

ANNUAL UPDATE



The Underground Collaborative

2025



WE WORK ON SACRED GROUND

The Underground Collaborative acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation, and the traditional owners of the land on which we live, learn and work. We thank them for their stewardship of the land that now sustains us all.

We pay our respects to ancestors and elders past and present, and are committed to a positive future for the Aboriginal community.

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from our CEO

2025 has been a truly wonderful year as we continued to strengthen Ground+Co as a thriving social enterprise café, making over 4,000 sales each week while creating real employment pathways for at-risk young people and women who have experienced family and domestic violence. Behind every coffee served is a person building confidence, skills and stability - often for the first time in their working life.

This year, our Employment Program supported six young people through paid employment and wraparound support, with three moving into stable work or education, two transitioning into secondary employment and two independently housed while building work readiness and confidence.

While these numbers may appear small, our focus has always been depth of impact.

We also took an important step forward in laying the foundations for TUC Cleaning Co. This initiative responds directly to what our participants told us they needed: flexible, dignified work supported by the same trauma-informed approach that underpins everything we do. While still in its early stages, TUC Cleaning Co positions us to expand our impact sustainably over the coming years.

However, none of this work happens in isolation. We are deeply grateful to our partners, funders, suppliers, volunteers and community who continue to believe, and walk alongside us. Your support means more than words can say, and enables us to create safe, supportive workplaces where people are seen, valued and empowered.

On a personal note, 2025 has also been transformative for me as I became a mum and welcomed my baby girl. Stepping back at times allowed me to trust the incredible team and Board who hold this organisation with care and integrity. It has reinforced my belief that TUC is bigger than any one person - it is a collaborative effort grounded in shared values.

Thank you for being part of our story.

With deepest gratitude,

Katie

our supporters

As we close another year at The Underground Collaborative, we want to take a moment to thank you – sincerely and wholeheartedly for standing alongside us.

Your support over the past year has enabled more than just programs or services. It has created safe spaces for people to show up as they are, to rebuild confidence, develop skills, and take meaningful steps toward stability and independence. Every contribution, whether financial, in-kind, advisory or relational, has helped us create workplaces that are compassionate, trauma-informed and focused on long-term change.

We are especially grateful to our funders, partners, suppliers, volunteers and community members who continue to champion our work, advocate for inclusive employment, and trust us to do this work with integrity.

To our staff, volunteers and team – you are the incredible people who make this work possible every day. Thank you for showing up every day with care, patience and professionalism, and for holding space for others while delivering excellence in your roles.

To our Board, thank you for your guidance, governance and unwavering belief in our mission. Your commitment ensures The Underground Collaborative continues to grow with integrity, purpose and heart.

funders

ALCOA PEACH (Personnel Employed
at Alcoa Charity Help)
GRO FOUNDATION
LOTTERYWEST
THE WHITE FAMILY
WESTFIELD
WESTPAC FOUNDATION

in-kind

CUSTOM PEOPLE SOLUTIONS
FIVE SENSES
K&L GATES
LAYLA SMITH
STATE LIBRARY OF WA
YOUTH FOCUS



+ our individual and anonymous donors and volunteers

our impact: 2025

6 PARTICIPANTS

Employed at Ground+Co

1,039 HOURS

of paid work

\$29,063

paid in award-wages



- 3 transitioned to paid employment and education
- 2 transitioned to independent housing

Every placement created delivers long-term social and economic value, reducing reliance on crisis services.



Early intervention through employment helps break cycles of disadvantage.

OUR IMPACT ISN'T MEASURED BY SCALE ALONE, BUT BY MEANINGFUL, LASTING CHANGE.

While our numbers may be modest, each outcome represents a significant shift in someone's life trajectory – from instability to income, from isolation to connection, from crisis to possibility. This is what drives long-term, generational change. This is our focus.

Our impact is intentionally intensive in supporting individuals facing complex barriers. Even one sustained employment outcome can break cycles of disadvantage and reduce long-term reliance on support systems.

"The employment program has helped my confidence a lot. I was grabbing at loose ends, and I wasn't actually willing to approach anyone to get a job as I had a lot of anxiety around that but being here has helped a lot."



Ash's story

Ash was referred to TUC through Anglicare WA. While he completed the Program, he maintained employment at Ground+Co for a year, demonstrating confidence and growth in mentoring other participants.

During this time, Ash:

- was in a better mindset than before he started working at Ground+Co
- loved the role of being a mentor to participants and providing lived experience training
- has overcome social anxiety, becoming fearless in speaking with customers and not shying away from confrontations
- has demonstrated improvement in taking on initiative

Ash spent 5 years applying and trying to find work prior to working at TUC, but due to his living situation (sleeping rough, in and out of different accommodations), he faced numerous bouts of rejection.

His self-esteem was so low and due to his unstable living situation, he wasn't able to secure employment.

Being able to work at Ground+Co for over two years has been his longest period of employment – a significant achievement given his past experiences. He is proud to have pushed through, seeing his role at Ground+Co as both an opportunity and proof to himself that he can commit to and sustain employment.

Watch Ash's story [here](#).



our journey, milestones and achievements: TUC Cleaning Co

Over the past year, TUC has made significant progress in strengthening our operations and expanding our impact through the launch of TUC Cleaning Co.

