

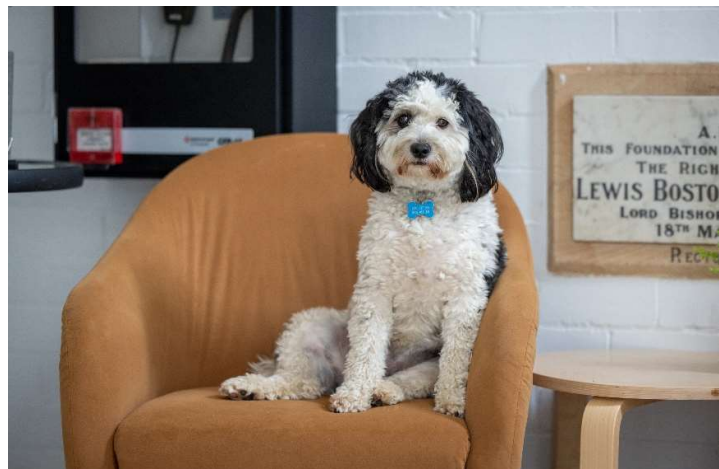


The Story of HOME

Celebrating 15 years



Patron: The Hon. Sir William Deane



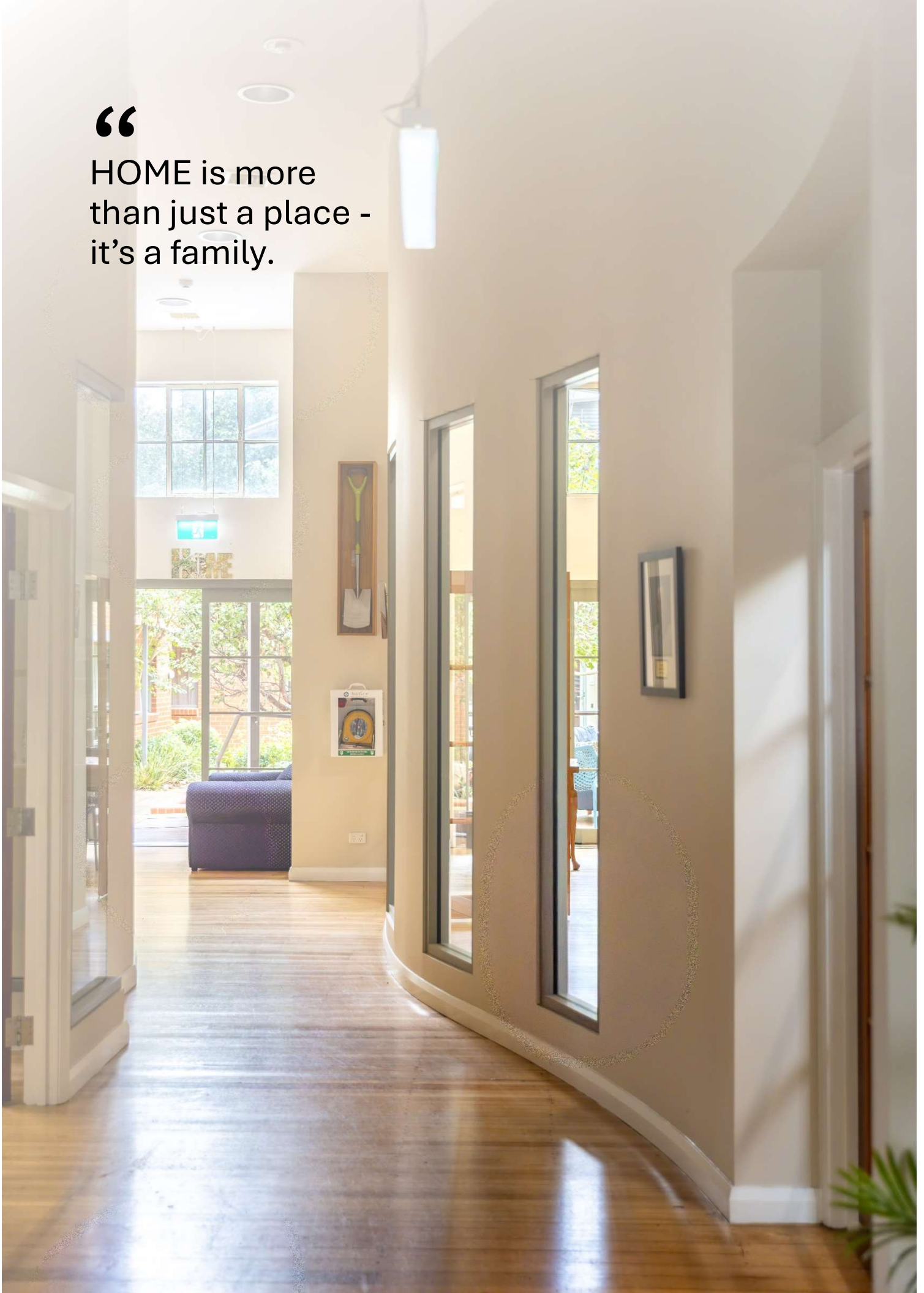
The Story of HOME

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HOME is more
than just a place -
it's a family.



Note from our Patron



Over the years, particularly while I was Governor-General, my wife Helen and I have been privileged to listen to the stories of countless people from many walks of life. For us, the most disturbing and challenging of those stories have been those of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our Australian community - and their stories have also been the most important. For we have no doubt that the ultimate measure of the worth of us all, both as individuals and as a society or nation, is how we listen and respond to those most in need of our protection, and care.

Enduring serious mental illness, or caring for someone with a mental illness, can be life consuming. The consequences can be completely devastating, with suicide, homelessness, isolation, and loneliness all too pervasive realities. Far too often in our Australian communities, notwithstanding the genuine efforts of government and government agencies, the plight of the seriously mentally ill is ignored or unappreciated because they have become isolated and largely unseen - be it on the streets, or in completely unsuitable housing.

Given this reality, there is an urgent need for us to do what we can at a local level, both as individuals and as members of our local communities, to ensure that those living with an enduring mental illness are recognised and afforded adequate support and care. HOME in Queanbeyan ("HOME") was established and exists to provide such local support and care.

