



**concern
australia**

Strategic Plan
2024-27

Statement From Our CEO & Board Chair



Board Chair

Jon Ma



Chief Executive Officer

Judith Atkinson

Concern Australia's Strategic Plan 2024-27 builds on our strong foundations and learnings of over 50 years, as we seek to address the key challenges and opportunities for young people today.

The experiences and voices of the young people we partner with have guided us. Our plans are also informed by our deep understanding of the environments in which we work and inputs from our strategic partners and stakeholders.

This Strategic Plan reflects our commitment to utilise our full expertise and resources to make the greatest impact we can to bring about positive change for young people.

Our Purpose

Concern Australia works in partnership with young people, children and their families to create positive life opportunities.

Our services are **hopeful** and focused on enabling young people to be **successful** in navigating their futures.

Organisation Values

Faith — Integrity — Respect — Belonging



Concern Australia Founder

Rev Dr John Smith (1942 - 2019)

"I long for a better world. And as best I can, I intend to be part of the answer than part of the problem."

Our Approach

In delivering our Strategic Plan 2024-27, we will:

Centre young people's voices and experiences

- Ensure Co-design and Youth Advisory activities remain at the centre of the development and delivery of all our services.
- Invest in youth leadership development, work experience and volunteering opportunities.
- Offer additional regular opportunities across our services for young people to retain their positive connection with us for as long as they need it.

Deliver culturally informed services

- Work alongside young people, their families and wider communities in ways that respect and promote positive connection to their communities and culture.
- Partner with relevant agencies to expand programs to new groups, including developing resources in language and supporting members of newly arrived communities.
- Deliver the commitments in our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and develop an Innovate RAP to continue our reconciliation journey.

Provide inclusive, trauma-informed services

- Advocate for high quality supports to young people being sensitive to their needs and goals - this will include building capacity for staff and mentors to create inclusive and accessible spaces.
- Deliver a comprehensive staff and mentor training and development program, informed by sector best practice and youth advisory feedback.
- Promote equal access to opportunities for the young people we work with.

Foster a strong organisational culture, investing in staff and volunteers

- Undertake a cultural audit and work to maintain a culture which enables us to put young people and their needs at the centre of everything we do.
- Invest and position Concern Australia as an employer of choice, where staff and volunteers feel supported to flourish.

Build strong partnerships

- Value and support the contribution of volunteers, corporate supporters, and faith communities to increase our resources and capacity.
- Raise the profile of our work and increase the visibility of young people and their challenges through strategic communications.
- Prioritise investment in strategic partnerships to increase outcomes for young people.

Leverage research and best practice, measuring social impact

- Participate in the Social Impact Hub Fellowship.
- Contribute to sector research and innovation to bring about better outcomes for young people, in particular those in contact with child protection, youth justice and homelessness systems.
- Further develop the Concern Australia Evaluation and Impact Framework.

Maintain governance and financial health

- Maintain excellent standards of governance and compliance across the organisation.
- Develop a robust fundraising strategy and longer-term financial policy to maximise stewardship opportunities.

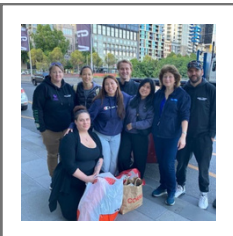
The Way Forward

Concern Australia knows the right interventions can create positive trajectories, equipping young people to achieve their goals.

With over 50 years' experience working with young people at risk, we know how to deliver effective support. Our work always begins with the young person and is holistic, flexible and strengths-based.

This approach is at the heart of all we do.

More specifically, our activities will be driven by six areas of ambition:



Preventing Homelessness



Facilitating Belonging & Social Connection



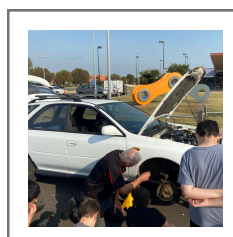
Building Resilience



Creating Positive Diversions



Creating Positive Transitions to Independence



(Re)Engaging with Employment & Education

Focus Area One

Providing high quality homes and support for young people as they transition from state care.

As a community, we need to provide better preparation and transition for young people who have experienced out of home care.

Research conducted by the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) found young people who had been in state care are at significant risk of homelessness, hospital admissions (80%) and involvement with youth justice (24%). The recent 2021 Census found over a quarter of Victorians without a home are young people between 12 and 24 years [1]. Due to current market housing challenges, research also suggests that between one third and a half of all care leavers are accessing homelessness services in the four years after leaving care. It is therefore vital that more housing capacity and better transitional support is provided to young people.

The research also found that young people “have the best possible chance of transitioning successfully if they have a stable and secure care experience where they can learn essential life skills, build resilience and foster positive social supports and relationships, stable post care housing and specialised post-care supports that are flexible and sustained”.

This is our experience at Concern Australia, and delivering these supports will be a priority in 2024-27.

[1] CHP AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services 21-22



Concern Australia's Response

To create positive outcomes for young people, in 2024-27 Concern Australia will:

- Provide safe and stable homes, and independent living skills development to young people aged 16-18 years in state care across Metropolitan Melbourne through the Inside Out program.
- Pilot an additional accommodation and support service for young people aged 18-21 years at risk of homelessness. Where possible, we will work with community and faith-based partners to increase the supply of housing available for young people at risk.
- Work with young people to identify and achieve their goals, including skills development, connection to work and more, to prepare them for a positive transition to independent living.
- Increase the recruitment of Live-in Mentors so that more young people can experience positive role models and connection to the wider community.
- Develop our capacity to provide more flexible support packages to young people transitioning from care.

