



A SAFE PLACE FOR WOMEN

2024-2025 Annual *Report*



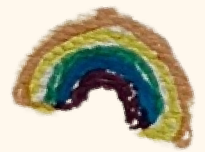
Acknowledgement of *Country*

Lou's Place acknowledges the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and deliver services. We recognise their continuing connection to the land, waters and culture, and we thank them for protecting it since time immemorial.

We pay our respect to Elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are part of the Lou's Place community.

Australia always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.





Their *Voices* Fill These Pages

The handwritten words and drawings you see throughout this report were created by women who visit Lou's Place.

Each mark, sketch and sentence holds a story of resilience, connection and hope. Some came from laughter, some from quiet reflection, and all from a place of courage.

Together, they honour the women who make up our community and give Lou's Place its heart.





What's *Inside*

- 06** Message from the Chair
- 07** CEO's Letter
- 08** Our Mission, Vision & Values
- 10** Our Year at a Glance
- 12** Stability First
- 14** Always Mum
- 16** Connecting Through Change
- 18** A Year at Lou's Drop-In Centre
- 20** Case Study: A Safe Place to Begin Again
- 22** Activities & Clinics
- 24** Volunteers: The Lifeblood of Lou's Place
- 26** Moments That Brought Us Together
- 30** Building for the Future
- 32** Treasurers Report
- 33** Looking Ahead
- 36** Our Donors, Supporters & Partners

Message from the *Chair*

Dear Friends, Supporters and Community,

I am delighted to present this year's annual report.

Our strongly growing numbers at Lou's tell a powerful story. They drive our commitment to continually improve. We have spent time over this last year developing new processes and programmes to ensure that every woman who walks through our doors receives comprehensive and compassionate care.

Our team has been strengthened with key appointments that position us for sustainable impact. Our new philanthropy role has opened doors to deeper community partnerships and expanded funding opportunities, while our financial controller brings the expertise needed to steward our resources with precision and accountability. We have filled a crucial additional domestic and family violence position as we recognise the urgent need for specialised support in this area. In addition, we have further developed our case worker team. Months of collaboration and strategic thinking have resulted in the implementation of an enhanced data collection capacity. This enables us to serve our community more effectively and to communicate clearly to our stakeholders.

Lou's Place board and the management team developed a comprehensive three-year strategic plan: a roadmap that reflects our vision for the future, while honouring our founding values. This planning process has sharpened our focus and aligned our efforts toward measurable, meaningful client outcomes.

I am so buoyed by and grateful for the extraordinary dedication of our staff, volunteers and board members, with their tireless efforts, creative problem-solving, and genuine care for our mission. The systems we've built, the team we've assembled, and the strategic direction we've charted well position Lou's Place to meet evolving challenges. Our commitment to being a place of safety and support for women in need is our touchstone.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed so much in 2024-2025: our funders, partners, volunteers, staff and board. Together we will continue to make a difference in many lives.

Rebecca Fitzpatrick

Chair

The Marmalade Foundation



CEO's letter

This year at Lou's Place has been like no other. The numbers alone tell the story; more women than ever before have come through our doors, seeking safety, connection and hope. Our reputation has continued to grow, and Lou's Place is increasingly recognised as a place that women can trust and rely on.

Domestic and family violence has reached unprecedented levels, stretching services across the state to their limits. At the same time, the cost of living and the housing crisis are pushing more women into hardship, making it harder to hold onto safe accommodation. For too many, this means the frightening reality of homelessness. These challenges weigh heavily on women, but every day at Lou's Place, we walk alongside them and witness their courage, resilience and hope.

Our low-barrier approach means we welcome women as they are, without judgement, and we stand beside those who often struggle to find help elsewhere. This year we reached an exciting milestone: our first substantial government funding. We remain committed to delivering services in the way that we know works – by listening to women – while also extending our reach through services funded by the NSW government.

The words of women continue to inspire us. Time and again, they tell us Lou's Place is where they feel safe, welcomed and never judged. Many share that it is the one place they can walk into and know they will be met with kindness and dignity. That affirmation reminds us every day that we are getting it right.

This year also brought important changes to our team, including the creation of a philanthropy manager role and the appointment of a new financial controller. While these roles sit behind the scenes, they are vital to keeping our service running smoothly. This strengthens our ability to grow and manage resources wisely. Some days, of course, we feel tired – the work is demanding and the need is constant – but then we hear tears turn to laughter, or quiet conversations about hope for the future, and we are reminded why we are here.



I feel deeply privileged to lead this organisation and to work alongside such a compassionate and professional team. Their dedication and "can-do" spirit mean that every woman who comes to Lou's Place is met with 100% of our heart and commitment. I am also profoundly grateful to our board, whose guidance, generosity and belief in our mission have carried us through this year of extraordinary growth and change.

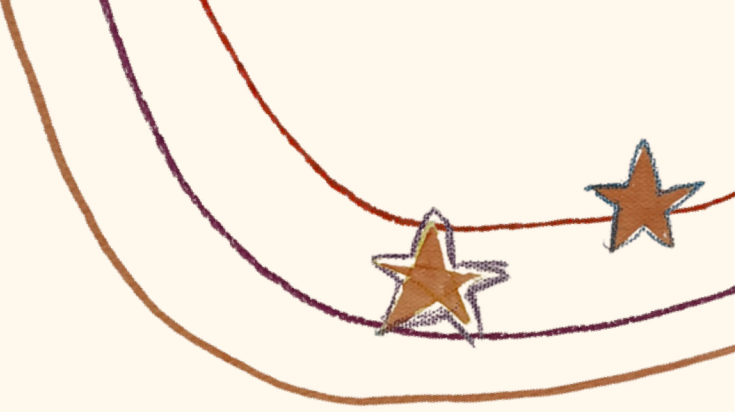
To our supporters, partners, volunteers, and donors – thank you. Whether you give time, resources, services, or funds, every contribution matters. Together we are creating a safe and welcoming place for women when they need it most.

