she remembers small but meaningful supports—like donated shampoo and school hampers—that helped her family feel seen.

Her involvement in the "Walk in Her Shoes" 2025 panel was a milestone, marking the first time she publicly spoke about her experience. "It was also the first time my mum and I, since being an adult, had actually ever spoken about homelessness and what it looked like from her perspective," Julz said. Despite the emotional toll, she found strength in sharing her story to help others and advocate for change.

Julz is passionate about challenging misconceptions, especially around women and multicultural communities experiencing homelessness. "My absolute biggest bugbear... is this person is from this country, and therefore they're getting access to things that I'm not," she explained, calling out the victim-blaming narratives that distract from systemic issues.

For Julz, home means more than just shelter. "When I think home, I think safety... I think of my partner, I think of my mum, I think of my friends," she said. Her story is a powerful reminder of the resilience behind lived experience and the importance of including those voices in shaping policy and practice.



Thanks to the Team

At wayss, we are incredibly proud of our diverse and inclusive team, which is the heart of everything we do. Our workforce comprises 208 people with different perspectives and experiences that drive our success.

We are honoured to have achieved the Rainbow Tick Accreditation, a testament to our commitment to fostering a workplace that celebrates and supports the LGBTQI+ community.

Together, our team represents a vibrant and supportive culture that thrives on collaboration, compassion, and respect, allowing us to make a meaningful impact every day.



Address

20 Princes Hwy, Dandenong VIC 3175



Email Address

contact@wayss.org.au



Website

wayss.org.au

