

# THE SOCIAL STUDIO

Annual Report 2013



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*“It’s fun here, we are like family. I love making clothes, the photo-shoots and modelling all the wonderful clothes.”*  
*Fedila - Fashion student*

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

## Farah Farouque

The Social Studio serves a number of roles. It is a training hub to shape the skills of people of refugee backgrounds and a lively space for the sale of fashion and food, but it is also a locus for the community. Our community is diverse; the students who participate in our programs hail from South Sudan, Eritrea, Burma, Sri Lanka and the Middle-East and then some. Then there are our staff, volunteers and customers whose ties to Australia can be traced back for longer years. But when we all converge at the Smith Street Collingwood site, we all strive for something better than a rancorous public “debate” that currently rages about the status of refugees and asylum seekers.

In the crucible of our modest Melbourne workroom and cheerful cafe, you can see how transformative the humanitarian migration intake can be for the lives of people who have faced countless hardships in conflict-ridden homelands. Our students are keen to take up opportunities and make a contribution to Australian society. This is the stuff of inspiration, and fittingly, our social enterprise model has been taken up by others across Australia.

Now in our fourth year of operation, The Social Studio remains a vibrant and inclusive place. This is not to say we don’t face daily challenges – not least a difficult commercial environment. Yet, as an ethically based business, our “product” remains distinct. After all, empowerment is at the core of our business model. I’d like to pay tribute to our CEO Dr Grace McQuilten and other hardworking staff and dedicated volunteers who support the students and help make it all happen seamlessly.

# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

## Grace McQuilten

The Social Studio has had a creative year! The design and artistic talent of our staff and students has really been at the forefront of our activities, with incredible fashion shows, exhibitions, creative collaborations, and high quality products leading to further opportunities for our talented team to gain ongoing employment, relevant educational pathways and greater social and professional connections. Our colourful collection saw many jaws dropping at Penthouse Mouse – L’Oreal Fashion Festival earlier this year, followed by a stunning show curated by stylist Grace Dlabik at our Winter Gala, which attracted an audience of 300. In Spring we launched our Colour Chameleon project showcasing the capacity of our digital fabric printing studio and collaborating with powerhouse Australian designers Ken Done, Linda Jackson, Alpha 60, Bul, Limedrop and Obus. And if that wasn’t enough, we capped it off with a vibrant show at the National Gallery of Victoria as part of its Melbourne Now exhibition.

In addition to all of this activity, 2013 has been a big year of development and transformation on an enterprise level. We have worked hard to increase our business and community partnerships, and to extend our reach to a broader cross-section of the community. With the support of Deloitte Private, we have developed a three-year strategic plan to assist the Social Studio in achieving greater organisational growth, including increasing our self-generated revenue, extending our education and employment opportunities and supporting the development and sustainability of community-driven enterprises. This year we have made a strong start in this endeavour. We have seen a 15% growth in self-generated revenue from the enterprise, a wonderful achievement thanks to the hard work and support of our staff, volunteers and community. We have broadened our offerings in both training and employment, along with additional community support initiatives including health workshops, financial literacy and small business development initiatives. Our pursuit of ethical, sustainable and social goals has resulted in recognition from industry, including being selected as finalists in the Social Enterprise Awards, the Ethical Business Awards and Impact 100 Melbourne.

I would like to congratulate Nicole Kuol, our office administrator, book-keeper and Board member from the time of our start-up in 2009, who successfully attained an ongoing position in finance with the ANZ bank. We have been privileged to welcome Susan Yengi to our management team, whose expertise in both community development and the private sector has been of incredible benefit to our organisational development.