The initial vision of HOME was that of its founder, Father Peter Day. Put briefly, that vision was the creation of a loving and caring place, a "Home", for people with enduring mental illness. In the early days, that vision attracted the backing of an outstanding group of like-minded people, including Anne Pratt, Tony Carey, Nick Pelle and a variety of political, financial and other supporters.

Father Peter's vision has now been fulfilled. Thus, for over fifteen years, with the support of a dedicated Committee, selfless staff, along with a band of generous volunteers, HOME has been caring for some of the most vulnerable men and women in our community. As alluded to, the vision hinges on love - on loving people into life: encouraging residents to live active, fulfilling and happy lives.

While, during its building phase, HOME enjoyed substantial financial government backing, these days, its existence and ongoing operation is independent of government funding and is totally reliant upon the generosity of local donors. It is an absolutely outstanding example of an entire local community - businesses, schools, churches and individuals - combining to transform lives and work for the common good.

I have no hesitation in expressing my support and unqualified admiration for HOME and for all those who, by their work or generosity, have made or make its operations and achievements possible.

Sir William Deane

Governor-General of Australia 1996-2001

Our purpose

HOME's vision

We seek to provide a safe, loving, and long-term home for twenty men and women living with an enduring mental illness who are at risk of homelessness.

In essence, we want to create community: an environment of mutual friendship and support: a “HOME” that helps love people back into life!



A distinct model of care

At the core of HOME's approach is good quality long-term accommodation in a safe, loving, non-clinical setting.