- Concept development of TUC Cleaning Co
- Logo and brand identity developed
- Identified builders & market opportunity
- Began developing systems, processes, and procedures

foundations

- Recruited Cleaning Team Leader
- Provided hands-on training and onboarded first participants
- Completed post-construction cleans with Dale Alcock Projects

first delivery

- Engaging with builders and developers to establish pipeline
- Growing visibility within construction sector
- Building long-term partnership opportunities

partnerships



TUC
CLEANING CO.

building capacity

- Purchased operational vehicle
- Purchased cleaning equipment and supplies
- Secured partnership for vehicle storage + TUC CC HQ
- Developed core operational systems, training and onboarding processes



traction

Ongoing work secured with Dale Alcock Projects and established pipeline of cleaning jobs

scale

- Strong foundation for consistent pipeline of work
- Ability to create more jobs and training opportunities
- Increasing financial sustainability through trade revenue

These achievements position TUC to grow a sustainable pipeline of cleaning contracts, increase self-generated revenue to reinvest in impact, and expand our ability to create meaningful, paid employment opportunities.

our goals: 2026

CREATE MORE JOBS THAT CHANGE LIVES

- + 16 participants employed through TUC Cleaning Co (secured pipeline)
 - Secure 4-6 industry partners so we can scale TUC Cleaning Co across multiple sites and deploy more teams
- + 8 participants employed through Ground+Co cafe
 - Increase service offerings including (drop-off and in-house) catering and labour hire

SUPPORT THE WHOLE PERSON, NOT JUST THE JOB

- + 300+ hours of mentoring and wraparound support
- + 80% participant retention across our Employment Program
- + 70% participants transition into ongoing employment, education and/or training
- + 80% participants transition into stable and independent housing

"It goes beyond being able to find work.

Being able to financially stabilise myself.
Having the ability to do that ... my self-worth has just skyrocketed."



the realities of a Work Integration Social Enterprise

At TUC, our impact is not measured by volume alone, but also by significance of change.

Our impact numbers reflect the complex realities of supporting people experiencing homelessness and significant disadvantage.

LIFE

The people we support are often navigating:

- Housing instability or homelessness
- Mental health challenges and trauma
- Financial insecurity and system barriers

Supporting someone into employment is not just about giving them a job – it requires time, trust, and intensive wraparound support.

Progress is rarely linear. Attendance, performance, and readiness for work can fluctuate as individuals stabilise their lives.

THE TRUE COST OF IMPACT

Our model is deliberately person-centred, requiring:

- On-the-job training and supervision
- Mentoring and case management
- Coordination with external support services

The intensive wraparound support required to achieve sustainable outcomes is currently absorbed within our operations without dedicated external funding.

BALANCING IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

As a social enterprise, we operate real businesses while delivering social outcomes. This means we must constantly balance:

- Commercial viability (running a café and cleaning business)
- Participant support needs (which can be intensive and unpredictable)

At times, this creates challenges between operational performance and social impact.

THE HOUSING-EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

Employment alone is not enough. We have seen that:

- Without safe and affordable housing, employment is difficult to sustain
- Without employment, securing housing becomes even harder

Participants often face:

- High rental costs relative to income
- Long waitlists for social housing
- Reduced support once leaving supported accommodation

WHY PROGRESS TAKES TIME

Many participants:

- Are not immediately ready for employment
- May disengage and re-engage over time
- Require flexible, trauma-informed support

This means outcomes take longer, but are more sustainable when achieved.

In a system where many fall through the cracks, even one sustained outcome is deep, meaningful impact and can begin breaking the cycle of intergenerational trauma.

our employment model

engage

participants are referred through our partner support services. this ensures individuals receive the right support before, during, and after employment

open hiring

no formal resumes, prior work experience or lengthy interview processes. we create accessible entry points for people who are often excluded from traditional hiring pathways

thrive

our goal is not just to employ, but to create pathways forward. we support participants to transition into external employment, training and/or education + build long-term independence, including transition to stable housing

build skills

participants learn by doing, with hands-on experience alongside support from our team; providing opportunities to build confidence, skills, and routine

support

employment is just one part of the journey - we provide mentoring and guidance, flexible work arrangements where possible, connect participants to housing, wellbeing, and other support services



Be the change



PARTNER WITH US

The Underground Collaborative welcomes the support of our partners through sponsorship or philanthropy who share similar values and we are always keen to explore opportunities to work with organisations that align with our vision and mission to help break the cycles of homelessness through education, empowerment and employment.

[donate](#)



BECOME AN EMPLOYMENT PARTNER

Our Employment Partners are incredibly important for the success of our Employment Program. If your company is passionate about providing a safe and welcoming workplace for our participants to transition to, being an Employment Partner will help provide stable and diverse employment options.



CHOOSE US

Visit Ground+Co Cafe.

Order catering from Grounded Gatherings.

Engage our TUC Cleaning Co services.

Recommend us within your workplace or networks.

By choosing to support our initiatives, you are making a real and tangible difference.

Every coffee purchased, every catering order placed, every cleaning contract secured creates meaningful employment opportunities for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

Beyond the job itself, it's the human interactions, routine, stability, team environment, and sense of belonging that create lasting change – supporting our participants' mental health, confidence, and journey toward independence.

[order catering](#)

THANK YOU.



"I am so much more confident in my ability to go and find work and go and talk to people now."



the
UNDERGROUND
collaborative



GROUND+CO
An Underground Collaborative Initiative

TUC
CLEANING CO.