With gratitude,

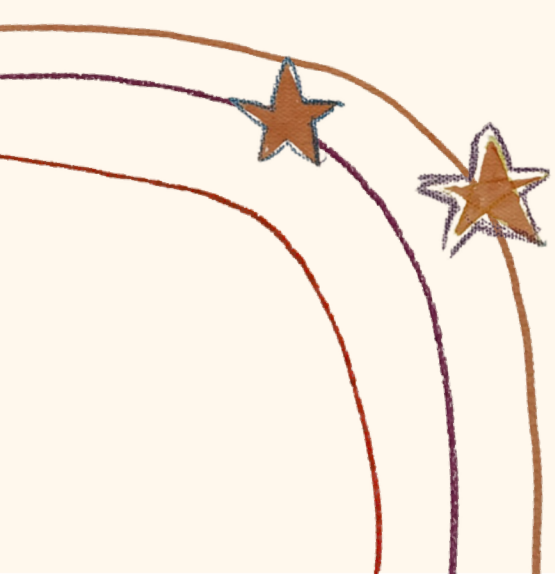
Amanda Greaney

Chief Executive Officer

Lou's Place



OUR core values



CARING

We show genuine compassion and empathy in our interactions and services. We cultivate a home-like atmosphere that fosters trust and safety. We prioritise creating an environment where women feel safe.

NON-JUDGEMENTAL

At Lou's, we welcome all women. We accept and respect women, whatever their circumstances. We believe in diversity and inclusivity, and we see the value inherent in each woman. We work to ensure that everyone feels valued and included.

INDEPENDENT

Lou's Place is guided by its values. We are flexible and responsive to each woman's changing needs. We pride ourselves on ensuring that the priorities of the women come first. We seek innovative solutions to better support and empower women.

WOMEN-LED

We are driven by the needs of the women we support. We act as advocates for the growth and healing of each woman, as well as for the sector at large.

Our *vision*

is to contribute to a world where
ALL WOMEN experience safety,
support & are **EMPOWERED**
to live their life and realise their
inherent **VALUE & WORTH.**

Our *mission*

is to provide a **SAFE SPACE FOR ALL WOMEN**
through holistic care in a non-judgemental
community. Lou's Place aims to build trusting
relationships with women, providing person-
centred and innovative program support to
enhance each individual's well-being.



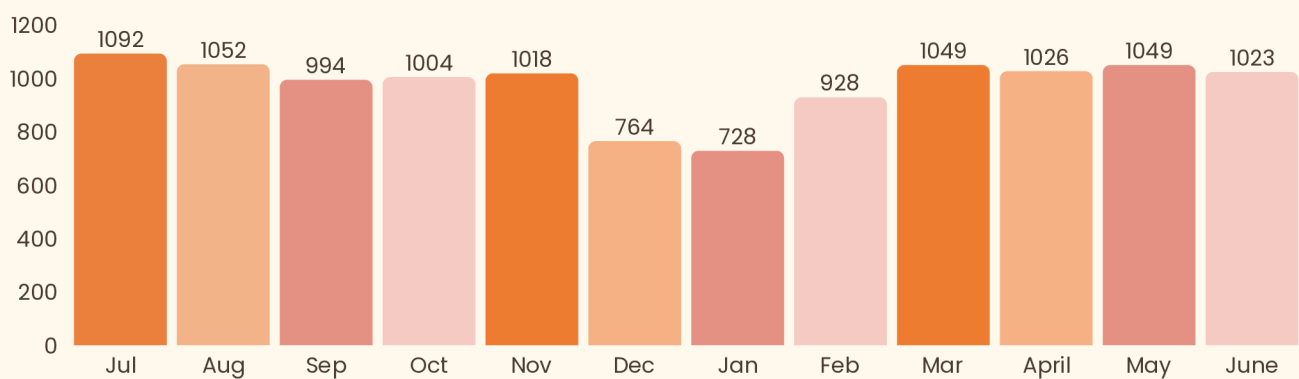
Our year at a glance

This year, Lou’s Place continued to be a hive of activity, with more women than ever coming through our doors each day to find connection, safety, and support. **July 2024 was our busiest month on record, with 1,092 total visits**, and we also saw a 78% increase from last year in the number of breakfasts shared. Throughout the year, our team remained dedicated to creating a safe and welcoming environment, meeting each woman at her point of need, and fostering autonomy, dignity, growth, and self-worth.

Lou’s Place supported 818 individual women across 11,727 visits this year.



2024/2025 MONTHLY VISITS



ACCESS & ESSENTIALS

From hot meals and showers to clothing and toiletries, Lou’s Place provided essentials that helped women feel safe, cared for and valued. Meeting these needs reduced daily pressures, allowing women to stabilise and take the first steps toward recovery.

“
It’s more than the basics... it’s feeling safe, cared for, and not forgotten.
— Words from a woman at our drop-in centre
”



1,311 items of emergency clothing provided, often alongside a hot shower.



3,701 toiletries supplied to support hygiene and dignity.



573 showers offered in a safe, private space.



1,669 loads of laundry completed.



3,366 takeaway meals provided so women had food after the doors closed.

MEALS & SHARED TABLES



4,521 breakfasts and **8,710 hot lunches** shared — a total of **13,231 meals enjoyed with community.**

Sharing food is at the heart of Lou's Place.

For some women, it meant relief from hunger; for others, moments of connection and belonging. Around the table, friendships formed and women felt seen, heard, and included.

Feedback from the women included:

I live alone so I always eat alone, so it's nice sometimes to talk to a "friend" while I eat

The meals here give me food security so I don't have to be constantly worrying about where my next meal is coming from.

COMMUNITY, CONNECTION & EMPOWERMENT

Lou's Place is more than a service - it's a community. Through shared meals, activities, workshops and case management, women found connection, built friendships and strengthened skills to navigate complex systems. Many describe Lou's Place as a "family" - a space where they feel accepted, supported and empowered to move toward independence.

Together, we delivered over **3,780 hours** of practical and emotional support through our case management programmes.



SAFETY & STABILITY

Lou's Place provided practical support and advocacy to help women stay safe and housed — preventing homelessness, securing crisis accommodation, and sustaining long-term tenancies. Having a secure place to rest, be heard, and plan gave women the stability to move forward with confidence.



On average, **47 women a day** came to Lou's to find **safety, connection,** and **support.**

Stability First

BUILDING SAFE FOUNDATIONS

At Lou's Place, we know that a safe and stable home is more than just a roof, it is the foundation for dignity, safety, and recovery. This year also marked the launch of Stability First - Lou's Place's first government-funded programme, delivered through the NSW Homelessness Innovation Fund.