HOME features 20 self-contained, one-bedroom units, allowing residents to live independently - with love and care always near at hand. Residents are free to stay at HOME for as long as they like, thus affording them invaluable security and stability.

The HOME team supports residents 7 days a week, helping with medications, appointments and daily living. Overnight caretakers provide security and support in case of emergencies.

HOME wants to become a living example of a local community taking a stand, by caring for its most vulnerable citizens. By doing so, HOME aims to counter the pervasive default setting in which the care of citizens is outsourced to governments.

To this end, HOME is totally self-funded – receiving no ongoing government support. After all, it is not the government's role to provide ‘love’ – that is our role, the community's.

The success of HOME

Professor Cathy Owen is a psychiatrist in the Queanbeyan and Canberra region and has worked alongside HOME for over 14 years, witnessing firsthand the profound effect it has on residents and the broader community.

Professor Owen sees the housing stability provided by HOME as being a key to its success, and something that differentiates it from other services. “That kind of continuity is incredibly important—not just for mental health stability but for physical health, community engagement, and overall quality of life.”

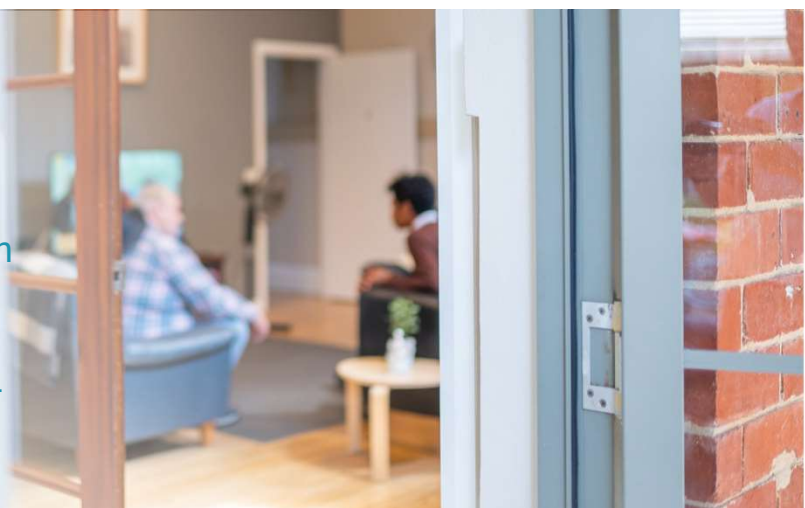
As well as stability, HOME provides residents with a safe and secure place to live, which for many residents is quite different from their experiences before moving to HOME. “Some of the places our clients lived before HOME are frankly unsafe. The environments can be aggressive, with easy access to substances that exacerbate psychosis. It’s a stark difference from the structure and support HOME provides.”

High turnover rates in community mental health means residents often face instability in external services. “HOME’s staff are the bridge - the ones providing the continuity when everything else changes,” Professor Owen said. “They are often the ones helping junior mental health workers understand how to engage effectively with clients.”

When asked what she envisions for HOME’s future, Professor Owen stressed the importance of sustained funding. “This model works. It improves lives. There is a clear growing demand for more services like HOME - permanent supported housing that isn’t just a stopgap solution.”

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That kind of continuity is incredibly important — not just for mental health stability but for physical health, community engagement, and overall quality of life.



Our history

The origin of HOME

Father Peter Day had a deeply personal awakening to the realities of homelessness and mental illness when he spent eight months living on the streets in Sydney's Kings Cross in the late 1990s. This gave him a taste of the struggles faced by people with enduring mental illness, who too often are left to fend for themselves in squalor, in jails, and unsafe public housing, devoid of love and friendship and care.

This intolerable plight led Peter to develop the concept of HOME – a long-term, relationship-driven model of care seeking to love people back into life. The vision aims to encourage communities to look deeper, to look beyond clinical, short-term institutional solutions, which more often than not, fail to address the inherent dignity and humanity of people.

