

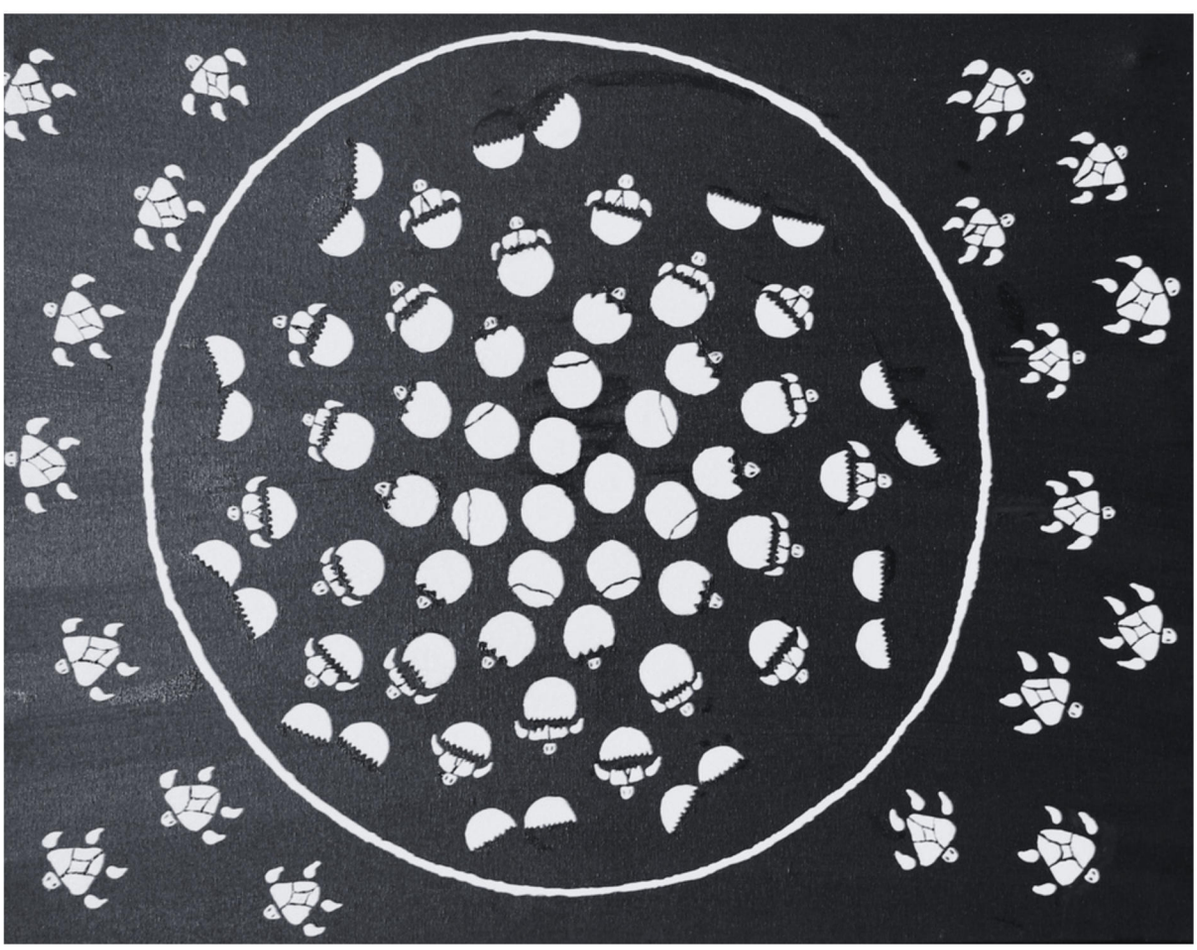
2025 2026 ANNUAL REPORT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Lou's Place acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which we work and gather in Redfern. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of the Redfern community.

Redfern is a place of deep and continuing significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For generations, Aboriginal people have gathered here, built community, cared for one another, created spaces for culture and connection, and led movements for justice, self-determination and change. We honour the Aboriginal women whose strength, leadership and care have helped shape this community, including Shirley "Mum Shirl" Smith, Ann Weldon and Naomi Mayers.

We recognise the strength, resilience and enduring presence of Aboriginal communities in Redfern, and the generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have shaped and continue to shape this place. We are grateful to live and work with, and support women on Gadigal Country, and we are committed to learning and respecting the history, culture and communities of this place. Australia always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



Australia always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

**Artwork created by a woman who comes to Lou's Place*

Title: *A Turtle's Dream*
Description: *"A sea turtle's life is rich with colour, so she dreams in black and white. She dreams of her babies making it safely into the world. In this painting, three eggs are waiting to hatch. If you dream of them hatching too, let them - they might just be the beginning of something new."*

Made by her, shared by us

The artworks, handwritten words and creative pieces 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.



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A year in reflection from our Chair



Dear friends, supporters and community,

On behalf of the Board, I am proud to present this year's Annual Report, which marks the completion of the first year of our three-year strategy. It has been a year of growth and strengthening at Lou's Place as we have continued to build our capacity while remaining focused on what matters most: providing support, connection and community for the women who come through our doors.

Thanks to a special capacity-building grant, we have created a dedicated Project Manager role to lead several important initiatives. This year's initiatives included engaging external expertise to strengthen our HR policies and procedures, developing new systems to better understand and report on our work and impact, and establishing a Client Advisory Group to ensure that the voices and experiences of the women we support help shape Lou's Place. While much of this work happens behind the scenes, its purpose is focused. These investments are helping us build a stronger, more sustainable organisation.

I am deeply grateful for our staff, Board, volunteers and broader community, whose commitment and generosity enable this work. In a year of considerable global and economic uncertainty, the Board remained committed to supporting our team, recognising that the compassionate, skilled and dedicated people at Lou's Place are at the heart of everything we do.

Our community outreach and our engagement with services and partners have also grown, strengthening the support available to women across Sydney. This year, more women have turned to Lou's Place for support. While we would always hope to see less need in our community, the reality is that many women still face significant challenges. They need a place where they feel safe, welcomed and supported. I am proud of our team who continue to meet women where they are, providing compassion, respect and professionalism.

As we approach the second year of our strategy, our focus turns to building on our strong foundations. With a dedicated team, a committed Board, a growing network of partners and supporters, and a clear sense of purpose, I am confident about the future of Lou's Place and the women in our community.

Thank you, as always, for standing alongside us. Your support helps ensure Lou's Place remains a place where women can find practical support, connection, care and a sense of belonging.