Exciting times are promised in 2014, with the continued growth and development of two of our sister-enterprises enabling us to have a “ripple-out” effect across Melbourne and interstate. The Social Outfit in Sydney is set to open its doors early in the New Year, and the Twitch Women’s Sewing Collective has commenced delivering training in Certificate III in Clothing Production, a partnership with The Social Studio and RMIT School of Fashion, for those living in the Dandenong region. In the next year we will continue to support and develop entrepreneurial projects like Twitch and The Social Outfit, as part of our broader goal to create long term and sustainable change for new migrant communities, with a focus on community-led project that prioritise a sense of ownership and celebrate the talents of new migrants. At the same time we will continue to invest in our staff and students, including implementing more creative collaborations and securing further work and educational pathways for our graduates.

I would like to extend a huge and heartfelt thanks to our staff, students, volunteers, board and the many generous supporters, customers, and champions of The Social Studio who help to not only sustain, but accelerate, the impact and reach of our wonderful community enterprise.





## OVERVIEW

This year we had more than **120 people** involved in The Social Studio's enterprise, with 78 people participating in formal TAFE training & employment programs. For those involved in our formal programs, we have again achieved a fantastic result of 96% retention and completion rate. Of those that completed our programs, 58% obtained ongoing employment, and 36% transitioned into higher education. In addition to this, we have worked hard to expand our outreach to various communities, schools, and migrant centres and have run many programs and workshops, tours and events around Melbourne.





## TSS FASHION LABEL

### Retail and Manufacturing

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In the last 12 months, the Social Studio Fashion label has experienced increased sales and awareness as a result of participation in various fashion events, the retail shop transformation, improvement in quality and speed of manufacturing and the implementation of a social media campaign.

We renovated our retail shop in March 2013 as a result of a fantastic Indiegogo crowd funding campaign. The creative talent of Assemble Studios developed and implemented the new shop design and co-ordinated a stellar team of volunteers and pro bono supporters including Light Project and Archier Furniture. Since the shop transformation, we have seen increased sales of fashion merchandise, in-store foot traffic and general fashion queries.





We launched the new online shop and subsequently revamped our website to provide consumers with a seamless shopping experience as well as ensuring the website can be regularly updated with ease.

The Social Studio was part of the major runway for **Penthouse Mouse** at the **L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival**, a fun and dynamic event that also provided professional modelling opportunities for four of our aspiring models and featured the stunning adornments of **Maryann Talia Pau**. We were excited to collaborate with Maryann again for our Winter Gala Show, creatively directed by the talented stylist **Grace Diabik**.

We experienced a steady increase in manufacturing orders from commercial and community organisations including the Koori Courts, Shebeen, Kere Kere and the School of Life. We expanded our in-store offerings by stocking other items for sale on consignment that have been produced by the communities we work with including, Twich Women's Sewing Collective in Dandenong, No Sweat Fashion and Rosa – a local jeweller from El Salvador. We participated in the **Melbourne Spring Fashion Festival** launching the **Colour Chameleon** project in collaboration with local Australian designers Ken Done, Linda Jackson, Alpha 60, Bul, Limedrop and Obus.

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We capped off the year with collaboration with artist **Lisa Hilli** to present our latest collection as part of **Melbourne Now**, a major exhibition held at the National Gallery of Victoria.

**Oyster Magazine** have recently featured our designs and we're currently collaborating with the team launching **Ascension Magazine**, a new magazine aimed at promoting Ethnic women in fashion.

We have also developed a new range of products including cushion covers, gift cards, jewellery, bags and aprons.



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## FASHION SCHOOL

*“The Social Studio as an organisation trains more people in clothing production than anyone else in the state.”*

*Peter Bonnell – Industry Training Program Coordinator – School of Fashion & Textiles, RMIT University*

Over the past 12 months the Social Studio has significantly boosted its student capacity, with 30 students formally enrolled in the Cert III Clothing Production and Cert IV Textile Design program – delivered in partnership with RMIT University. The course runs on a flexible timetable across 5 days of the week at our premises, with student access available across 6 days. Graduates of this program are equipped with skills in garment construction and pattern making, are able to sew their own clothing and accessories using industrial machines and leave having developed close relationships with industry. We have also developed and implemented specialist computer literacy and ESL programs to support our training outcomes.