Peter first made the vision public during a Saturday evening homily at Mass in Queanbeyan in 2005. The rest, as they say, is history.

Groundbreaking ceremony

The search for a site for HOME begins



The site for HOME is found



HOME opens its doors



2007

2008

2009

2010

HOME's architect Nick Pelle found himself drawn to the organisation when he heard Peter's vision. HOME needed to provide a space where residents could decide who visited them, where they could lock their doors without fearing intrusion, and where they were not passive recipients of services but active members of a community.

Nick offered his expertise in design and construction, recognising the fundamental importance of well-thought-out spaces in providing dignity, security, and stability – elements often missing in existing housing for vulnerable populations.

Autonomy, security, and a sense of belonging remained at the core of HOME's design, and through persistence, community engagement, and strategic partnerships, HOME came to life – not as a large-scale institution but as an intimate, deeply compassionate space for residents.

HOME celebrates one year

Residents celebrate Home

By Hannah Jonkers

FOR many residents of Queanbeyan, this is not the first time they have lived in a community where they can decide who visits them, where they can lock their doors without fearing intrusion, and where they are not passive recipients of services but active members of a community.

All 18 men are now full and equal members of the community. Further, they are not just residents of HOME – they are also citizens of the town of Queanbeyan. They are not just residents of HOME – they are also citizens of the town of Queanbeyan. They are not just residents of HOME – they are also citizens of the town of Queanbeyan.

Residents and management at HOME in Queanbeyan celebrate the first birthday of the service with cake last Friday. Photo: Julie Kaur

HOME opens an additional accommodation unit

Another life can change

By Elliot Williams

HOME in Queanbeyan has the chance to change the life of one more person with a new accommodation unit. The organisation officially opened their new unit on Thursday with an afternoon tea, attended by residents, staff and local dignitaries.

Manager of HOME, Anne Pratt, said she was very excited to be able to bring one more resident into the fold. "It's giving one more person the chance for their lives to change," Ms Pratt said.

"To be more than just a normal person, we can help them find that human side again."

Monday marked eight years since the opening of HOME and in that time Ms Pratt said she had witnessed extraordinary change in residents.

HOME staff Ruth Peltan and Susan English, with manager Anne Pratt, inspect the new unit which will provide a home for someone living with a mental illness and bring their total residents to 20. Photo: Elliot Williams

Canberra Cavalry support HOME

Hitting a HOME run

21st December 2012

HOME in Queanbeyan manager Anne Pratt with Robert Dickman, Steve Hall, Michael Collins and Brian Gearing from the Canberra Cavalry. Photo: Andrew Johnson

Cavalry goes into bat for HOME in Queanbeyan

HOME celebrates 15 years



2011

2012

2018

2025

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HOME felt like a home – the residents are cherished by their loved ones, staff and the community.





The HOME team: Chris Tanzey, Sue Skinner, Susan English, Anne Pratt (OAM), Lynda Carbone and Zoe Ryan.

The HOME team

Anne Pratt has worked at HOME since before it opened. During that time, she has seen many positive changes in residents. This positive impact extends to families, where families are no longer the sole carers of a resident and can focus on being a mum, dad, sister or brother.

She feels privileged to be able to walk alongside the residents and is amazed at how readily the residents allow the staff at HOME to be with them through their ups and downs. We are able to get to know each resident on a deeper level, focusing on their strengths, interests and unique qualities rather than on their mental illness.

Zoe Ryan joined HOME in 2019 after having worked with HOME's residents in an outreach role. “HOME really felt like a home – the residents are cherished by their loved ones, staff and the community.”

As well as accommodation and support, HOME provides a daily lunch prepared and served by a dedicated team of volunteers. Lunch brings the residents together to enjoy a meal, good conversation and friendship.