With gratitude,

Rebecca Fitzpatrick

Chair
The Marmalade Foundation

Message from the CEO

Showing up for women is at the heart of Lou's Place.

It means welcoming every woman as she is, whether she is visiting for the first time, or has been part of our community for many years. It means listening without judgement, responding with care and recognising her absolute value and worth.

Over the past year, we have continued to see more women needing Lou's Place. Some come for practical support as they manage the rising cost of living and try to hold on to their housing. Others are navigating homelessness, violence, trauma or isolation. Many come seeking community and a place where they feel safety, acceptance and belonging.

The women who come to Lou's Place show extraordinary courage, determination and resilience. They are navigating complex systems, making decisions and building the lives they want for themselves. Our role is not to take over or assume that we know best. It is to listen, understand what each woman wants and help her work towards it.

Behind each woman is a consistent staff team. Progress is rarely straightforward. Women are too often confronted by systems that are difficult to navigate, services that cannot meet their needs, and decisions with limited options. When one pathway closes, our team continues to advocate, follow up and help the woman explore another, while ensuring she remains in control of the decisions affecting her life.



Together with our staff, our volunteers are an essential part of the daily life of Lou's Place. Every week, they prepare nutritious meals, share their skills, facilitate activities and create moments of connection and joy. They generously give their time, and through their warmth and consistency, help make Lou's Place a community where women feel welcomed and valued.

Our donors make this possible through their generous financial support and their trust in our work. Our partner organisations bring valuable expertise and resources, helping us achieve more together than we can alone.

Throughout the year, we have continued to strengthen the foundations of Lou's Place while protecting what has always made it special.

In the pages that follow, we invite you to see a little of what this shared commitment has made possible at Lou's Place over the past year.

Amanda Greaney

CEO
Lou's Place







Vision and Mission

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.

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 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 year
at a glance

12,118 visits
Approximately **47 women** visited Lou's Place each day.

761 women
accessed Lou's Place throughout the year.

This year, Lou's Place recorded 12,118 visits from women seeking safety, connection and support — a 9% increase from last year. 761 women came to Lou's, with some returning more frequently, and a daily average of 46.4 women. Yet on some days, more than 70 women walk through our doors. This increase in visits reflects the growing need for ongoing, intensive and trauma-informed support, as women navigate complex systems and circumstances.

It also reflects the trust women place in Lou's Place as a safe, welcoming and non-judgemental space where they can return for practical support, connection and advocacy. Our staff support women aged 18 to 81, as well as children. They meet each woman where she is, and support her with dignity, choice and respect.



Lou's Place is another choice, when people keep telling you what choice do you have.
Lou's Place is where you can find women's wisdom and mother's nurture. I call it my sanctuary, my buffer zone, where I can land on. Where I can reassure myself that I'm going to be ok. Ok without a partner. Ok without a parent. Ok when everything comes down, when worst comes to worst. I will be ok because I know so...
I am seen, I matter, I am safe. It's ok to start to explore from here.

— A woman who comes to Lou's Place

Safety and stability

Lou's Place supported women experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, domestic and family violence, and involvement with the child protection system through practical assistance, advocacy and connection to services. Having somewhere safe to turn — and someone to walk alongside them — helped women navigate challenging circumstances and build greater stability.

Around the table

At Lou's Place, sharing a meal is about more than food. Around the table, women found nourishment, conversation and connection. Meals created opportunities to pause, feel welcome and spend time in a space where women could be themselves.

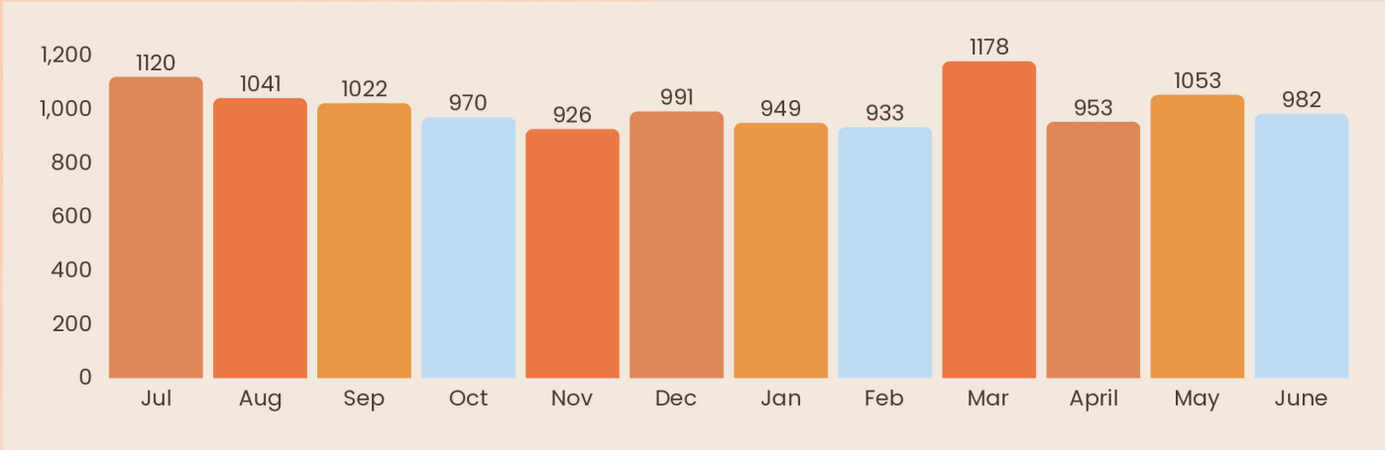
Everyday essentials

From a hot meal and a shower to fresh clothing, toiletries and laundry, Lou's Place provided everyday essentials that helped women feel comfortable, respected and cared for. By easing some of the pressures of daily life, women had space to focus on what mattered to them and consider their futures.

A place to belong

Through activities, workshops, shared meals and case management, women formed connections, developed skills and accessed support. When navigating housing, health, safety and other challenges, they were met where they were and empowered to shape their futures.

2025/2026 MONTHLY VISITS



4,710 breakfasts and 8,091 hot lunches shared — a total of 12,801 meals enjoyed together.
An average of 19 breakfasts and 32 hot lunches shared each day.



"This place is a lifesaver, there's nothing like it."

-A woman supported by Lou's Place

Stability First

452 women accessed the Stability First service.

870 acts of advocacy helping women to navigate complex systems



528 homelessness supports including crisis beds and safety-focused support for rough sleepers

221 housing applications supported with a trauma-informed approach



722 instances of support to sustain tenancies preventing women from entering or re-entering homelessness

Building safe foundations

As the housing and cost-of-living crisis continues, more women are turning to Lou's Place for support. In its first year, **the Stability First programme provided 1,539 instances of support to women experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.** This highlights the growing need for specialist housing support.