As a pilot initiative, Stability First was developed through the work that we did through our Drop-In Casework service, building on more than 25 years of experience while pioneering a flexible model of support for women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The programme maintains our low-barrier and inclusive approach to service delivery, ensuring that women with high and complex needs, often excluded from other services, can access housing support in a trusted and familiar space. Stability First formally launched in May 2025 and the data provided in this report reflects our drop-in casework and Stability First Program's combined.

378

Women Supported

1294

Hours of Support

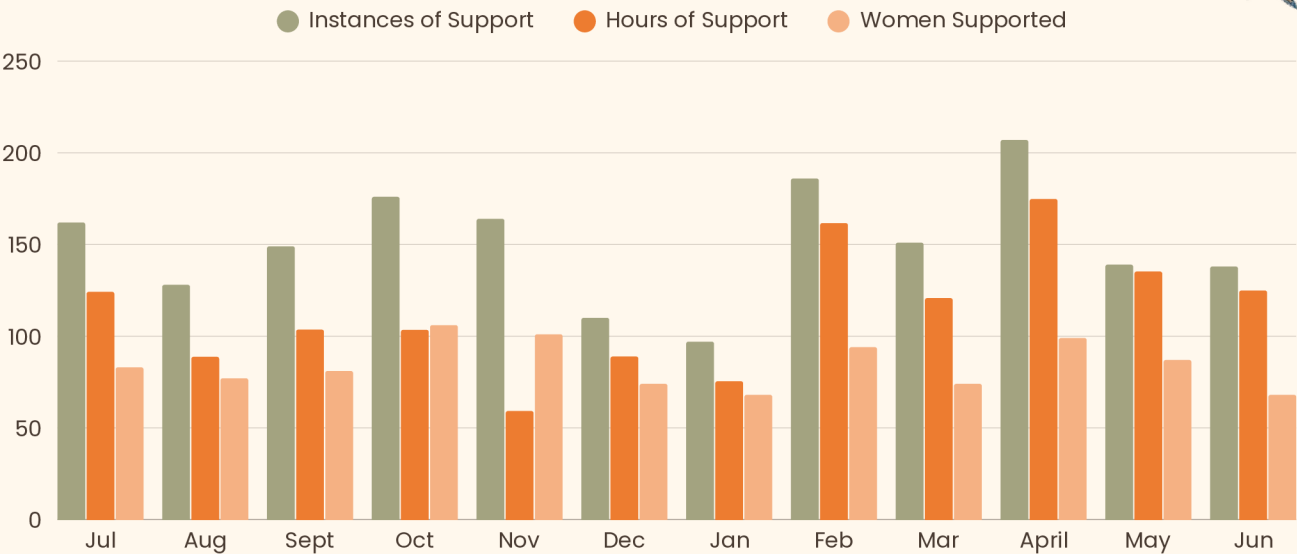
1727

Instances of Support



24/25 TRENDS

Demand grew throughout the year, peaking in November, March, and May. These surges reflect that women often seek support during moments of acute crisis, whether due to housing, safety, health, financial stress, or the many intersecting challenges they face.



JOURNEYS OF STRENGTH

The impact of Stability First is best understood through the journeys of the women we walk beside. One woman arrived after leaving a violent relationship, with a young baby and nowhere safe to stay. Others came after months of rough sleeping, or while managing grief, parole conditions, or family separation.

Through persistent advocacy, warm referrals, and practical support, women moved into crisis and transitional housing, secured long-term homes, and furnished them with the essentials needed to start again. They were supported throughout hospital admissions, linked to mental health and financial services, and guided to take steps toward family reconnection. For many, these interventions meant the difference between remaining in cycles of homelessness and beginning a path toward stability and safety.



PATHWAYS TO SAFETY

Housing remained at the heart of our work. Our team walked alongside women through:



506 Acts of Advocacy
helping women to navigate complex systems.



313 Tenancies Sustained
preventing women from entering or re-entering homelessness.



254 Homelessness Supports
including crisis beds and safety-focused support for rough sleepers.



120 Housing Applications
supported with a trauma-informed approach.



180 Warm Referrals
to specialist housing supports.

WRAP AROUND SUPPORT

Homelessness is never just about housing. Alongside housing support, we provided:



660 Moments of Emotional Support
offering connection and care during overwhelming times.



248 Case Management Sessions
weaving together fragmented systems of support.



82 Responses to DFV
prioritising women's safety.



Meeting Basic Needs
transport, healthcare, food, and toiletries, provided in collaboration with our drop-in centre.

BUILDING FUTURES TOGETHER

Stability First represents a system-wide investment in more inclusive homelessness responses. As part of the Homelessness Innovation Fund, the programme will not only continue to support women at Lou's Place but also contribute to broader reform. With lived experience embedded through women's voices, Stability First aims to help shape more accessible, flexible approaches to housing support across NSW.

The outcomes of this first year make clear that Stability First is about real change in women's lives. Each tenancy sustained, each safe night secured, and each step forward demonstrates the power of consistent advocacy, flexibility, and care. Together with the women we support, we are building safer, more stable futures.

Always *Mum*

Always Mum is a unique programme designed to support mothers navigating the child protection system. The programme comprises a 10-week therapeutic group and intensive case management. It provides a safe and empowering space where women can reflect on their parenting, share experiences with others and access the practical guidance needed to advocate for themselves in a challenging system. By standing alongside mothers, Always Mum works to reduce stigma, build confidence and affirm that no matter the circumstances, they will always be a mum.

This year, Always Mum supported 51 mothers through the group programme and 102 mothers through our tailored case management service. Referrals came from across the community. Many mothers also self-referred after hearing about the programme from previous participants. This word-of-mouth connection has become one of the programme's strongest pathways, reflecting the trust and impact Always Mum holds in women's lives.

52

Mums supported through our group programme.

102

Mums supported with specialised case management.

80

Children at the heart of the journey.

OPENING PATHWAYS TO CONNECTION & CONFIDENCE



This year, Always Mum provided **1,197 moments of support** to mothers navigating parenting and child protection. Each step reflected advocacy, encouragement and care, helping women feel heard, build confidence and strengthen their role as mothers.

Our steps together included:

Advice & information:

helping mothers understand their rights and options.



Emotional support:

offering connection and care during difficult times.



Living skills & personal growth:

strengthening confidence and independence.