Many of the residents' lives have been changed since living at HOME. This includes Logan* who arrived at HOME over five years ago. Logan has a diagnosis of schizophrenia and experienced addiction to drugs and alcohol. Prior to living at HOME, he was often admitted to hospital. With the ongoing support provided by the HOME community and staff, Logan's life has changed. Logan enjoys a variety of activities including a job, visits to the swimming pool and gym, dinners with other residents, visits to see his family members and weekly Mass. Logan has not been readmitted to hospital since moving into HOME six years ago.

HOME's staff and volunteers all bring unique qualities and personalities to the HOME team. The low turnover in staff allows for consistent care and stability for the residents.

“The residents at HOME are amazing individuals. They look out and care for one another.”

**Resident's name has been changed.*

Our impact

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as “a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.... mental health is a basic human right.”¹

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 43% of the population has experienced a mental illness during their life².

HOME residents experience a range of mental health conditions such as schizophrenia and anxiety disorders and in some cases, these can co-exist with other disorders such as autism and intellectual disability. Having a safe and stable environment where residents can get past the stigma of their mental health conditions and access a range of social activities and volunteering has seen a demonstrable, positive improvement in all residents at HOME. This includes a decrease in suicidal behaviours in some cases, and a reduction in hospital admissions, along with increased confidence, self-care and social engagement.

With the average cost of visiting an Emergency Department at \$692⁴, and even higher costs for people admitted to hospital, HOME believes the improvement in their residents represents a significant saving in hospital costs within the local community.

43%

Of the Australian population has experienced a mental illness during their life²

310,200

Mental health-related presentations to Australian public emergency departments nationally in 2023-24; an increase of 22% since 2014-15³

\$692

Average cost of visiting an Australian public emergency department⁴



¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response> (June 2025)

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release> (June 2025)

³ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/mental-health/topic-areas/emergency-departments>

⁴ <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2024/data-downloads/Rogs-2024-part-1-overview-and-sections.pdf>

A community of volunteers

HOME is more than just a place - it's a family. For volunteer Kris Mitchell, her 13 years with HOME has reinforced the power of human connection and shared purpose. Kris describes the atmosphere as special and welcoming, where love, care, and mutual support define every interaction. She has witnessed remarkable transformations among residents, from newfound confidence and social engagement to personal growth that enables some to transition to independent living. Initially working in the kitchen, she soon found herself deeply involved with residents, witnessing first-hand how a stable, compassionate environment empowers individuals to rebuild their lives.

HOME's unique model fosters deep, lasting connections. Kris herself has received unwavering support, including counselling during personal challenges, reinforcing the community's reciprocal nature she refers to as 'two-way care'. The presence of therapy animals like Ollie, the beloved resident dog, enriches the sense of belonging and community among the residents and volunteers.

The wider Queanbeyan and Canberra communities have embraced HOME, contributing food, resources and support, and even baking cakes to celebrate residents' birthdays. What was once met with a degree of fear – as neighbours adjusted to the idea of a mental health facility on their doorstep – has become a recognised pillar of compassion and dignity. Kris believes the HOME model should be replicated elsewhere, proving that with the right support system, people facing significant mental health challenges can lead meaningful, fulfilling lives.

For Kris, HOME is a life-changing experience, a testament to the power of kindness and collective effort. She hopes its success will inspire more communities to build safe, stable spaces where everyone can thrive.



Stories from loved ones and family of residents

Since its inception, HOME has been a sanctuary for individuals seeking a supportive and loving community. It has profoundly impacted not only its residents but also their families. Relatives and loved ones of HOME's residents often share how HOME has transformed their lives and the lives of those they care for.

Tom is an active and cherished member of his family, his church, and his community. Despite his full life, Tom's journey has been marked by challenges, as he has grappled with mental health issues. Tom found solace as a resident at HOME, a life-changing move that brought about profound positive changes for both him and his family.*

At HOME, Tom received the support he needed to live independently, freeing him from dependence on his siblings and restoring a sense of dignity and equality. Being part of a community with shared experiences allowed Tom to rediscover happiness and fulfilment. For the first time in decades, Tom began living a life that was truly his own, embracing his love of sports, learning new things, and reconnecting with his family. His siblings no longer bore the weight of caregiving, returning to their roles as loving brothers and sisters.