Our informal ‘Social Sewing’ program on Saturday’s has also proven to be a great success; with an average 60 student’s honing their sewing skills and making new friends in the process.

Two of our students, James Mbonimpa and Evariste Congera, recently completed the first year of their apprenticeship within our manufacturing department.

Other major highlights for the past 12 months include the fortification of prestigious internships for our students with Willow the fashion label and the Australian Ballet. Current students Jenny Lee and Roni Yalda just completed an internship at the Australian Ballet. The placement involved each student using their skills in garment construction and pattern making to assist within the millinery, men’s costume and women’s costume departments. 2012 Graduate, Rania Deng, completed a month-long internship with renowned Sydney fashion label Willow. Rania had a broad ranging experience at Willow, including range planning, design development with label head Kit Willow, pattern making and sales.





## THE PRINTING STUDIO

The last 12 months has seen a steady increase in commercial clients, ranging from students to emerging local designers and installation pieces for established Melbourne design practices including Tin&Ed and Spacecraft.

One of The Printing Studio's greatest highlights was **The Colour Chameleon** project; a collaboration with and printing for some of Melbourne's most renowned fashion labels, **Alpha60, Bul, Limedrop, Obus** and two of Australia's great fashion icons **Ken Done** and **Linda Jackson**. The project was a great learning opportunity not only for The Printing Studio but the manufacturing team as well. The second stage of the project, working with The Social Outfit and a group of Sydney designers gave us an insight into the challenges of large production runs and working with interstate clients. After a great deal of hard work The Social Outfit were really happy with the result and are looking forward to working with us again in the future.

The Printing Studio continues to be integrated into student training with the launch of the Cert IV in Textile Design and Development introduced in July 2013. Most recently students have worked on a project that has allowed them to explore the differences between screen printing and digital printing producing their work across both technologies. The Cert IV is delivered on-site at The Social Studio with some units to be delivered on campus at RMIT Brunswick, to take advantage of their screen-printing studio.





## THE CUTTING TABLE CAFÉ

The Cutting Table café continues to be a community hub, attracting new consumers, supporters and students to The Social Studio. Over the past 12 months, the Cutting Table Café has experienced 13% increase in café sales and 58% increase in catering and functions within the cafe; creating new employment as well as work experience opportunities for an additional 25 young people from refugee backgrounds.

We launched Revolving Cuisine, a weekly revolving menu celebrating cuisines from the diverse communities we work with.

We delivered Certificate I in Hospitality and Vocational Preparation in partnership with our training partner William Angliss Institute to 12 young people experiencing barriers to mainstream employment & training.

We held two free community BBQs this year, one during Anti-Poverty week to raise awareness about poverty in Australia, in partnership with Westpac Fitzroy Branch, and the other to celebrate Mother's Day.





## THE GALA

In July 2013, The Social Studio held a successful winter gala event, which combined a delicious banquet from The Cutting Table with fashions from The Social Studio to showcase our enterprise to an audience of 300 guests from the local community, business, and fashion industry and government representatives. Celebrating our rich and dynamic community, we had a vibrant fashion parade, cultural performances from the Burundian Women's Choir, Anbressa Gebrehiwot & Ethiopian Dancers, Karen-Burmese Dancers, guest speaker Abdi Aden, and contemporary musical performance from Arowe, Ee'da Brahim, DJ Chris Gill from Northside Records, Massive Hip Hop Choir and Lil Criszy. Through a live auction and raffle, we also raised much needed funds to support our fashion school programs.

*"I really enjoy coming here and I've learned lots of new skills. This year was great and I can't wait for next year."*

*Tabitha - Fashion student*





## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

In 2013, the Social Studio has continued to actively support the communities we work with through informal mentoring, financial literacy, advice and counselling when required.

