



The Social Studio

**FY2024
Impact Report**





The Social Studio acknowledges that we operate on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people of the Kulin nation. We recognise that sovereignty over these lands and waterways was never ceded and that Yálla-birr-ang, or Collingwood, where much of our work is based, is of particular significance to the modern cultural and political life of Indigenous Victorians.

As an organisation working with some of this country's newest Australians, we are privileged to live on the lands of the oldest continuous culture on earth and we recognise elders, past and present, for the legacies they have left and the ones they continue to build. We are committed to honouring these ongoing connections to Country and culture through our work and collaborations with First Nations creatives.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

In the 15th year of The Social Studio, we remain proud of our roots as a small organisation which began in a Smith St shopfront with the dream of using fashion, art and creativity as a vehicle for social change.

Although we now call the Collingwood Yards arts precinct our home, we are still that small organisation at heart: a place of welcome, of belonging and desire for change.

This year we witnessed change in many ways. From the growth and evolution of our graduates Kiyya, Semira, Somaya, Aziza, Sata, Lida and Asmaa after two years of study in our Cert III program, to the shift in confidence and self-esteem we saw in the women who worked with us as part of our two Afghan embroidery projects.

We felt change in other ways too, as cost of living pressures and global conflicts affected all of our community. We bid farewell to our Heidelberg West space and Somali sewing group there after 4 years, and we welcomed new staff while others set off on different adventures.

Yet throughout the change and disruption of the past year a reassuring thread of stability has remained: our studio. A space where our students volunteers and staff feel connected to each other, a space many refer to as a second home.

It's this special alchemy of support and welcome, of creativity and learning, that is at the heart of our students' success and why, we discovered this year, our Cert III completion rate is 80% compared to the national average of 47.6%.

Thank you to all our supporters, volunteers and friends for enabling us to continue this work after 15 years. Here's to the next!



Dewi Cooke

CLASS OF 2024



In June 2024, we celebrated the work of Cert III graduates Sata, Asmaa, Somaya and Lida with an exhibition at West Space. They followed in the footsteps of Kiyya and Semira, who graduated in November 2023.

These two groups of incredible women were with us for two years (more in the case of a some!), starting their studies either during COVID-19 lockdowns or as Melbourne was just emerging from them.

It's always special to be able to stop and reflect on everything our students achieve during their studies with us, and we were blown away to see their installations and celebrate their growth as creatives. Not only did their pieces honour the hard work that goes into garment making and design, but also their family histories and cultural practices, from fine Afghan hand embroidery to Eritrean coffee traditions and Somali "dirac" clothing.

CLASS OF 2024



OUR IMPACT

Provided
4370 hours
free Cert III
training

7 Cert III
graduates

Delivered
1080 hours
of psychosocial
support and pathways
planning to our
students

21 jobs
created for refugees
and asylum seekers

OUR IMPACT

Paid
\$95,433 in wages
to people from
refugee and asylum seeker
backgrounds

Paid
\$29,233
to BIPOC designers
and makers
through our retail store,
workshops
and creative projects

Diverted
151 kilograms
of excess textiles
from landfill

303 garments
repaired or altered
through Mend by TSS

THE PRODUCTION STUDIO

From complex garment construction to our beloved canvas tote bag, our Ethical Clothing Australia-accredited production studio's broad skillset across manufacturing, patternmaking, product design and textile design continues to be in demand with emerging designers, local brands, art centres and government agencies.

We were proud to receive the 2023 Victorian Premier's Design Award for Fashion for our Kay Abude x Alpha60 capsule, a great recognition of the technical and creative capacity of our studio. Production team members Lois, Nyamal, Irem and Cinzia also featured in the campaign for this collection, which was a fundraiser for The Social Studio's education program. Our immense thanks to Alpha60's Georgie and Alex Cleary and artist Kay Abude for their support and enthusiasm along the way.

Big congratulations also to our Production Assistant Irem who led the development of our summer collection, presented at Melbourne Fashion Week! This collection also gave students Kiyya, Semira, Somaya, Lida and Aziza the opportunity to design pieces for the runway.



CREATIVE PROJECTS

After nearly 12 months of development, our Cross Stitch: Crafting Community project was delivered in August. Led by the work of 12 artists from refugee, Indigenous and culturally diverse backgrounds, alongside more than 160 community members, Cross Stitch was a window into the bright, human-centred world of The Social Studio.

A collective exploration of the intersection of contemporary craft practices across traditions and cultures, we celebrated with an exhibition at Schoolhouse Studios and workshops led by Phong Chi Lai of Studio PCL, Sai-Wai Woo and Muhubo Suleiman. Led by Creative Projects manager Bonnie Mooney, this project was a huge undertaking for our small team and we couldn't be happier with the result!

By September we had quickly moved into our next project, the 'Moon Of My Heart' embroidery collection and by February 2024 we began our second, expanded Afghan embroidery project, 'Suzani Stories'. In all our creative projects we strive to provide paid opportunities and Award rates to our collaborators. More than that, we're proud that through these projects this year, we've facilitated first-ever jobs for 17 newly-arrived Afghan women.