Before HOME, Salha experienced more than most, and often the experiences she had were difficult. She had lost contact with her children and spent 10 years in a refugee camp. She came to HOME after being diagnosed with late onset schizophrenia - at that time she was homeless. Her strength and determination that had carried her so far in her life, had finally found a sanctuary in HOME.

HOME changed Salha's life. She was able to reconnect with her three sons who were also living in Australia - and became regular visitors. They were previously not aware of her health condition or her whereabouts and were incredibly relieved to find her in such a caring and supportive community.

*Resident's name has been changed.

A resident's experience at HOME

Pam* lived a long and adventurous life - travelling the world, working as a nurse, and embracing every opportunity that came her way. Pam's life changed when she developed a mental illness and went blind, both in her late 40's. She was living alone in her upstairs unit. After falling down the stairs it became impossible for her to live alone. That's when Pam arrived at HOME. "They said, 'We'll give you two or three weeks. If you like it here, you can stay.'" And stay she did - for nearly 15 years!

At first, it was a big transition. Pam's independence was important to her, but HOME made sure she had both the support she needed and the autonomy she valued. "I had my own room, my own shower, and rails installed to help me move around safely." More importantly, Pam had people - friends, carers, and a community that truly looked out for one another. "I made friends with Vera, Mario - just about everyone, really."

HOME wasn't just a place to live. It was a place filled with life and laughter. Music became Pam's favourite part of the week. "Wednesday was the best because we had music." And then there was Pam's 70th birthday. "Everyone was waiting for me to come out. It was a surprise party! The mayor came, and we had a good laugh."

Living at HOME meant always having something to do, someone to talk to, and a reason to smile. Whether it was enjoying meals together, spending time in the lounge, or sitting in the courtyard, there was always a sense of community. "I had a personal trainer, and we used to go up to the church with my walker, then do some rowing. I did 200 without stopping, and he said that was very good."

The people at HOME became family. Pam watched staff come and go, made lifelong friends, and even saw children grow up.

HOME was Pam's home. Pam has now shifted to residential aged care where she continues to live a happy and fulfilled life.



“
I made friends
with just about
everyone really!”

*Resident's name has been changed.



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Knowing that your brother, uncle, or daughter is safe, supported, and well cared for is an immense comfort.

Kenrick Winchester, Mayor of Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council

Kenrick is inspired by the “awesome people that are involved” and the remarkable influence HOME has on its residents.

The impact of HOME is often underestimated. Kenrick acknowledges that, before his involvement, he too didn’t fully grasp its significance, “unless these challenges have personally affected your life, it’s hard to comprehend the severity until you engage directly.” Through his connection to HOME, Kenrick has seen its transformative effects firsthand. He recalls a close friend whose brother is a resident at HOME, and the reassurance it brings to families: “Knowing that your brother, uncle, or daughter is safe, supported, and well cared for is an immense comfort.”

Running a mental health non-profit without government funding presents significant challenges, and Kenrick is acutely aware of the pressure on the board and staff to deliver exemplary services with limited resources. He encourages the local community to support HOME, emphasising, “The service they provide is something that is needed – this is definitely a worthwhile cause.”

Helping HOME

HOME is a non-for-profit organisation and to preserve its special, community-centred character, it does not rely on government funding. This means that every year HOME needs to raise \$350,000 to fund staff wages and training, building maintenance, community awareness and education and providing a healthy meal for the residents, costs associated with volunteers and other running costs.

You can help HOME by volunteering your time, donating money, offering your services, making a bequest or organising a fundraiser. You can find more information on how to do this at homeqbn.org or by scanning the QR code.