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We are particularly proud of our achievements in incubating, mentoring and supporting new migrant enterprises, with a focus on local community ownership.

### **Twich Women's Sewing Collective**

We have continued to incubate and support the Twich Women's Sewing Collective, a small non-profit enterprise based in Dandenong, with assistance in business planning and management. The group have formally Incorporated, registered as a charity and made great strides in developing their organisational and financial capacity. We have also successfully negotiated with RMIT to run a Cert III Clothing Production program at Twich in Dandenong similar to that at our premises in Collingwood.

### **Nyandeng Riak African Fashions**

A graduate from our 2012 fashion course, Nyandeng has just opened a small fashion business in Footscray showcasing African formal wear, designed and manufactured in-store. We are providing ongoing mentoring and support in her business development.

### **The Social Outfit – Sydney**

We continue to provide advice and support to our sister organisation, The Social Outfit in Sydney, who have received the fantastic news that they have enough funding to open their doors. In 2014 they will begin a design school and retail store in Sydney's Inner West; a base from which to grow their creative work. The Social Outfit exists to celebrate the skills and styles of diverse cultures in NSW. In 2014 they will be working hard to enrich the educational and employment opportunities for people from new migrant and refugee backgrounds in Sydney.

Left: Abuk Bol of Twich  
Above: The Social Outfit's  
Colour Chameleon event





## MEDIA COVERAGE

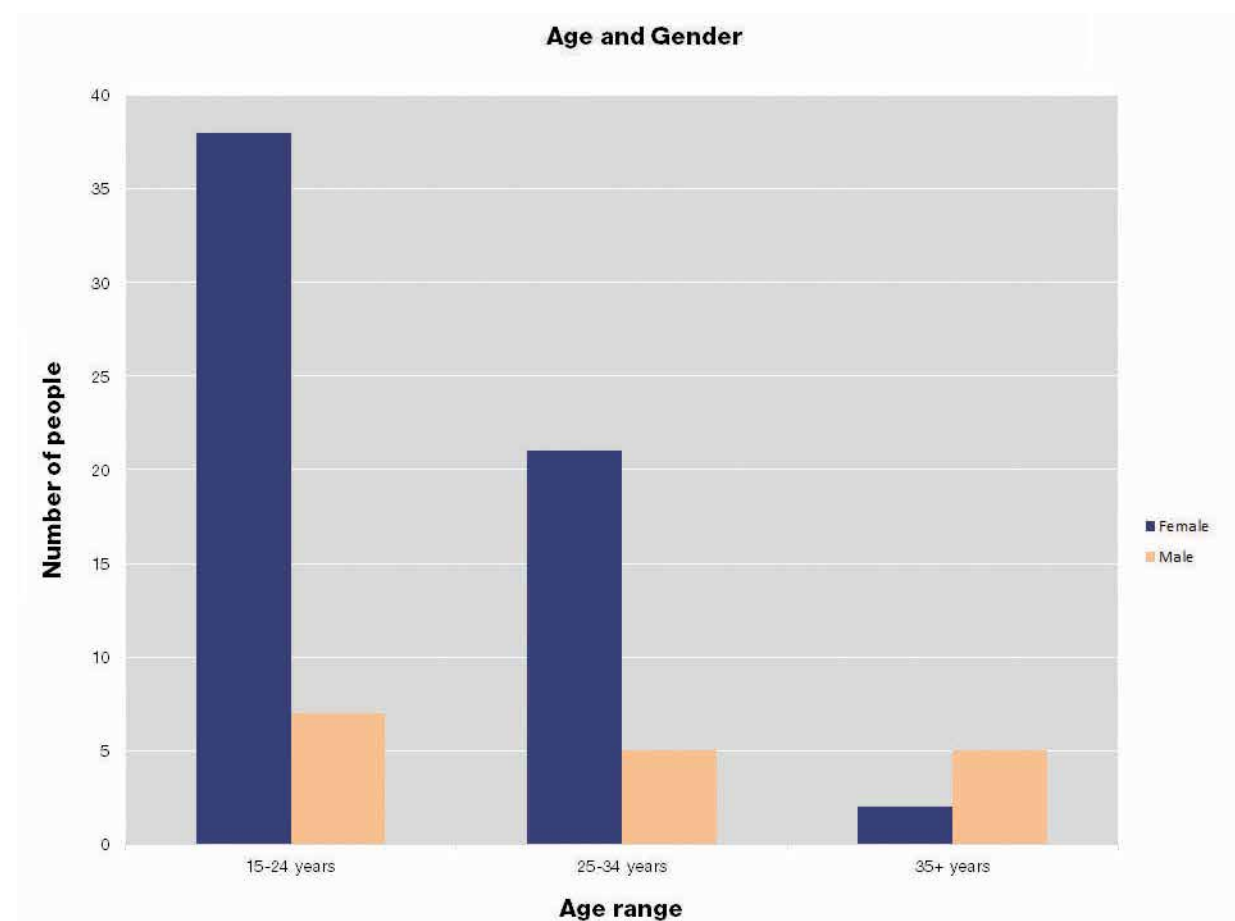
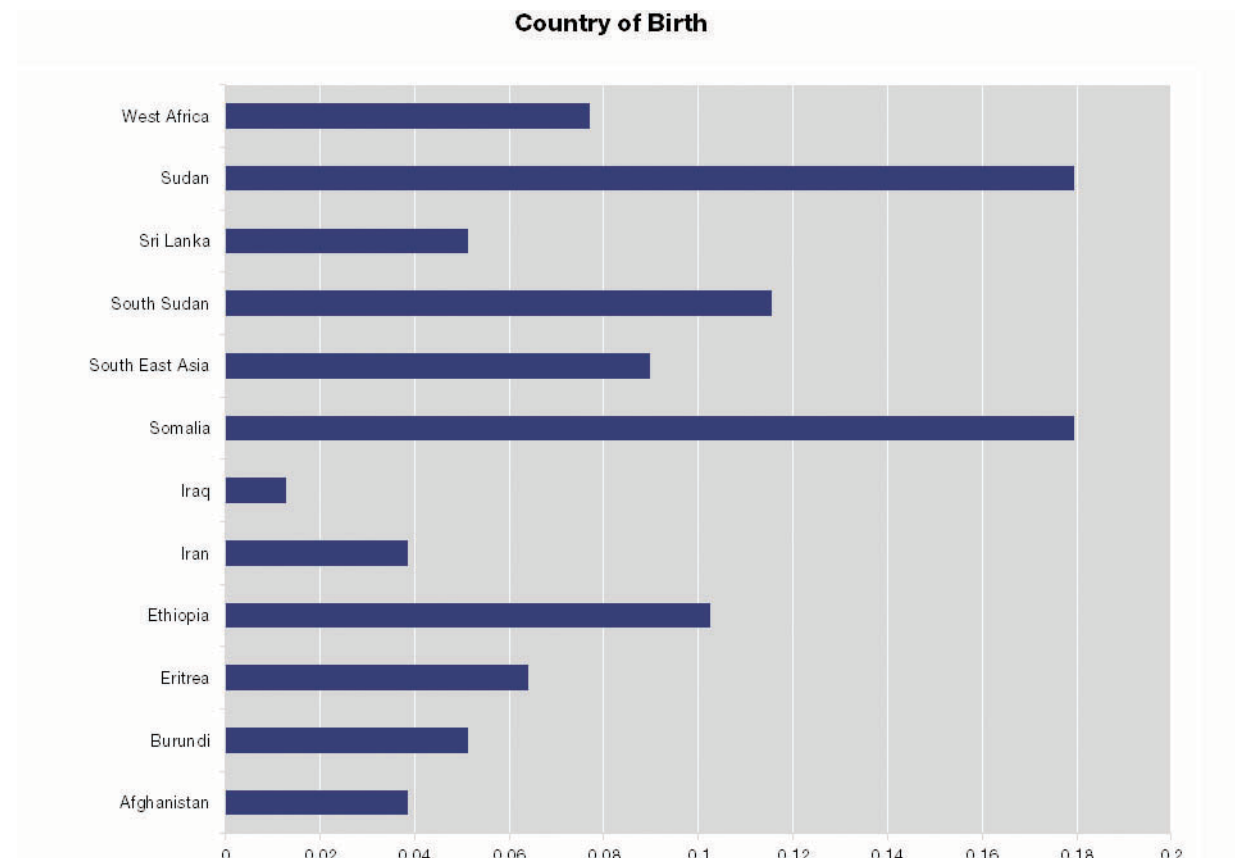
*"Truly, we have been supported every step of the way. The Social Outfit sincerely thanks our sister organisation, and all the supportive individuals from Melbourne who have so generously helped us in Sydney. We look forward to this ongoing collaboration and their professional insights in 2014 too."*