Having a safe place to call home can make a significant difference in a woman's life. Many women who come to Lou's Place are navigating a range of interconnected challenges, such as financial hardship, domestic and family violence (DFV), health concerns, legal issues, social isolation and barriers to accessing services. **Housing is often just one part of a much bigger picture.**

Stability First provides specialist, relationship-based housing support that looks beyond finding accommodation. The programme helps women to understand the factors contributing to housing instability. It also strengthens practical and emotional supports, while connecting women with services and resources to help them build and maintain a safe and stable home. **Lasting housing stability takes time and is built through trust, consistency and connection.**

Walking alongside women

Flexible support through Stability First is guided by each woman's circumstances, priorities and goals.

A woman who experienced homelessness following her release from incarceration needed help obtaining identification documents for banking services and to pay for accommodation.

Another woman and her children were assisted with a tenancy application. They obtained temporary accommodation before moving into a permanent home. Today, the family is settled in their new community with services that will help sustain their tenancy.

A third woman was able to remain in her home with assistance with rental arrears and advocating for a manageable repayment arrangement.

These women's stories reflect the importance of practical support and advocacy.

From pilot to ongoing commitment

Stability First began with pilot funding from the **NSW Homelessness Innovation Fund (HIF)**. After its early success, Lou's Place has continued the programme beyond the initial funding period while seeking longer-term investment opportunities. The model has been designed specifically for women who can find it difficult to access mainstream housing services, for example: housing exclusion, tenancy breakdown or disengagement from support systems.

Working together for better outcomes

This year, Lou's Place joined the **Homelessness Assertive Response Team (HART)**, a collaborative partnership of housing, health, homelessness, alcohol, drug and mental health services.

The HART team conducts weekly outreach in Sydney's inner city, talking with people who are sleeping rough, and offering practical support and information. **By working together, services can respond more effectively, reduce barriers to support and help ensure people have access to the assistance they need.**

274 women with complex support needs were supported with tailored, holistic care.

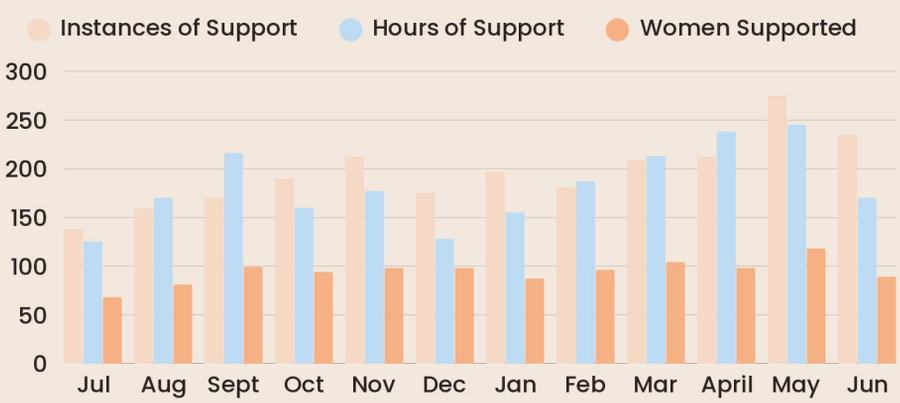
540 instances of brokerage were provided to stabilise housing or prevent tenancy breakdown.

780 moments of emotional support offering connection and care during overwhelming times

244 women at risk of homelessness or losing their tenancy received support to maintain safe and secure housing.

98 individual women were supported to move from rough sleeping, sleeping in cars or couch surfing into safer accommodation.

143 women who accessed the service were also experiencing domestic and family violence.





These numbers represent women who sought support, connection and practical assistance during times of uncertainty. They reinforce the importance of low-barrier, flexible services that meet women where they are.

> ***I found a home and signed a one-year lease. I couldn't have done it without Lou's Place.***
>
> *— A woman supported by Lou's Place*



Always Mum



Motherhood doesn't end

Group reflections

For women who have had children removed from their care, motherhood doesn't end. Child removal can bring profound grief, loss, uncertainty and isolation to mothers while they are navigating systems such as the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and the Children's Court. Concurrently, they are working to maintain or rebuild relationships with their children.

Recent NSW research indicates that fewer than one in three children in out of home care are restored to their birth parents. Rather than reflecting a mother's commitment, this highlights the barriers often faced when seeking restoration. Inconsistent support can make mothers' journeys even harder.

Defining progress on a woman's terms

Always Mum meets women where they are. For some, this involves working towards restoration. For others, it may mean attending court with support, understanding their rights, self-advocacy, strengthening family relationships, or simply having a space where they are respected and understood. The programme acknowledges that progress is variable, and that outcomes cannot be measured by restoration alone.

**https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/about-us/facsiar/facsiar-research-seminars/past-seminars/2026-webinars/june-2026.html*

A place where mothers are seen and supported

Always Mum provides a safe and supportive space for mothers and grandmothers who have experienced child removal. Combining a 10-week psycho-educational group with intensive case management, it supports women to process their experiences and strengthens their understanding of complex systems while obtaining practical support. Significantly, Always Mum recognises that motherhood remains an important part of a woman's identity.

Connection through shared experience

This year, 31 mothers and grandmothers participated in Always Mum, representing 80 children. The group focuses on creating a safe and trusting environment. It also offers an opportunity to connect with others and to build a sense of belonging. **Feedback from participants was encouraging, with a 75.5% increase in feeling heard and validated, and an overall rating of 9.3/10.**

Building understanding and confidence

Many women participating in Always Mum are also navigating other challenges. **This year, 49% of participants had experienced domestic and family violence.** Women explored topics such as trauma, child protection processes, self-advocacy and well-being. **At its conclusion, participants reported a 91% confidence level in their understanding of trauma (a 23% increase from pre-programme responses).**

> ***" Thank you, ladies, and beautiful, strong and brave mothers for this experience in my journey as a mum, and for giving me advice and courage to keep fighting for my girls."***
>
> ***-Always Mum Participant***



**The woman depicted in this image are not related to these case studies.*

Walking alongside women

The mothers and grandmothers in Always Mum show remarkable strength, persistence and commitment to their families.

One mother currently has two of her children back in her care and is seeking restoration for her son. She joined the group programme and received case management support. This included assistance to understand her Summary of Proposed Plan (SOPP), navigation of the child protection system and pursuit of a Section 90 application.