Court support, warm referrals & 1:1 parenting education:
ensuring mothers had the right tools at the right time.



Collaborative case management:
shaping support around individual needs.



Advocacy & liaison:
ensuring women's voices were heard.



STORIES OF HOPE AND HEALING

The impact of Always Mum is best reflected in the journeys of the women we walk beside. One mother, newly sober, at risk of homelessness and with minimal supports, came to Lou's Place at the start of her restoration journey. Through the programme she received support for her Section 90 application*, regular case management, and emotional encouragement that helped her believe reunification with her son was possible. She is now preparing to welcome him home.

Another mother, who had fled a violent relationship, engaged with both groupwork and case management while navigating child protection proceedings. With advocacy from staff, she secured safe housing, developed her parenting confidence and built strategies for healing from trauma. Her newborn was able to remain safely in her care, a milestone she described as life changing.

For others, the journey is longer. One mother celebrated 12 months of sobriety, secured housing, gained employment and rebuilt her stability step by step. With Always Mum walking beside her, she is now on the cusp of having her daughter restored.

These stories are not isolated; they reflect a broader pattern of transformation. Over the year, several mothers achieved restoration or kept newborns safely with them, while others laid the groundwork for future reunification. In each case, Always Mum staff provided the steady presence of advocacy, guidance, and care, ensuring that mothers were never alone in facing systems that can feel overwhelming. Together, these journeys highlight the courage of mothers and the power of support that meets women where they are.

**Section 90 application: a legal process whereby parents can ask the court to vary or cancel previous care orders if their circumstances have significantly improved.*



Group Reflections

I am
willing to learn
& change to
be the best
mum I can

I am excited
as I get closer
each day
however slowly
however hard it is,
to the day my boy
comes home.

Excited 2
be CLEAN
Excited 2 be
working 2 work
getting kids
back

Connecting Through Change



Domestic and family violence continue to impact women across the nation at devastating rates, with lives lost each week, and countless others living under the weight of coercive control, fear and instability. At Lou's Place, we witness first-hand how this crisis affects women in our community. Yet, we also see the resilience, bravery and potential for transformation when women are offered safety, support and connection.

Connecting Through Change (CTC) is our dedicated DFV program, combining therapeutic groupwork with specialist case management. In 2024–25, CTC became a vital pathway for women moving from fear and instability toward safety, healing and empowerment.

HOLISTIC SUPPORT

Alongside groupwork, CTC provided specialist case management that was client-led, individualised and holistic. Violence does not occur in isolation – it affects housing, finances, health, safety and wellbeing.

Case managers walked beside women across these interconnected areas:

Housing & Stability:
securing crisis accommodation, sustaining tenancies, priority transfers.

Financial Safety:
support to access crisis payments, food and transport vouchers, bills & debt advocacy.

Safety First:
tailored safety plans, police liaison, AVO support.

Health & Recovery:
counselling referrals, healthcare navigation, brokerage for essentials.

Legal Navigation:
court support, advocacy, family law and immigration referrals.

68

Women joined therapeutic groups across **35 sessions**.

130+

Women engaged in specialist DFV case management.

Together, this represented
700+ instances of support
and more than
880 hours of advocacy and care.

“

I finally felt like someone was in my corner. It made the hardest time of my life feel less impossible.

– CTC Participant



”

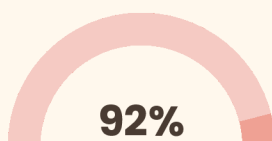
GROUP OUTCOMES

Our therapeutic group programme created a space to pause, reflect and connect. Across sessions, women explored the dynamics of domestic and family violence, trauma recovery, boundary-setting and rebuilding self-worth. They shared their stories, found solidarity in others who understood, and began to reimagine a different future.

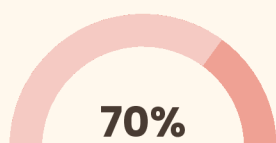
The outcomes were powerful:



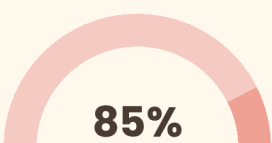
increase in women feeling supported.



increase in connection to peers with shared experiences.



increase in confidence to recognise red flags and set boundaries.



increase in awareness of rights and available supports.



“

For the first time, I know it's OK to put myself first and to love myself.

– CTC Participant

”

PATHWAYS OF COURAGE

Numbers help us measure reach, but it is women's stories that bring the programme's impact to life. Behind every hour of support is an act of courage and survival, often in the face of systemic barriers and overwhelming fear.

One woman came to Lou's Place after escaping years of abuse with her children. She was supported with housing, accessing childcare subsidies, and funding through Victim Services Support, and she later joined the group programme where she found strength and solidarity. She described Lou's Place as the place where she finally felt believed.

Another woman arrived after enduring escalating violence with nowhere safe to go. Within hours, our team secured emergency accommodation, accessed crisis payments, and wove therapeutic activities into her casework to ease her anxiety. Today, she is settled in long-term housing and planning her future with confidence.

A mother fleeing interstate violence was turned away by services at capacity. Our case managers advocated persistently until she was placed in safe accommodation, provided her with a safe phone and crisis brokerage, and supported her housing journey. Today, she and her children are securely housed. She plans to join the group programme when she feels ready.

Each of these stories and the many others like them demonstrate the heart of CTC: women moving from fear and isolation toward safety, confidence, and connection, with someone walking beside them every step of the way.

A YEAR AT LOU'S Drop-In Centre



"Wonderful place
with heart, soul,
and smarts. Good
stuff happens."



Everyday Support

Women can share breakfast and lunch, take a shower, do their laundry, access essential clothing, toiletries and takeaway meals, or simply just relax with a cuppa. Alongside these practical supports, outreach legal and health clinics and creative activities like art, sewing and yoga create moments of comfort, confidence and connection.

The Lou's Place drop-in centre is a haven for women who need it most, a space to rest, reset and rebuild. Each day, we open our doors to offer care, connection and support in a calm, welcoming environment. In a country where women make up almost half of all people experiencing homelessness, and many are seeking safety from domestic and family violence,¹ Lou's Place remains a rare and vital space of belonging and hope.



"Growing into a new
version of myself. One that
is more confident and
empowered."



¹ Wood & Villiers (2024); Ng et al. (2023).

