





The Social Studio



2022

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

One year ago we were all re-emerging into the sunlight after several months of lockdowns, uncertain of what the next 12 months would hold. Now we can look back on a year of incredible change – from vaccines that fortified our community against COVID-19, to our students boldly reclaiming public space through the multi-disciplinary Takeover project; our own designs hitting multiple runways and our social enterprise operations seeing sustained growth.

Throughout its 13 years The Social Studio has always kept the needs and talents of our community of refugee and new migrant creatives at its core and this year our school became a hub of activity once more, with accredited Cert III studies, social sewing classes and creative projects all engaging and extending our participants.

Our satellite presence at Heidelberg West launched after a long COVID delay and has been a welcome conduit for learning and gathering, led by our determined staff member, Sagal Yusuf.

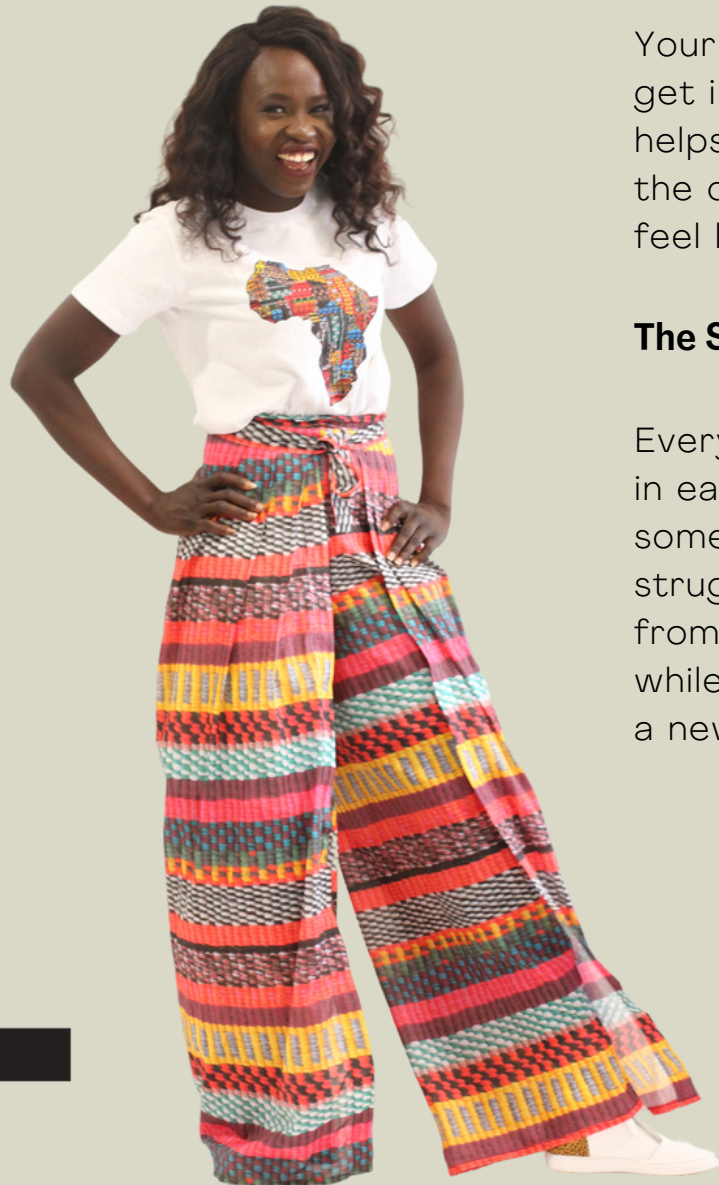
Our status as a leading arts-based social enterprise continues to grow and for the first time in our history we were awarded multi-year operational funding through Creative Victoria. This is a significant milestone for us as we work to expand our impact and creative output through training, job creation and community arts programs for refugee and migrant youth.

I'm so thankful to our many supporters across government, philanthropy and the general public for their belief in and support of us. But none of what we have achieved through the twists and turns of this pandemic could be possible without our formidable staff, our Board, and most of all our students who make it all worthwhile – thank you for everything.



Dewi Cooke

'MY CREATIVE JOURNEY'



Your creativity can be the first thing to go when life and struggles get in the way. But The Social Studio elevates our creativity and helps us believe that this can be a way of life. Some other places in the creative industries might focus on creativity but they make it feel like hard work, like it's all about money and business.

The Social Studio is different. It feels like home.

Everybody here is genuinely here for you and with you, we believe in each other and there is a genuine sense of belonging. When some people come here they may lack confidence because they struggle with English or they have had a child and have been away from work and study for a long time. But after being here for a while they feel comfortable and confident. They feel supported by a new family and ready to move forward.