A grandmother was supported to reconnect with grandchildren living interstate. Through ongoing advocacy and support, she established monthly visits and is working towards having her grandchildren returned to her care. With her case manager, she secured a larger property more suitable for her grandchildren, should they return home in the future.

Always Mum ensures mothers and grandmothers are welcomed without judgement, supported through challenges and recognised for the unwavering strength, love and commitment towards their children.

Connecting
Through Change

Domestic and family violence (DFV) remains a significant and complex issue in NSW. While physical violence is often the most visible form of abuse, women may also experience coercive control, intimidation, stalking, financial, emotional and technology-facilitated abuse. Such behaviours are often an ongoing pattern of control that can impact every aspect of a woman's life.

In 2025, NSW Police recorded more than 25,000 domestic violence-related offences and more than 26,000 breaches of apprehended domestic violence orders. However, these figures do not reflect the experiences of all women affected by violence. Many women do not report abuse due to fears for their safety, concerns about how systems may respond, or previous experiences that have made it difficult to seek help.



Creating space for safety, choice and understanding

Connecting Through Change (CTC) provides women with a safe, consistent and trauma-informed space to better understand their experiences, strengthen their safety and rebuild a sense of choice and control in their lives.
The programme offers specialised case management and psycho-educational group work. Women can explore the dynamics of DFV in a supportive, respectful and empowering environment. Through connection, learning and personalised support, women can develop greater understanding, safety and confidence about their future.

When a woman decides to leave

Leaving a violent or abusive relationship is often one of the most difficult and dangerous times for a woman as the period immediately after separation is when the risk of violence can escalate.

When a woman comes to Lou's Place seeking support to leave a relationship, staff work quickly to prioritise her safety and respond to her immediate needs. This begins with careful safety planning and practical support.

https://bocsar.nsw.gov.au/media/2026/mr-nsw-recorded-crime-statistics-quarterly-update-december-2025.html

Practical support in critical moments

Support may include a technology safety assessment and access to a safe phone, helping reduce the risk of location tracking, spyware or unauthorised access to personal accounts. Women who leave abusive relationships often have little or no access to their own finances, particularly in instances of financial control. Practical assistance, such as food vouchers, transport support and emergency essentials, can help women stay safe while reducing the risk of being tracked through financial transactions.

Finding safe accommodation at short notice is also challenging, especially when women are facing additional barriers such as visa restrictions, limited income or a lack of support networks. In these situations, staff work to identify safe accommodation options, broker crisis accommodation where possible, and provide support outside standard service hours when necessary.



Before participants engaged in the group work, they reported 52% confidence in their understanding of risks and red flags. Upon completion of group participants scored an 89% confidence in this.

Components of support

Emotional support
Trauma-informed, emotional support

Safety planning
personalized plan to increase safety



Practical support
access to clothing, food, toiletries, etc.

Financial support
brokerage and support to access payments/ secure bank accounts

Advocacy
advocating with organisations, systems and services to ensure women's needs are met

Legal support and referrals
connecting women to legal services

Housing and accommodation
ensuring women have safe accommodation

Walking alongside women beyond the crisis

The impacts of DFV can continue long after a woman leaves a relationship and reaches safety. Case managers help women navigate housing, legal matters, finances, parenting, health and recovery. Women are supported at their own pace, with compassionate, trauma-informed care that places dignity, choice and self-determination at the centre of their journey.

Her day at Lou's Place
Drop-In Centre

A WARM WELCOME

She walks through the door. She's welcomed by the Lou's Place team and checks in. No appointment or referral is necessary to simply enter, and be met with warmth, respect and compassion. A conversation gives her the opportunity to share what would be most helpful today. It might be something practical, or simply a safe place to spend some time. There is no pressure to have everything figured out.





THE BASICS & A CHANCE TO RESET

She takes care of the essentials. Today, she needs toiletries, fresh sheets, towels and clean clothing. She takes a shower, changes into clean clothes and puts on her laundry. Having access to these essentials might seem simple, but these small moments can restore comfort, dignity and a sense of feeling like herself again. Lou's meets women where they are, offering practical support with dignity.

A SAFE PLACE TO EAT, CONNECT & BE

She makes herself a cup of tea and sits on the lounge to watch TV and have a meal with other women.
Food is more than something to eat. It is another opportunity to pause, connect and feel welcomed into the Lou's community. There's conversation, laughter and the familiar rhythm of the centre around her. For a while, she doesn't need to do anything. She can simply be: take a breath, feel safe and reset in a space where nothing is expected of her.

> ***"I feel more connected than ever."***
>
> ***— A member of the Lou's Place community***



LEAVING WITH SUPPORT AND A WAY FORWARD

Her day at Lou's Place comes to an end. Before leaving, she takes some food with her. She also receives information about mental health support and other services she can access, if and when she is ready. She doesn't have to navigate everything alone.
She leaves with her immediate needs met, practical support in hand and the knowledge that Lou's Place will be here whenever she needs a safe and welcoming place to return to.

SPACE TO CREATE

In the afternoon, she joins an art activity. She paints, makes artwork and spends some time doing something simply because she enjoys it. Creative activities provide space for self-expression, connection and belonging, and a chance to focus on something other than what is happening outside the centre.