"I enjoy coming to Lou's place for the togetherness"



A Place to Begin

For many women, our drop-in centre is the first step toward stability. It offers a gentle introduction to support, where trust is built and women can learn about our other programmes such as Stability First, Always Mum and Connecting Through Change. From here, they can explore the kind of help that feels right for them, at their own pace.

I've been coming here for 8 years. Don't know what I'd do without Lou's! xxx



Dignity in Every Interaction

From the first meal served to the last therapeutic activity, everything we do helps to rebuild dignity and connection. This ripple of support embodies the spirit of Lou's Place: not only providing essentials but creating a growing community. Lou's Place offers wrap-around care tailored to women. It is often their first point of healing and hope.

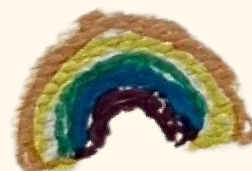


The Ripple Effect

Over the past year, we've welcomed increasing numbers of women through our doors. The most powerful sign of success is when a woman returns, this time bringing someone new. It means what she found here wasn't just help; it was the beginning of trust and hope she now shares with others.

"Do the storms ever stop?"
"No", but neither do the rainbows"

Thank you Lov's, I'm very
grateful for the service



LOVE +

CARE



Peace
Love &
Sharing



A Safe Place to Begin Again:

YASMIN'S STORY

When Yasmin* first came to Lou's Place, she was struggling to cover her basic needs. She couldn't always afford food, so she began visiting Lou's for breakfast, lunch and takeaway meals. After a few visits, she started to use the washing machines which helped ease the financial pressure of daily life.

Yasmin's crisis accommodation was closed during the day, leaving her with nowhere safe to go. Lou's quickly became a place where she could rest, access support and feel part of a welcoming community.

Through conversations with staff, Yasmin learned about our drop-in casework service. She decided to reach out for additional support with her financial hardship, rental arrears and complex hoarding tendencies. She revealed that she had fled her home country due to significant domestic violence.

Our caseworkers worked with Yasmin to identify her priorities and connect her with practical help. They linked her with a financial counsellor, advocated with housing services, and provided support letters and food vouchers. She was also able to access legal and health clinics at Lou's. Once her immediate needs were met, a volunteer supported her with job readiness skills. This gave Yasmin the confidence to apply for work.

Yasmin's situation began to improve. With the help of Lou's Place and other services, she was able to resolve her rental arrears, move into safe accommodation, and eventually secure full-time employment in hospitality. Having a steady income allowed her to enter the private rental market. This gave her the independence and stability she had long been striving for.

Today, Yasmin still occasionally drops by Lou's Place. Whether it's for a meal, toiletries, or simply to reconnect with a familiar and supportive community, she knows she is always welcome. Her story is a reminder of the resilience of the women who walk through our doors, and of the difference that a safe space, practical support and a listening ear can make.

**Names and identifying details have been changed to maintain privacy.
The woman depicted in this image is not related to this case study.*



Activities & Clinics

at Lou's

SPACES THAT BUILD SAFETY,
CONNECTION & CARE

Each week, Lou's Place comes alive with activities and clinics that offer women the chance to connect, create and care for themselves. From sewing to yoga, legal clinics to creative workshops, every session is more than a class - it's a moment of *connection, belonging and growth*.

285 ACTIVITY
SESSIONS

66 SPECIALIST
CLINICS

1773 ACTIVITY
ATTENDANCES

CREATIVE WRITING

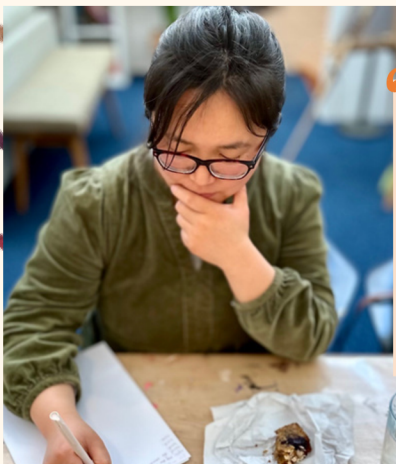
Through writing, women explored self-expression, reflection and storytelling. These sessions offered a safe outlet for creativity and the chance to share experiences in their own words.

ART

Art classes encouraged creativity, connection and expression without judgement. Women painted, crafted and discovered new ways to process emotions through making.

SEWING

Sewing groups combined practical skills with community. Women made, mended and shared conversation, often leaving with items that brought pride and joy.



Art classes and writing classes helped me to regulate my emotions. It gives me time to rest my mind from stress.

— **Rossana,**
Activity Participant



JEWELLERY MAKING

One of our most popular groups, jewellery making blended creativity with connection. Women created beautiful pieces while sharing ideas, stories and laughter.

MUSIC

Music brings joy and connection to Lou's Place. Women take part in one-on-one piano lessons with our volunteer teacher and join Tuesday karaoke sessions, moments that spark confidence, laughter and creativity.

I've been volunteering at the Wednesday art class for seven years. It's been so positive seeing the women's creativity, and many have become close friends through art and conversation.

— **Activity Volunteer**

YOGA

Yoga sessions focused on grounding, breath and movement. Women described feeling calmer, stronger and more connected to their bodies afterwards.

“

I've learnt that movement and meditation combined can help me direct my energy and helps me to be in the moment.

— Honey,
Activity Participant

”



“

I've taught yoga and mindfulness at Lou's Place for nearly 10 years. Often women arrive stressed, and it's rewarding to see them relax and leave in a calmer, better space.

— Tessa, Volunteer

”

MEDITATION & BREATHWORK

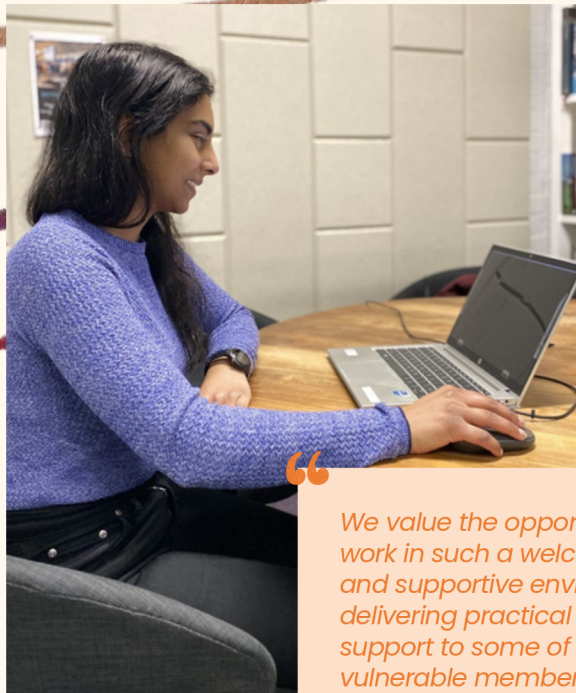
These sessions offered women tools to slow down and ease stress while connecting through a shared practice of stillness and calm.