Georgina Byron AM, CEO Snow Foundation

“HOME has held a special place in our hearts since day one. We were there from the very beginning – when it was just an idea – and we’ve proudly supported it every year since. It was the vision, compassion and deep commitment of Peter Day, Anne Pratt and the whole team that drew us in. They saw a critical gap – long-term, loving accommodation for people with mental illness – and built something truly one-of-a-kind.

This isn’t just a facility, it’s a home in the truest sense. A place built on love, community and dignity. You can’t replicate the spirit that exists at HOME in Queanbeyan. It’s been an honour to walk alongside them – not just as funders, but as partners and friends.

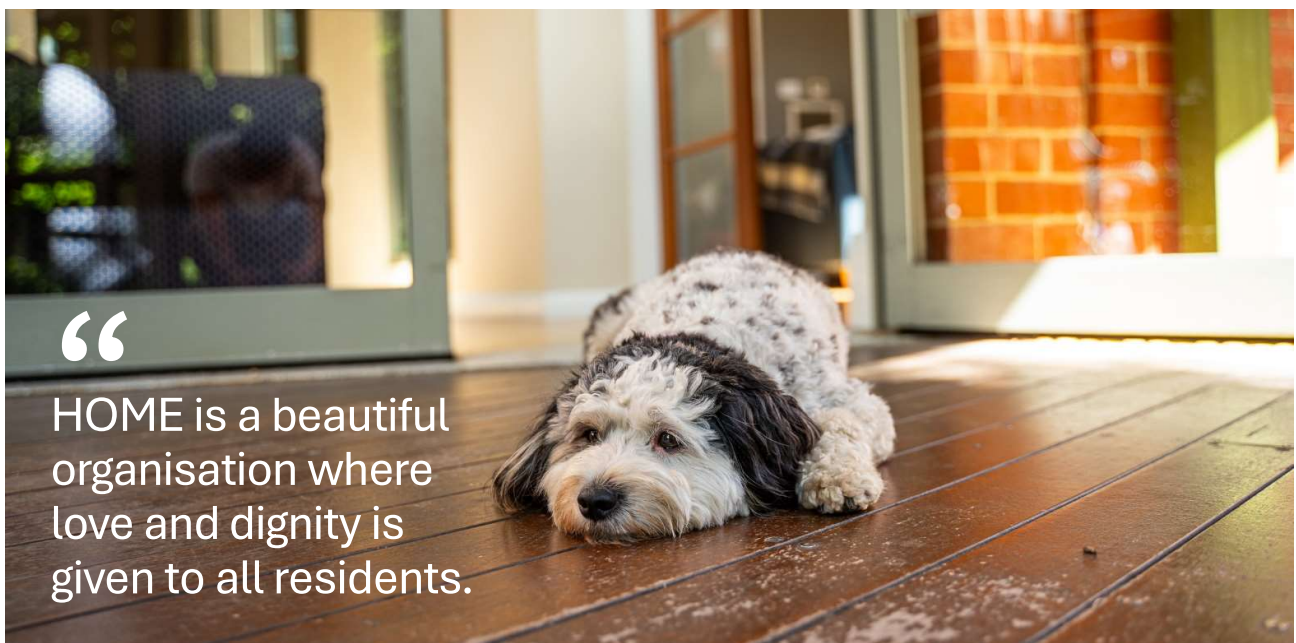
But this work doesn’t sustain itself. HOME needs ongoing support to maintain its buildings and care for its residents. We urge the community, government and philanthropists to continue rallying behind this extraordinary place. Because when we all show up, the impact is lasting – and life-changing.”

A thank you from HOME

HOME would like to sincerely thank everyone who has supported us over the past 15 years. With your commitment and continued generosity, we have been able to provide a loving and supportive home for our many residents.