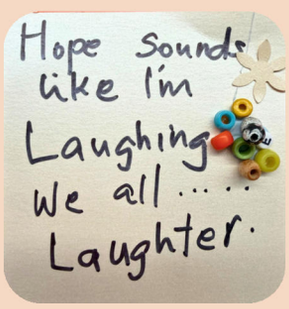


– creative writing participant

SUPPORT WHEN SHE'S READY

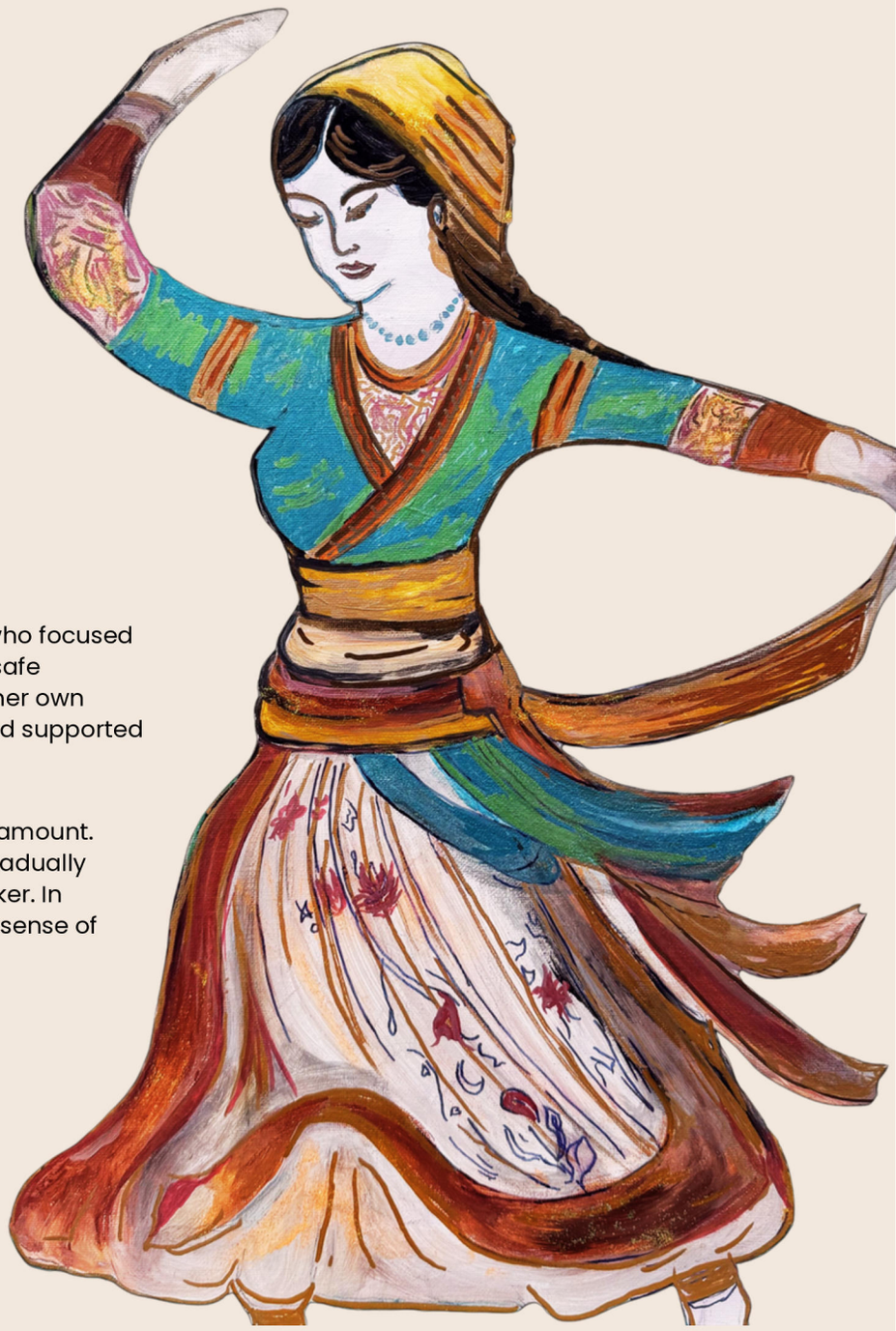
She talks with a caseworker about what's been on her mind. While she is at Lou's, she mentions that she is worried about money and needs help getting to some upcoming appointments. A caseworker helps her to understand what is happening and explores some helpful support options.

Today, the caseworker provides a food voucher and an Opal card top-up, which eases some immediate pressure. She helps her get to appointments and stay connected to support. The woman leaves the conversation with practical help, greater confidence in her next steps, and a clearer sense of what they might be.



More than a place to live

Molly's story: building trust and creating change



When Molly first came to with Lou's Place, she had spent several years without stable housing and had experienced significant barriers to accessing services. Previous experiences had left her cautious about obtaining support, and she had found it difficult to trust services or to maintain ongoing connections with support workers.

Molly met a dedicated caseworker at Lou's Place who focused on building a consistent, respectful and culturally safe relationship. The caseworker worked with Molly at her own pace to understand what was important to her, and supported her to set her own priorities.

Molly's connection to culture and Country was paramount. Through yarning, patience and consistency, she gradually developed a trusted relationship with her caseworker. In fact, Molly said, "You're different, sis," reflecting the sense of safety that she felt.

Together, they navigated the practical barriers that had previously hindered access to support. This included obtaining identification, connecting with mental health and AOD services, and advocating for priority housing. Lou's Place also worked closely with other homelessness services to advocate for safe housing that was connected to Molly's people and community.

After more than five years of rough sleeping, Molly was offered her own home. Lou's Place supported her to furnish it, so it became somewhere Molly felt comfortable, safe and proud to call home. The day after signing her lease, Molly proudly walked through Lou's Place with her new house keys hanging from a lanyard, excitedly showing everyone that she finally had her own home.

Molly has continued to demonstrate strength and independence. She maintains her tenancy, attends appointments independently and remains engaged with support. She is also beginning to explore employment opportunities in landscaping and bush regeneration, reflecting her passion for Country and the outdoors.

Molly's story demonstrates the impact of individualised support, with patience, genuine connection and advocacy. For Molly, having a safe home has created the foundation to look beyond survival and begin imagining what comes next.

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

I came to Lou's Place to complete a Work Development Order. At first it seemed like a good choice, being so close to home. But I have come to realise that this place is a sanctuary and a safe space for women going through the worst ups and downs in life.

It's a community space where women can come and write, create art and move their bodies, and get nourished without any judgement for the way they are.

This place epitomises a judgement-free, inclusive, accepting space where the staff remember your name and speak kindly to everyone, not because they have to but because they want to.
— A woman who comes to Lou's Place



I know they will always listen to me, and I feel safe at Lou's.
— A woman supported by Lou's Place

It's great to know this place exists. I feel so lucky to be able to come here. Thank you all.
— A woman supported by Lou's Place

Activities and clinics



Our activities and specialist clinics are designed to support women's wellbeing, build connection, reduce isolation and improve access to essential services. Our programmes are geared towards the women's interests and needs. They create opportunities for relaxation, creativity, learning, connection, as well as practical support in a safe and welcoming environment.

MONDAY

WAGEC building tech safety

Tech Safety sessions helped women recognise technology misuse, understand warning signs and build practical strategies to strengthen their digital safety.

Redfern Legal Clinic

70 instances of participation

RLC provided accessible legal support within Lou's familiar environment, helping women navigate housing, family law, fines and safety issues.

Lunch

Movement and meditation

125 instances of participation

These sessions gave women simple tools to pause, regulate and manage stress.

Salvation Army Foundations Central Alcohol & Other Drugs Clinic

Launched in November 2025, we recorded 33 instances of participation.

The AOD clinic provided a safe and non-judgemental space for support with alcohol and other drug use.

TUESDAY

Self-guided yoga

128 instances of participation

Yoga offered women a calm and grounding space to move and reconnect with the body.