MASSAGE

Massage offered women moments of calm and relief, easing tension in body and mind. For many, these sessions were a rare chance to pause and receive gentle care.

SPECIALIST CLINICS

Alongside group activities, women accessed legal and health clinics through our drop in centre, providing expert support in a safe, familiar space. These services removed barriers and made practical help feel less intimidating. Partners included the Inner City Legal Centre, Immigration Advice & Rights Centre and Redfern Legal Centre, offering advice on tenancy, family law, visas, fines and safety. Sydney Local Health District's women's health clinics provided cervical screening, contraception, STI testing, Hepatitis C education and flu vaccinations.



“

We value the opportunity to work in such a welcoming and supportive environment, delivering practical legal support to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

— Alexis Goodstone,
Redfern Legal Centre

”

Volunteers

THE LIFEBLOOD OF LOU'S PLACE

Volunteers are at the heart of Lou's Place. Their generosity, time and commitment are integral to our operations. Without them, our service could not exist. Our volunteers bring warmth, skill, and compassion, helping us create the safe, welcoming environment that Lou's Place is known for.

They contribute across all areas of the centre. They prepare and serve nutritious lunches, lead therapeutic activities, as well as support women in preparing for employment through resume writing and interview practice. Behind the scenes, volunteers assist with administration, donations, fundraising events, and even deliver frozen meals from our partner services.

By donating their time and talents, volunteers not only strengthen the daily operations of Lou's Place, but they also help weave us more deeply into the fabric of our community. They are an invaluable network of supporters and advocates, and we are grateful for the energy, compassion and commitment they bring to every aspect of our work.

“

Volunteering at Lou's Place is the best part of my week. The smiles and thankyou's from the women as we serve up lunch makes my heart sing. I'm proud to have been associated with Lou's Place over many years and thank the wonderful team who continue to make a difference to the lives of so many women.

- Lisa, Volunteer

”



134

ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

535

VOLUNTEER SHIFTS

1178

HOURS VOLUNTEERED



“

In my cooking role it's all about preparing family style lunches in the kitchen with lots of care for the women to enjoy. It brings the women together, sharing kindness and connection over a meal. It's so much more than just food. It's a way of nourishing wonderful women.

- Cooking Volunteer

”

VOLUNTEER NIGHT AT LOU'S

In November 2024, we hosted a volunteer night at Lou's Place to acknowledge our volunteers for their dedication. The evening provided an opportunity not only for connection and community, but also for learning new skills that could be applied both within Lou's Place and in everyday life. Our guest speaker delivered an education session on trauma, exploring how it can manifest, and how we can better support those with lived experience. After a Q&A session, volunteers did a mini meditation and breathwork practice led by one of our own volunteers. It was a grounding way to close the evening.



“

On a quiet little laneway in Redfern, a wonderful team of women, workers and volunteers care and gently give support to those who need it, a small but mighty energy prevails.

- Nikki, Volunteer

”

2024 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

In 2024, we nominated our activity volunteers for the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards in recognition of their commitment and dedication to providing therapeutic and skill-building activities at Lou's Place.

The awards, coordinated by the Centre for Volunteering (the peak body for volunteering in NSW) were held across multiple locations, with nominees invited to attend the ceremony closest to their local area. This initiative not only celebrated the valuable contributions of our volunteers but also highlighted the critical role of volunteering in NSW.

5.8 million people gave their time as volunteers (*the Centre for Volunteering's NSW State of Volunteering Report, 2024*), contributing an estimated \$233 billion to NSW. The report also recommended shaping the future of volunteering through increased flexibility, targeted training, breaking down stereotypes, as well as fostering leadership—principles that resonate strongly with the culture and values at Lou's Place.

Moments that brought us together

LOU'S CHRISTMAS PARTY 2024

85 women came to our Christmas party, a festive celebration filled with food, fun and laughter. The upstairs space was transformed into Santa's Grotto, where women could chat with Santa and have their photos taken. Festive activities included bauble decorating, card making, gingerbread decorating and carolling. Each woman left with a Christmas bag of goodies generously donated by the community. The Christmas party reflected the generosity and community that embody Lou's Place.



NAIDOC WEEK 2024

NAIDOC Week at Lou's Place is always a special opportunity to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This year was no exception. We began the week with an Aboriginal-themed art session, led by one of our lovely Aboriginal women. She shared her culture, and the meaning behind dot paintings, before guiding others to create their own artworks. It was a beautiful way to learn and connect, and to honour Aboriginal culture through creativity.

Later in the week, clients, volunteers and staff enjoyed a NAIDOC community BBQ. The food was prepared with native meat rubs and seasonings. The lunch provided a spirit of community and respect, as well as an opportunity to learn more about indigenous culture.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025

On Friday 7th March, Lou's Place proudly celebrated International Women's Day with a day full of activities, connection and reflection. This year's theme, March Forward: For ALL Women and Girls, was woven throughout the celebrations. It reminded us of the power and courage of our women.

Our volunteers from Wotton & Kearney served up a delicious cooked breakfast. A mindfulness session followed before women joined a lively game of bingo. A BBQ lunch and cupcake decorating added to the festive and welcoming atmosphere. Women joined more activities such as temporary tattoos and nail painting.

Women considered the theme more deeply during a reflective activity. They wrote their responses to the question: "What brave step have you taken to march forward?" on footprints pinned to our corkboard. This created a powerful visual display of resilience, bravery and hope. The opportunity for connection with others during the day made the celebration both joyful and empowering.