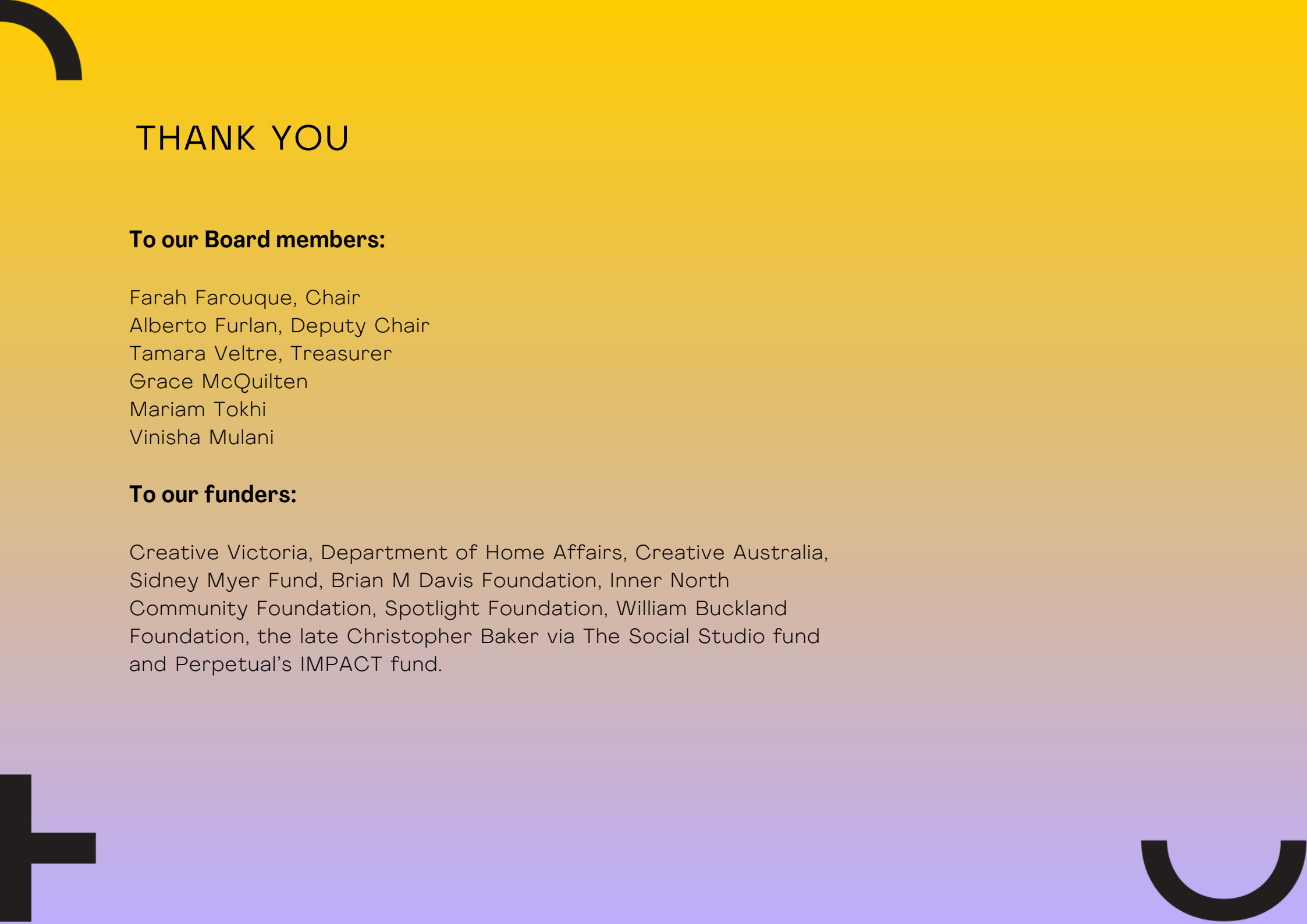
THE SHOP and MEND BY TSS

We were honoured to be included in the opening runway of Melbourne Fashion Week '23, where we debuted pieces from our 'Moon Of My Heart' summer retail collection alongside some student work. Featuring traditional Afghan hand embroidery inspired by memories of summer in Afghanistan, this project also provided first-ever jobs to eight women from Melbourne's Afghan community.

Besides offering a wide selection of garments, homewares, prints and accessories by First Nations and culturally diverse creatives, our Collingwood Yards shop also became a hub for our new mending enterprise this year: Mend by TSS.

With reuse, mending and repair becoming increasingly popular as a circular solution to fashion's sustainability woes, our mending service took off with more than 300 garments repaired by our talented team. This also provided valuable training opportunities for our Work2Learn trainees Oksana and Somaya as well as continued income for our retail operations.





THANK YOU

To our Board members:

Farah Farouque, Chair
Alberto Furlan, Deputy Chair
Tamara Veltre, Treasurer
Grace McQuilten
Mariam Tokhi
Vinisha Mulani

To our funders:

Creative Victoria, Department of Home Affairs, Creative Australia,
Sidney Myer Fund, Brian M Davis Foundation, Inner North
Community Foundation, Spotlight Foundation, William Buckland
Foundation, the late Christopher Baker via The Social Studio fund
and Perpetual's IMPACT fund.