*Jackie Ruddock, CEO, The Social Outfit*

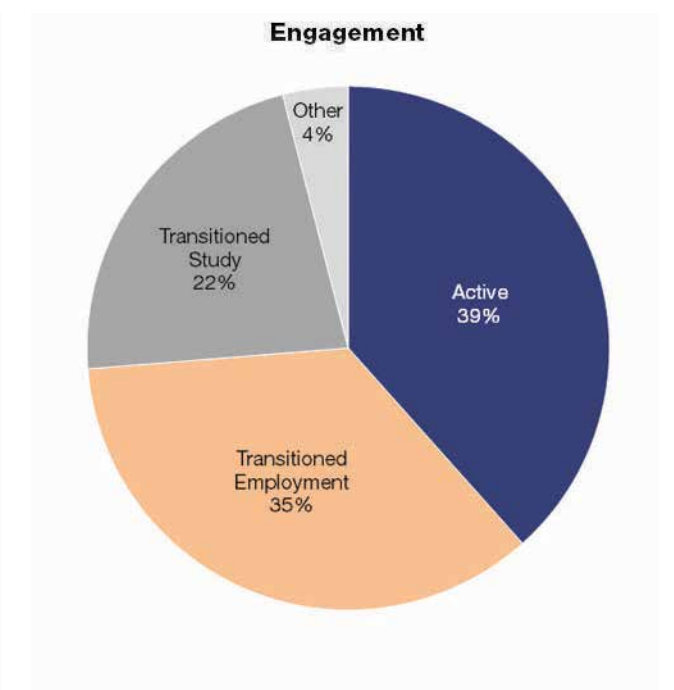
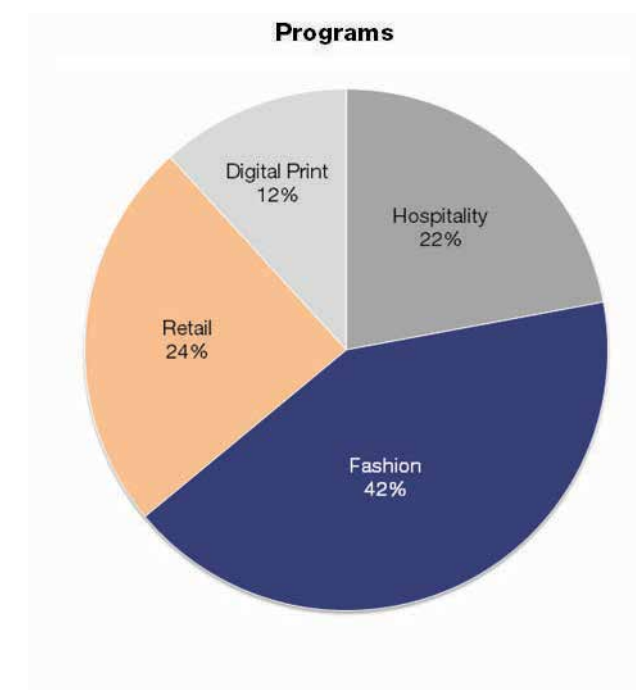
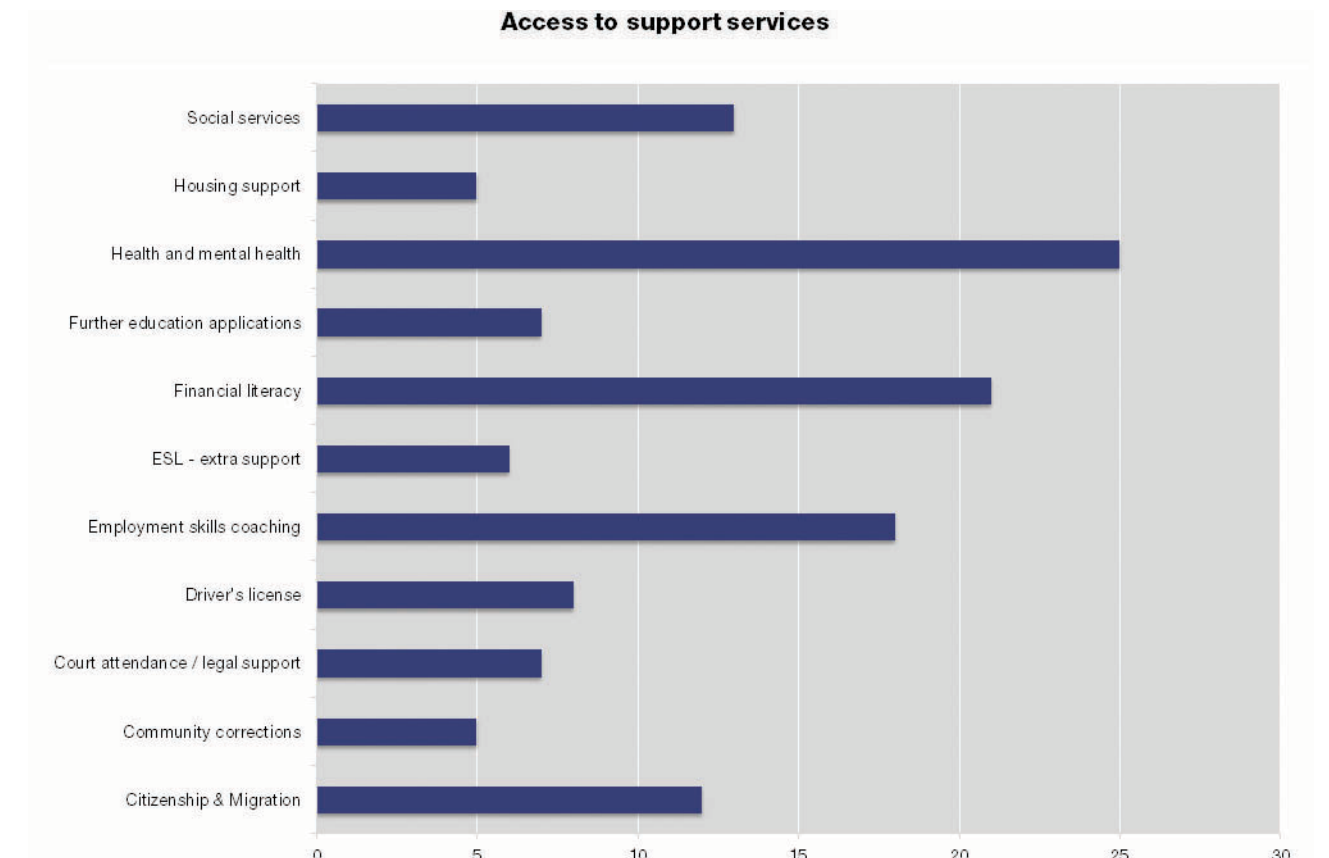
- The Thousands (Three Thousand and Four Thousand)
- The Age M Magazine (Cover)
- The Age Small Business (Video)
- Broadsheet
- mX Newspaper
- Fashion Journal
- Oyster Magazine
- Assemble Papers
- Leader Newspaper
- City Weekly Magazine
- Craft Almanac
- Peppermint Online
- Frankie Magazine Online
- Pro Bono Australia
- 3ZZZ Radio
- PBS Radio
- ABC Radio
- 3RRR Radio