UNITE AGAINST VIOLENCE

No More Empty Shoes

Lou's Place stood up again this year to raise awareness about domestic and family violence and to demand real change. We partnered with the 2024 NSW Vigil Collective for our "No More Empty Shoes" campaign at Martin Place on 26 November, joining the UN's 16 Days of Activism.

Empty shoes on plinths told the story. Each pair represented a woman whose life had been stolen this year. We honoured survivors and stood with those still living in fear. The number of homicides recording violence against women, as reported by Counting Dead Women Australia, from 1 January to 31 December 2024 was 79. A truly appalling spike. This issue belongs to all of us. As our keynote speaker Darryl Gardiner put it:

"While female survivors' voices can never be replaced by a man's, it's critical that we, as men, add our voices to this conversation."

Delia Donovan (DVNSW CEO) and Daniel Principe (2025 NSW Australian of the Year nominee) challenged us all to take responsibility. Melinda Schneider's performances of "My Voice" and "Courageous" struck a deep chord.

The public walked among the plinths, each one bearing the name and date of a woman lost in 2024. The most powerful moment came when those names were read aloud and roses placed beside each pair of shoes. The silence was deafening. Yet there was hope. As Darryl said:

"Today, I want to speak not just about pain, but about the power of change. We aren't helpless bystanders. It starts with the courage to say, 'This is not acceptable.' This isn't just about stopping violence; it's about building a world on respect and kindness."

Thank you to everyone who stood with us. Your support made this year's vigil bigger and more impactful than ever. Funds raised are being used for our DFV case workers at Lou's Place.

**Together, we say: Unite Against Violence.
No More Empty Shoes.**



Lou's Closet 2025

Another year, another successful closet, with \$135,000 raised! What an amazing result we achieved with the assistance of the community.

We're grateful for the continuous support of Australian designers Carla Zampatti, Bianca Spender, Moss and Spy, and Baz, as well as generous clothing donations from individuals.

We couldn't have pulled it off without the tremendous efforts of the Lou's Closet team who worked tirelessly over the preceding months and over the three-day event.



FUNDS RAISED

\$135k

The closet was held at the Tramsheds at Forest Lodge. Beautiful clothing hung in our designer boutique, with luxury international designers such as Gucci, Prada, Armani, Versace, Louis Vuitton, and Australian designers such as Zimmerman, Camilla and Marc, and Camilla. Our general boutique had well-known Australian labels, including Veronika Maine, Country Road, Cue and Sportscraft. The vintage and knitwear sections also proved to be very popular.

Lou's Pantry, as part of the closet, sold an array of homemade chutneys, seasonings, jams and baked goods, all prepared by our kitchen volunteers.

So many bargains were to be had by shoppers young and old. Every single cent raised goes directly to helping the women who access Lou's services. In addition, our shoppers support the sustainability of the fashion industry.

Thank you to everybody who supported Lou's Closet through attending the sale and by donating their clothing and time.

We can't wait to see you all again for Lou's Closet in May 2026.



Building for the *Future*

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY AND IMPACT

At Lou's Place, we are committed to continuous improvement and building the foundations that sustain meaningful, long-term impact. Over the past year, we have invested in key initiatives to strengthen our systems, refine our practice, and ensure our model of care continues to respond to the changing needs of women.

Defining Our Impact: The Theory of Change

In partnership with Social Ventures Australia, Lou's Place developed a Theory of Change that maps how and why our work leads to positive outcomes in women's lives. The process brought together voices from across our community – staff, volunteers, Board members and women with lived experience, to create a shared framework that reflects both evidence and empathy.

This Theory of Change now underpins our evaluation approach, giving us a clear language for describing impact, measuring progress, and guiding service design into the future.

**Accurate data
shows us not just
what we do, but
why it matters.**

At a Glance

- * Developed with Social Ventures Australia.
- * Co-designed with staff, volunteers, and women with lived experience.
- * Maps how Lou's Place creates change – from safety to stability to connection.
- * Guides how we measure impact and plan for the future.

Harnessing Data: Implementing the Service Record System

To strengthen how we record and understand the support we provide, we introduced a new Service Record System (SRS). The SRS allows us to capture data more consistently across all programmes and translate it into meaningful insights about women's needs, engagement and outcomes. Adapted to fit our trauma-informed, low-barrier model, it also improves collaboration with partner services and enhances the quality and consistency of casework. With the SRS in place, Lou's Place is better equipped to make data-informed decisions that improve the care we deliver every day.

Embedding Quality: Strengthening Governance & Policies

This year we undertook a comprehensive review of key organisational policies and procedures to ensure our governance and safety frameworks remain strong, current and aligned with best practice. Staff were involved throughout the process, ensuring updates reflected real-world practice and the values that underpin Lou's Place. Clear, consistent policies empower our team to respond confidently and transparently, reinforcing accountability and the high standards of care that women can depend on.



Safety & Governance



Practice Frameworks



Evaluation & Growth



Staff Collaboration

“

The support we receive in Peer Learning Circles is open, honest, and constructive.

Having a space to talk through the challenges we face has helped me feel more balanced in both my work and personal life.

– Lou's Team Member

”

Growing Together: Peer Learning Circles

Supporting our team to pause, reflect and learn together is central to sustaining quality care.

Through Peer Learning Circles, client-facing staff come together fortnightly to share experiences, workshop challenges and strengthen collective practice in a supportive, non-judgemental space. These sessions invite honest conversation about what's working, where we can grow, and how we can best support the women we work with.

The circles have become an anchor for connection and professional development across Lou's Place, a space where insight meets empathy, and where shared reflection turns into stronger practice. By creating regular time for dialogue and learning, we're nurturing a culture that values curiosity, trust and continuous growth, the same principles that guide every aspect of our work with women.

Building on What We Have Learned

The work we have done this year to strengthen our foundations reflects our commitment to learning, accountability and continuous improvement. These initiatives may sit behind the scenes, but they directly shape the quality, safety and impact of the support we provide every day. By investing in our systems, our people and our evidence base, we are building Lou's Place for the future: a place where women can find safety, stability and connection, and where our model of care remains strong, responsive and impactful for years to come.

Treasurer's *Report*

The 2024–2025 financial year was a period of significant growth and continued resilience for Lou's Place. In response to the increasing complexity of our work, we established two key positions, a philanthropy manager and a financial controller. These roles will strengthen both our fundraising capacity and financial oversight. We also partnered with Social Ventures Australia to develop an outcomes framework, which will provide valuable insight into how we measure and communicate the impact of our services.