Piano & karaoke

126 instances of participation

Music brought joy, confidence and connection to Lou's Place. Women enjoyed individual piano lessons, and group fun-filled karaoke sessions.

Lunch

Centrelink hub

15 instances of participation

The Centrelink Hub helped women access practical support and navigate Centrelink services within a familiar environment.

Inner City Legal Centre

Women attended 36 times.

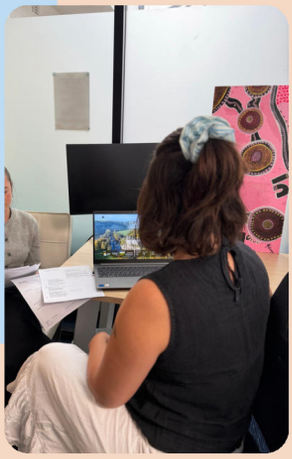
ICLC provides specialist legal advice directly to Lou's Place, helping women understand their rights and navigate complex legal matters.

Access to specialist services

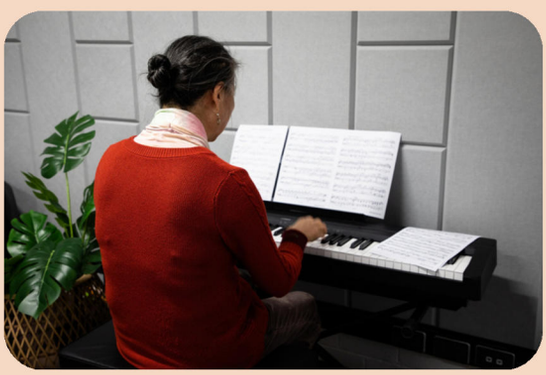
Our visiting clinics bring professional services directly into a familiar and trusted environment. This reduces barriers to women accessing formal support. Such programmes and partnerships ensure women can access wellbeing, connection, practical support, as well as specialist care within a safe and trusted community.

> ***My favourite activity is jewellery. We get to make something beautiful & special & can keep it for ourselves or give it to someone else as a gift!!!***
>
> ***-A woman who comes to Lou's Place***

Sydney Local Health District offered healthcare services through women's health, Hepatitis C and flu vaccination clinics, supporting women with screening, contraception, testing, health information and preventative care in a familiar and trusted environment.



WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Sewing **325 instances of participation** Sewing offered women the chance to connect with one another while creating, mending and learning practical skills.	**Jewellery** **556 instances of participation** A much-loved activity, jewellery making brought women together through creativity, conversation and shared skills.	**Knitting** **129 instances of participation** Knitting offered a calming and creative activity for our women.
Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
IARC Legal Clinic **37 instances of participation** The Immigration Advice & Rights Centre provided women with access to specialist advice on visas, immigration and related rights in a safe and trusted setting.	**Job readiness** Job readiness support helped women build practical employment skills and confidence as they explored opportunities for work.	**Facial & pampering** **26 instances of participation** New this year, facial and pampering sessions offered women moments to relax, receive care and enjoy time for themselves.
Art **255 instances of participation** Art provided a welcoming space for creativity and self-expression.	**Creative writing** **68 instances of participation** Creative writing gave women a space to reflect, express themselves and share their stories.	



Lou's Volunteers



Celebrating our volunteers: the heart of Lou's Place

Volunteers are at the heart of Lou's Place. Every day, their generosity, compassion and commitment help create a welcoming community for our women. Volunteers play an important role in making Lou's Place a place where women feel safe, respected and valued.

The difference volunteers make

Over the past year, **122 volunteers** contributed their time, skills and energy.

Together, volunteers provided:

2,268 hours preparing and serving nutritious lunches

864 hours supporting activities, job readiness programmes and administration

We also welcomed 33 new volunteers through 10 induction sessions, further strengthening our community.

Their contribution allows our staff to focus on case management, advocacy and supporting women with more complex needs.

Many roles, one shared purpose

Volunteers bring a diverse range of skills, experiences and perspectives. They prepare and serve meals, collect takeaway food, support Lou's Closet, facilitate activities, provide job readiness support and assist with essential administrative tasks. Some volunteers work directly alongside women, while others support behind the scenes. Together, they help ensure Lou's Place remains a welcoming, responsive and vibrant community.

> ***Cooking at Lou's has shown me that food is about so much more than feeding people – it's also a time for connection and conversation.***
>
> ***- Lou's Place Volunteer***

Nurturing our volunteer community

We are committed to supporting our volunteers with opportunities to learn, grow and deepen their understanding of the women we support.
This year, volunteers participated in professional development opportunities including Accidental Counsellor training and the "Always the Fundraiser" workshop.

We have also grown our corporate volunteering programme. In addition to Wotton & Kearney, a longstanding and regular corporate volunteer partner, we were delighted to welcome Allens as a new corporate volunteer partner supporting our busy lunch service. These partnerships provide practical support to the daily running of Lou's Place while also helping to expand awareness of our work within the community.

> ***Volunteering at Lou's Place has reminded me how much small acts of kindness can mean.***
>
> ***- Lou's Place Volunteer***



> ***I volunteer with art and absolutely love it. It's a time for women to connect, express themselves, and switch off for a little bit.***
>
> ***- Lou's Place Volunteer***



Celebrating and staying connected

In April, we launched The Heart of Lou's, our volunteer newsletter. The newsletter shares service updates, celebrates volunteer contributions, highlights opportunities and keeps our volunteer community connected.
We also hosted two volunteer appreciation nights. These create opportunities to come together, share stories, celebrate milestones and recognise our volunteers. Christmas cards were sent to every volunteer, and we also supported nominations for the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

Thank You!

Every volunteer shift, meal served, activity facilitated and task completed behind the scenes contributes to something much bigger.

Volunteers help create a place where women feel welcomed, connected and supported. Their generosity strengthens our community. It makes a meaningful difference in the lives of the women who access Lou's Place.

Moments that brought us together







NAIDOC WEEK

July 2026

In July, Lou's Place celebrated NAIDOC Week. **This year's theme, 50 Years of Deadly, marked five decades of the NAIDOC movement and honoured the generations who have carried it forward.**

Women joined a weaving workshop with Malima, took part in a yarning circle and art session with Mirri Mirri, and got creative with jewellery, tote bags and boomerang painting. Food was also part of the celebration, with native ingredients inspired by Aunty Beryl's Cookbook, alongside NAIDOC-themed cupcakes made by our wonderful volunteer, Sarah.