Nyamal, TSS graduate '22

OUR IMPACT

68% of new hires
were from refugee,
asylum seeker
and migrant
backgrounds

Provided education
and training to
259 people
from refugee and
new migrant
backgrounds through
our Cert III, social
sewing and creative
programs

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

Provided
1146 hours
of free education
and training
to our community

OUR IMPACT

Paid
\$114,552 in wages
to people from
refugee and asylum seeker
backgrounds

Paid
\$38,194
to BIPOC designers
and makers
through our retail store,
workshops
and creative projects

Diverted
151 kilograms
of excess textiles
from landfill

Delivered
17 free
creative and business
workshops to our
students
and the public

THE SCHOOL

For more than a decade, The Social Studio has been fortunate to have had the generous support of RMIT University to deliver a Certificate III in clothing and textile production to our students on-site in our safe and welcoming Collingwood community space. This course is the jewel in our crown, and is at the centre of all the work we do at the Studio.

At present, our students come to us from 10 different home countries and this year we also graduated our first cohort since the COVID-19 pandemic began. We are immensely proud of this group for having persevered through a total course suspension (2020), lockdowns and remote learning (2021) and the general effects of the pandemic on individuals, families and communities.

They have shown tremendous creativity and tenacity in the face of hardship and uncertainty - congratulations to our class of 2022: Mariamo, Nyamal, Juan, Yar, Hawaa, Muhubo, Hawaeio and Mariam!

"It's the best experience I've ever had in my life. It's my second home."

Mariamo, TSS graduate '22



THE PRODUCTION STUDIO

Our Ethical Clothing Australia-accredited production studio continues to build on the surge in interest in local manufacturing that has occurred since the pandemic, with continued demand for our services across pattern making, product development, textile design and production throughout the year.

With our team expanding, we have been fortunate to work with a number of First Nations artists and arts centres this year, as well as develop our own in-house label and focus on building pathways for our Cert III students into the team.

Led by our Head of Manufacturing, Tara Wingate, the team now comprises members from eight different cultural backgrounds (including TSS alumni) and also includes paid production trainees selected from our Cert III. These trainees completed a structured 12-week training program of 144 hours each, giving them opportunity to focus on the speed, accuracy and consistency needed to obtain work in the industry or advanced study.

Thanks to the Victorian Government's Social Enterprise Equipment Grants, we were also able to purchase much-needed new machinery this year including our beloved fusing press, which has brought a 75% increase in efficiency for this process.



THE SHOP

Launched in December 2020, our sunny Collingwood Yards shop is now firmly established as a destination for shoppers looking to support Bla(c)k, Indigenous and culturally diverse makers from Melbourne and beyond.

We are the exclusive Melbourne stockist for a number of brands including Remuse Designs and North, and have cultivated relationships with a range of remote Indigenous art centres including Marrawuddi, Numbulwar Numburindi, Buku Larrnggay Mulka and Nagula Jarndu.

As a community space, we have thrown open our doors to our community of brands more than once, hosting pop-ups for fellow social enterprise Nisa and Broome's Nagula Jarndu, and also hosted exhibitions and brand launches.

In November, we launched our 'Kabed' collection of clothing, homewares and accessories which were produced by our Work 2 Learn trainees and our in-house production team. These featured a digitised weaving of student, Muhubo Sulieman, and were first released at the Big Design Market and then sold in-store.



CREATIVE PROJECTS

The Social Studio's creative practice has traversed mediums and the city itself this year.

Among our many projects was a collaborative artwork by our students for VicHealth's Future Healthy program, focusing on themes of social connection, physical activity and access to healthy food.

Led by Retail and Creative Projects Manager Bonnie Mooney and Iranian-Australian illustrator Nina Sepahpour, students engaged in open and supportive group conversations, brainstorming and mind-mapping, discovering how to express their feelings and aspirations through experimenting with colour, collage, mark and image making.

We have also embarked on 'Cross Stitch': a year-long exploration of craft and handmaking skills across traditions and cultures.

Supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and Yarra City Arts, this will take culturally diverse artists into communities across Melbourne, as well as introduce their work to the public through workshops in our Collingwood studio. These works will culminate in an exhibition in mid-2023.



THE FUTURE

As our graduating and soon-to-graduate students set their sights on further studies or business opportunities within fashion and the arts, we will continue to foster our community of care through new initiatives such as homework clubs, additional English-language supports, business mentoring and additional skills extension.

Computer-assisted design is not currently part of the RMIT Certificate III curriculum however we plan to establish a digital learning hub to teach students and TSS community members essential skills in programs such as Illustrator and Photoshop so that the digital divide is reduced for them once they enter the industry. This is based on feedback from industry as well as the needs of graduates who go on to higher-level design studies.

Our work with First Nations designers is also expanding and in 2023 we are slated to work with numerous Indigenous artists and arts centres across the Kimberley, the Northern Territory and Queensland. We will also be working on a project with Victorian Indigenous artists, supported by the Pandora and John Larkins Creativity Fund. Accordingly, TSS is internally embarking on cultural competency training with Aboriginal-owned consultancy Shifting Ground to ensure we are approaching these relationships with sensitivity and care.





THANK YOU

To our Board members:

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

To our funders:

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