Our clients continue to be affected by cost-of-living pressures, and this has been reflected in the demand for support. In particular, we substantially increased our brokerage services, providing additional funding for emergency accommodation, food and other essential needs. As a result of these initiatives, overall expenditure grew by 32% compared with the previous financial year.

Lou's Place remains deeply reliant on the generosity of our community and the individuals, businesses and philanthropic foundations who share our mission. This year, total income reached \$2,052,846, of which just 3% was sourced from government grants. After accounting for the increased expenditure, we closed the year with a surplus of \$398,200. This ensures that we are well-positioned to continue helping women in need, while expanding our services and advancing key initiatives outlined in our strategic plan.

Finally, I extend our gratitude to PricewaterhouseCoopers for their continued pro bono support in independently auditing our financial statements.

Karen Martin

Treasurer

The Marmalade Foundation



24/25 Financial Year

\$2,052,846

INCOME

\$1,654,646

EXPENDITURE

\$398,200

SURPLUS



Looking Ahead

As we close this report, we thank you for taking the time to reflect with us on the year that has been. Every story, every number and every achievement shared here represents not just the work of Lou's Place, but the courage, strength and resilience of the women we are privileged to walk alongside.

None of this would be possible without the care and generosity of our staff, volunteers, partners and supporters. Together, you create the community that makes Lou's Place what it is: a safe and welcoming place where women know they are not alone.

Looking to the year ahead, we are guided by our new strategic plan. In the coming year, our focus will be on strengthening operations so that every woman who comes to us receives the best possible support; investing in our people and culture; recognising that when our team feels supported and valued, the women we serve feel it too; and deepening our engagement with our community, donors and partners so that together we can create even greater impact.

The need for Lou's Place has never been greater. With your support we step into the future with hope, determination and a renewed commitment to making sure every woman who walks through our doors feels seen, heard and cared for.

With gratitude,

The Lou's Team



Lou's Place

2025 – 2028

Strategic Plan



Vision

Contribute to a world where all women experience safety, support and are empowered to live a life beyond survival.

People & Culture

Invest in the growth & wellbeing of our people to deliver better employee, team & client outcomes.

- * Strengthen our service delivery training & support for staff, and optimise resourcing distribution.
- * Expand professional development, education & wellbeing programs to increase staff engagement, build capabilities & retain/attract talent.
- * Identify and support more opportunities for industry engagement, collaboration & networking.
- * Build in-house marketing/communications capabilities.

Operations

Strengthen operational functions to lead best practice service delivery for women in crisis.

- * Evolve data collection & reporting systems to better track outputs, outcomes and demonstrate impact.
- * Achieve accreditation for key services.
- * Map all internal processes/roles and create robust policies to drive operational efficiency & manage risk.
- * Test viability for expanded services/hours to align with evolving client needs.

Engagement

Deepen stakeholder engagement to deliver better collective impact.

- * Advance our volunteer program, track & measure engagement.
- * Strategic government engagement to support funding and advocacy priorities.
- * Create a client advisory group to inform strategy & services development.
- * Design & execute a marcomms strategy to better engage with our community, tell our story & demonstrate impact.

Finance

Improve financial resilience to meet current & future needs of women in crisis.

- * Strengthen donor stewardship with a focus on planned/structured giving to build a robust multi-year pipeline.
- * Implement donor acquisition plan to attract new donors and diversify donor base e.g. next generation donors.
- * Diversify funding streams with a focus on: corporate partnerships, state/federal government grants & bequests.

Lou's Place

Donors, Supporters & Partners

Every contribution made to Lou's Place plays a crucial role in helping us realise our vision to support women to live a life beyond survival. The collective effort and impact of our community have been extraordinary. You are all instrumental in saving and changing the lives of women who turn to Lou's for support.

Whether you have donated your time, invested in our programmes, raised funds or contributed materials/goods, whether you give every month or have made a herculean effort to run a fundraiser, we thank you for standing alongside us.

You've helped numerous women leave violent and potentially fatal situations; you've re-housed women who have previously slept rough and shunned interventions; you've supported asylum seekers with no one else to turn to; you've provided food for families who didn't know where their next meal was coming from; you've helped many mums reunite with children who were previously taken away from them; you've lifted up Aboriginal women who've faced intergenerational trauma; you've supported our team to learn and grown.

Above all you've given hope and community to vulnerable women.

There are many ways to get involved — donate, volunteer or partner with Lou's Place to help women build safety, stability and connection. For more information, contact info@lousplace.com.au





**TOGETHER, WE
WILL KEEP
BUILDING A SAFE
PLACE FOR
WOMEN.**

Thank you

This year, it's become clearer than ever just how much our donors and supporters are invested in Lou's Place – helping us through busy periods, new challenges, taking some of the mental load off the team, as well as supporting us to evolve. As a result, we now have our first strategic plan. We are deeply committed to ensuring your contributions have the best outcomes, which we will continue to report back on.

We are very grateful for everyone's support, and we would like to acknowledge some of our longstanding major donors, grant givers, corporate contributors, supporters and service partners. While many remain anonymous or stay in the background, we'd like also to acknowledge your contributions.

Major Donors, Foundations & Grants

- 1666 Foundation Pty Ltd
- Amanda Lawson
- Australian Philanthropic Services Foundation
- Australian Stockbrokers Foundation Limited
- Pamela and Douglas Bartlett
- The Beeren Foundation
- The Berg Family Foundation
- Campbell Edwards Trust
- City of Sydney Grants and Sponsorship Programs
- Dr Jo Boney & Mr Ross Grant
- James N. Kirby Foundation
- Margaret Kirby
- The North Carolina Community Foundation
- Ottomin Foundation
- The Palghat Family
- Roger Tallboys
- Stability First Program – Funded by the NSW Government's Homelessness Innovation Fund

Corporate Contributors

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| • Andrew Blakemore | • Redfern Legal Centre |
| • Canva | • SleepSafe |
| • Immigration Rights & Advice Centre | • Sydney Local Health District Priority Populations Program |
| • Inner City Legal Centre | • Thread Together |
| • Joe Pollard | • Two Good Co. |
| • Oz Harvest | • Wotton & Kearney |

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Click below to follow us on social media:



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