# FACTS AND STATS

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# OUR STAFF

## Staff

Listed alphabetically by first name

### Café Team

Alek Nyok, Almaz Gebru, Cederic Kadile, Korlu Zarwue, Mohamad Nazari, Mu Mu, Thaw-Su

### Manufacturing Team

Abuk Bol, Evariste Congera, Francess Sesay, Helen Sheferaw, James Mbonimpa

### Office Team

Nicole Kuol, Susan Yengi, Zarah-Sheik Hussein

### The Printing Studio

Adriana Bernardo, Anna Sassi

### Retail Team

Alek Nyok, Almaz Gebru, Andrea Phillipou, Atong Joseph, Fatimata Kamara, Karl Sinlao

### Teaching Team

Fozia Akolo, Janelle Magee, Mathanarajan Sinnathanby

## Volunteers

Aden, Adriana, Aie, Anita, Clare, Eva, Frances, Gabby, Hossain, Huria, Jodi, Katie, Leisel, Omar, Padma, Ruth

# OUR BOARD

## Board Members

### Farah Farouque (Chair)

Senior Advisor, Public Affairs and Policy, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and our media and policy advisor.

### Tamara Veltre (Vice-Chair)

Director of Lulamae Clothing, fashion label and retailer in Melbourne, providing expertise in business, retail operations and fashion.

### Lew Hess (Secretary)

Western Regional Programs Manager for Foundation House (The Foundation for Victims of Torture and Trauma).

### Grace McQuilten (Public Officer)

Grace has an extensive background in community development, and is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Culture and Communications at the University of Melbourne.

### Alberto Furlan (Director)

Alberto is a Senior Programs manager at the Ian Potter Foundation.

### Khalid Osman (Director)

Khalid is a leader in the African community in Melbourne and the CEO of training provider Victorian Vocational Volunteer.

### Raphael Kilpatrick (Director)

A designer with an interest in architecture, interior design, graphic and web design, teaches at RMIT School of Design.

### Tristan Perry CA (Pro-Bono Accountant)

Tristan is a Manager at Mutual Trust and provides independent financial management oversight and advice.

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

- 30
- Andrews Foundation

Australian Communities Foundation

Baker Foundation

Collier Foundation

Eureka Benevolent Fund

George Hicks Foundation

Ian Potter Foundation

Igniting Change

Inner North Foundation

May & Stanley Smith Foundation

Minter Ellis Foundation

Perpetual Trust

RE Ross Trust

Victorian Women’s Benevolent Trust

Supporters – The Social Studio & Twich Women’s Sewing Collective

- English Foundation

Igniting Change

Scanlon Foundation

Jack Brockhoff Foundation

Pro Bono Support & Donations

- Assemble Studio

Australian Ballet

Club21

Chris Christophorou

David Hardie

Mutual Trust

Foundation House

Manfax Paints

Mariana Hardwick

Neighbourhood Justice Centre – Collingwood

Pratt Family Foundation

River Capital

RMIT School of Fashion

Scalzo Foods

William Angliss Hospitality

Kit Willow
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# THE SOCIAL STUDIO

Buy our label, order our catering, make a tax deductible donation or simply learn more about our work at [www.thesocialstudio.org](http://www.thesocialstudio.org)