The week was a powerful celebration of culture, knowledge and connection, and an opportunity to listen, learn and recognise the enduring strength and leadership of First Nations peoples.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2026

March 2026

International Women's Day was a celebration of the women at the heart of Lou's Place. With a **"Pamper You" theme**, the day included a beauty bar, and a screening of movies celebrating inspirational women like Erin Brokovich.

The women also took part in our "Letters to Self" activity, writing messages to their future selves about their strength, resilience and the things they wanted to remember. It was a simple but meaningful recognition of each woman's strength.

CHRISTMAS PARTY
December 2025

Our Christmas party was a joyful day filled with good food, laughter, music and Christmas spirit. Women decorated baubles, made Christmas cards, decorated gingerbread cookies and had their portraits taken with Santa.

One of the women, who had been taking piano lessons with volunteer teacher Carol, played for the group. It was a special moment, with everyone cheering and singing along to Christmas carols. The day was filled with a wonderful sense of community.







PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDS OF EMPOWERING OLDER WOMEN
June 2026

Lou's Place took our frontline experience to NSW Parliament, shining a light on the realities facing older women experiencing hardship, housing insecurity and social isolation. CEO Amanda Greaney spoke with MPs, and launched our Older Women Matter booklet, detailing the day-to-day experience at Lou's Place.

The event strengthened relationships with decision-makers and highlighted the importance of acknowledging older women as valued members of the community. With 224 women aged 55 and over visiting Lou's Place in the past year, it's vital to create opportunities for their experiences to be heard.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME CAMPAIGN
2026

Lou's Place joined Homelessness NSW's A Place to Call Home and the Support to Keep It campaign, standing with other NSW services to advocate for the long-term investment needed to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The campaign called for a 50% increase in core funding for homelessness services and 10,000 new social homes each year until social housing makes up 10% of all housing in NSW. Homelessness services in NSW are under increasing pressure, while the need for safe, affordable housing continues to grow. Greater investment would enable services to respond earlier, prevent homelessness, and ensure that services such as Lou's Place can continue to support women in need. Everyone deserves a place to call home and the support to keep it.

https://homelessnessnsw.org.au/aplacetocallhome/

A PLACE TO CALL HOME AND THE SUPPORT TO KEEP IT

No More Empty Shoes







Unity. Advocacy. Remembrance.

On 25 November 2025, the first day of the United Nations' 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, Lou's Place stood alongside the NSW Vigil Collective in Martin Place for Unite Against Violence: No More Empty Shoes. Proudly coordinated and chaired by Lou's Place, the vigil assembled frontline services, advocates and community members to honour the women and children who died because of domestic and family violence (DFV), and to demand lasting change.

Thanks to a three-year grant from the City of Sydney, the vigil continues to grow as a powerful platform for remembrance, advocacy and collective action.

The vigil paid tribute to the 49 women killed by DFV since the 2024 vigil. Plinths lined Martin Place, each holding a pair of woman's shoes, and a rose placed alongside as her name was read aloud. A tricycle honoured children lost to DFV. For the first time, a plinth recognised animals killed by perpetrators, also victims of coercive control.

Speakers including NSW Women's Safety Commissioner Hannah Tonkin, Domestic Violence NSW CEO Delia Donovan, and Corey Anderson of Healing Through Yarning. They all called for greater investment, systemic reform and collective action. Tabitha Acret delivered a moving address, sharing the story of the loss her daughter, Mackenzie, to DFV and her ongoing advocacy for reform.

Police are called to a DFV incident in NSW every three minutes. Behind every statistic is a woman, child, family and community, forever changed.

The NSW Vigil Collective has grown from seven to 30 organisations since 2024, reflecting the strength of a united sector voice. We were honoured to be joined by the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and musician Adam Greene. They accompanied Lou's Place CEO Mandy Greeney as she read the names of the women we have lost.

For Lou's Place, No More Empty Shoes is an opportunity to stand together, to remember those have died, survivors' voices and to advocate for a future free of gender-based violence. We remain committed to working alongside women, our sector partners and the broader community to help create that future.



Lou's Closet

Fashion for Good

For 15 years, Lou's Closet has brought the community together to support Lou's Place. 2026 was no exception.

This year's Closet at Tramsheds in Glebe raised more than $142,000

bringing the total raised since its inception to more than $1.1 million. Its success reflects our community's generosity and the dedication of the volunteers who make it possible.

A special thank you to the leadership team who spent months coordinating every detail, from sorting and curating clothing donations to organising volunteers, signage, promotions and the pantry.

Lou's Closet is a sale of high-quality pre-loved and new clothing, generously donated by our community and leading designers including Carla Zampatti, Bianca Spender, Moss & Spy and BAZ. This year, we received a film company's collection of beautiful vintage wedding dresses and hats. A bride-to-be found her dream wedding dress!

Over the years, Lou's Closet has become Lou's Place's flagship fundraiser. More than that, it is a celebration of community, while championing sustainable fashion. Every purchase helps support the women of Lou's Place. It also raises awareness of the challenges they face: homelessness, disadvantage, and domestic and family violence.

We are incredibly grateful to the donors, volunteers and shoppers who supported Lou's Closet in 2026. Together, you are helping ensure women have access to a safe place with practical support and connection.







We look forward to welcoming everyone back to Lou's Closet in May 2027.

Building for the future

2025–26: understand & build → **2026–27: implement & integrate** → **2027–28: embed & sustain**

Looking ahead

In 2026–27, our focus will be on embedding these foundations into everyday practice through continued policy and governance improvements, stronger people and document management systems, staff development and the use of data and evidence to guide our work. This staged approach will give staff time to understand and use new processes, while helping us build evidence of practice and prepare for future accreditation.

Together, these investments will help ensure Lou's Place remains strong and sustainable, while protecting the welcoming, low-barrier and woman-centred approach at the heart of our work.

Investing in our people and community

Our investment in people continued through staff development and initiatives that support our team to grow together.

The launch of our new website also made it easier for women, supporters and community partners to connect with Lou's Place. Together with a stronger communications approach, it is helping us increase awareness of our services and engage more effectively with our community.

Using evidence to learn and improve

A key focus has been developing an outcomes and impact dashboard, building on our Theory of Change to better understand and demonstrate the difference our work makes. This will strengthen reporting, planning and decision-making, and help us continue to learn and respond to the needs of women.

We also progressed the development and review of policies and procedures and continued preparations for accreditation, laying the groundwork for consistent practice and a strong, sustainable organisation.

Building on our progress

In 2024–25, we laid important foundations through the development of our Theory of Change, greater use of data and evidence, strengthened governance and investment in our people and systems.

During 2025–26, funding from the Sisterhood Foundation's capacity-building grant enabled us to build on this work and progress priorities aligned with our Strategic Plan 2025–2028.