Focus Area Two

Effective support of people experiencing and moving on from homelessness.

Since its early days, Concern Australia has provided outreach support and successfully supported many people on the journey from homelessness to stable, long-term housing.

Our STEPS Outreach Service has had a huge impact over the past 30 years, thanks largely to support from both individual and organisational donors.

"Many people who sleep rough remain vulnerable to homelessness even after they are housed. To reduce the incident and impacts of rough sleeping in Victoria, we must provide those who have experienced rough sleeping with the support they need to sustain their house." [2]

[2] Victoria's homelessness and rough sleeping action plan



Concern Australia's Response

In 2024-27, Concern Australia will:

- Provide its flexible, responsive outreach service to people experiencing and moving on from homelessness, including crisis intervention, active referral and advocacy, and long-term support.
- Work intergenerationally with families at risk of homelessness, including building resilience and supporting aspirations for young people to achieve social and educational goals.
- Promote the voice and impact of the Lived Experience Advisory Group and maintain strong levels of peer support and volunteering within the program, creating positive connections to the wider community.
- Work in partnership with our supporters to provide holistic support to people experiencing complex barriers.
- Conduct a social impact evaluation of our STEPS program to capture the impact, learnings and good practice to share with the wider homelessness sector.

Focus Area Three

Creating positive diversions for young people at risk of disengagement and in contact with the criminal justice system.

“We have a serious problem with young people detaching from schools in Australia.”
- Those Who Disappear Report, University of Melbourne.

Concern Australia works to reduce youth offending and create positive pathways to education and training. We focus on positive diversions, skills development, training as well as connecting to employment and apprenticeships.

We do this through a range of programs, including Hand Brake Turn and our social enterprise, fiXit.

We work with young people who have a range of needs, including those who are at risk of disengaging from school or are in contact with the criminal justice system.

We are committed to providing trauma-informed educational spaces where young people can move to a positive path, ultimately leading to employment and achieving personal goals.

Our flexible services also go where they can provide most benefit. In 2023-24, Concern Australia began a partnership with the Walpiri Community of the Central Desert Region to deliver mobile mechanical courses and effective, co-designed, community-based vocational education innovations.



Concern Australia's Response

We will expand our outreach activities through Values for Life and HBT Mobile, promoting resilience and wellbeing strategies in educational settings.

In 2024-27 we will:

- Continue to work with Youth Justice and other partners to reduce and divert young people from further engagement with the criminal justice system.
- Update our curriculum to ensure it is accessible to young people with different learning needs, including trauma-sensitive, newly arrived, neurodiverse, and those who have missed significant elements of traditional schooling.
- Provide more opportunities for young people to increase literacy, numeracy and other transferable employability skills.
- Continue our partnership with the Walpiri Community and further develop inclusive vocational education options.
- Update and develop Values for Life resources to include a focus on resilience building, positive transitions, and resources for promoting positive mental health.

Focus Area Four

Utilising social enterprise to create employment pathways and leverage commerce to provide inclusive services.

"The problem of social inequality is real. We know that social enterprise is a key part of the solution - creating jobs and delivery services that create an inclusive and sustainable economy." - Social Traders

Finding innovative solutions and creating opportunity to increase impact has always been part of Concern Australia's approach. We are not afraid to try new things if we think they can support change for young people.

fiXit was established to provide employment experience to young people who would otherwise find it difficult to get the opportunity. In its first three years, fiXit has provided employment for over 25 young people.

The fiXit model enables us to increase our impact by providing affordable cars to families in need and supporting the Hand brake Turn program with vehicles to use in their training.

We provide trusted car servicing to the public, including vulnerable clients who need to bring their car to a safe, supportive place.

The income we generate supports our overall sustainability and helps keep our entrepreneurial focus sharp.



Concern Australia's Response

In 2024 -27 Concern Australia will continue to create employment pathways for young people and support the wider community:

- Strengthen and grow the social enterprise through increased car donations and servicing, leveraging additional community resources to provide more starter jobs for young people at risk.
- Continue to provide entry jobs for young people graduating from Hand Brake Turn to increase employability skills and chances.
- Provide customers with a safe space for car servicing and repairs.
- Working with our corporate partners to provide pathways to apprenticeships and work for young people.
- Support environmental outcomes by recycling cars and parts, reducing waste and promoting sustainable approaches.
- Provide ongoing support to young people transitioning into employment for successful long term outcomes.

Concern Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners in each of the communities where we work. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.



Thank You for Supporting Our Work

All that we do is made possible by the relationships and support of the wider community including supporters, volunteers, government, corporate and philanthropic partners, community service organisations.

We are grateful for this well-developed ecosystem, and committed to maintaining and building these relationships which enable us to maximise our impact and work in complementary ways.



Our Child Safe Commitment

At Concern Australia, the welfare of children and young people in our care will always be our first priority. Children have a right to be safe and protected.

We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all those in our programs and the full implementation and promotion of the Child Safe Standards.