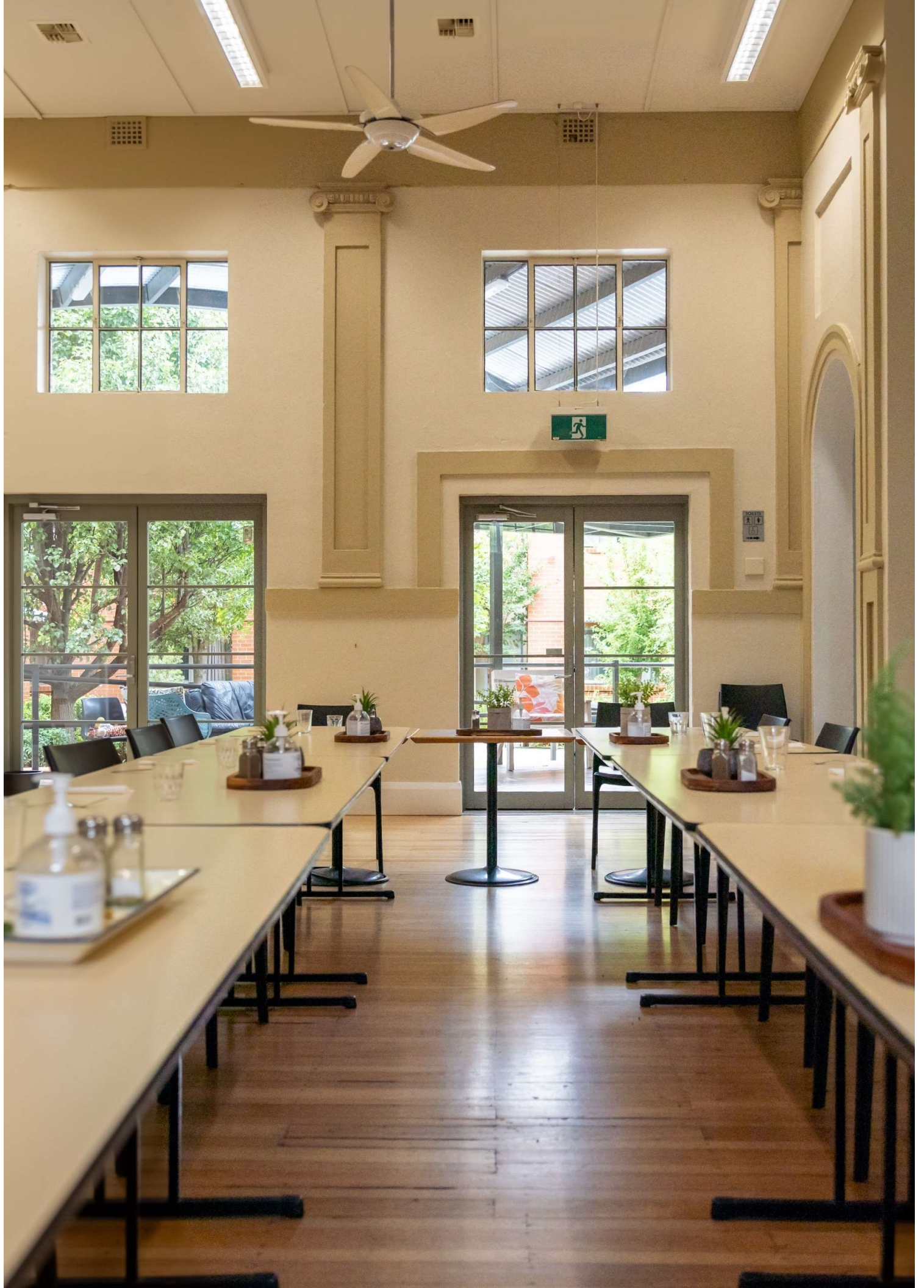
As a community we should be proud of what we have achieved - HOME is unique and was the first of its kind to open in Australia. Over the past 15 years, we have seen many lives change, with residents knowing that they are loved and valued.

We look forward to working with the community to ensure that our residents continue to have a home for many years to come.



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HOME is a beautiful organisation where love and dignity is given to all residents.





HOME
IN QUEANBEYAN

Patron: The Hon. Sir William Deane