Building strong foundations for the future

At Lou's Place, building for the future means investing in our systems, our people and our evidence base so we can continue to provide women with practical support, safety and connection.

Treasurer's Report

2025-2026 Financial Year

Net Income
$2,597,314

Expenditure
$2,034,223

Net Surplus
$563,091



Karen Martin

Treasurer
The Marmalade Foundation

The 2025-2026 financial year saw Lou's Place continue to strengthen and grow, supported by a healthy financial result, significant philanthropic investment, and targeted investment in the systems and people needed to meet increasing demand for our services.

A highlight of the year was securing a three-year grant from the Sisterhood Foundation. This important investment will strengthen our internal systems and infrastructure, helping build the capacity needed to support more women now and into the future.

Our one-year government grant for frontline homelessness services has now concluded. Government funding represented just 9% of total income this year, with no ongoing government grants currently secured for 2027. As a result, Lou's Place remains heavily reliant on the generosity of our donors, community and philanthropic partners. Continuing to grow and diversify our income streams remains a key priority for the Board and Management team.

To support our growth, two new roles were created: a Marketing & Communications role, leading our website redevelopment and expanding our digital presence, and a Project Manager role, driving capacity building, strengthening data and impact reporting, and progressing ASES accreditation. These roles represent an investment in the capability and sustainability of Lou's Place as demand for our services continues to grow.

Cost-of-living pressures have continued to increase demand for emergency brokerage assistance and crisis accommodation support. Alongside our investment in new roles and systems, this contributed to a 23% increase in expenditure during the year. Despite this, Lou's Place finished the year with a surplus and a strong platform for future growth. Strategic planning is already underway to identify new opportunities to expand our reach and deepen our impact.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my sincere thanks to our donors, philanthropic partners, staff and volunteers for their generosity and commitment. I would also like to acknowledge PricewaterhouseCoopers for their continued pro bono audit support.

Donors, Supporters and Partners

Together, creating safety, connection and hope

Every woman who comes to Lou's Place deserves to feel safe, welcomed and valued. For women experiencing homelessness, domestic and family violence, mental health challenges, financial hardship or isolation, Lou's Place is more than somewhere to turn in a moment of crisis. It is a place to belong, to be heard without judgement, and to find the practical and emotional support needed to move forward.

Our vision is for every woman to feel empowered to recognise her inherent value and worth, to build the life she chooses, and ultimately to thrive. This is only possible with the support of our extraordinary community.

Every donation, hour volunteered, partnership, shared skill and act of generosity contributes to what we can achieve. Our donors, volunteers, partners and supporters play a part in ensuring women have somewhere safe to turn, and an advocate when they need it most.
Your collective support helps provide a safe and welcoming space, practical assistance, meals, guidance, connection and compassionate, holistic care tailored to each woman. Together, you help women take steps towards safety and stability, reconnect with their community, rebuild confidence and create a future of their choosing.

Above all, together you remind women that they are not alone.

We are deeply grateful to every individual and organisation who has chosen to be part of Lou's Place. Your generosity, compassion and belief in our work strengthen our whole community and make an immeasurable difference to the women who come through our doors.

Thank you for standing with us and with the women of Lou's Place. Together, we are creating a community of safety, dignity, connection, belonging and hope.

There are many ways to be part of Lou's Place
Donate, volunteer or partner with us to help ensure women have somewhere safe to turn when they need it most.
For more information, contact info@lousplace.com.au

"Leaving my country was not a simple decision. It came from a place of pure survival. I remember arriving during the winter … and the cold was something I was not used to. Those first days were so hard both physically and in my heart. I came here seeking safety, hoping for protection, and praying for a chance to rebuild my life away from fear and uncertainty....

When I think about Lou's Place and the supporters behind it, I do not just think about services. I think about transformation. I think about what it means when someone is given a second chance, when they are believed in, and when they are supported at one of the lowest points in their life and I have been coming to Lou's Place for more than a year.

Many of you here may never meet the people your support reaches. But I want to tell you clearly: your impact is real, and it is direct. It lasts far beyond the moment of a donation. Because of you, people are fed when they are hungry. Because of you, women find safe spaces when they feel unsafe. Because of you, people receive counselling when they are emotionally overwhelmed.

I stand here not just as someone who received support, but as living proof of what your support can achieve....

Your kindness does not just change circumstances; it changes lives."

-A woman supported by Lou's Place generously shared her story, reflecting on her journey, what Lou's Place has meant to her, and the difference your support has made in her life.





“I’m continually inspired by the strength of the women we support. It’s a privilege to walk alongside them and be part of a space where every woman feels safe, heard and valued.

-Lou’s Place team member”



Thank You

Lou's Place has always been built on the strength of community. It is the generosity, compassion and commitment of many people and organisations that enables us to be there for women.

To every donor, volunteer, partner, supporter and friend of Lou's Place, thank you for giving your time, resources, expertise and encouragement, and for believing in our work.

Every contribution matters. Together, these individual acts of generosity create a place where women are welcomed without judgement, treated with dignity, listened to and able to access the support they need.

On this page, we acknowledge many of our major donors, trusts and foundations, grant makers, corporate contributors, supporters and service partners. We also recognise those who choose to support Lou's Place quietly or anonymously. While your names may not appear here, your contribution is deeply appreciated.

There is no single person or organisation behind the work of Lou's Place. It is what we achieve together that makes Lou's Place possible.

From our team, and most importantly, on behalf of the women who find safety and community at Lou's, thank you for being part of ours.

Major Donors, Foundations & Grants

- 1666 Foundation Pty Ltd
- Amanda Lawson
- APS Foundation
- Australian Stockbrokers Foundation Limited
- Pamela and Douglas Bartlett
- The Beeren Foundation
- The Berg Family Foundation
- Campbell Edwards Trust
- City of Sydney
- Dr Jo Boney & Mr Ross Grant
- James N. Kirby Foundation
- Libby Fairfax
- Margaret Kirby
- Neilson Foundation
- The North Carolina Community Foundation
- Ottomin Foundation
- The Palghat Family
- Roger S Tallboys
- Ruth Ritchie Family Fund
- Sisterhood Foundation
- Stability First Program - Funded by the NSW Government's Homelessness Innovation Fund
- Patterson Pearce Foundation

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Contact us

Lou's Place

Gadigal Country
67 Renwick Street
Redfern NSW 2016

9358 4553
www.lousplace.com.au
info@lousplace.com.au

@lousplace_sydney

Lou's Place is funded by the dedicated work of The Marmalade Foundation.

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