

2026 Impact Report

Outcomes That Count

ANCHOR



Anchor recognises the history and impact of colonisation upon all Aboriginal peoples, and we commit to progress reconciliation through our work, our relationships and our people.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways on which we live and work: the Wurundjeri people, the Boon Wurrung People, the Bunurong People, and the Gunnai Kurnai People.

Anchor commits to providing culturally safe services for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through deep listening and respect.

ANCHOR

Vision

Homelessness should leave no one behind.

Every child, young person, and family is equipped to shape their future.

Purpose

We believe in an Australia where anyone experiencing homelessness has a pathway to safety and independence.

We're here to help them find it.

Mission

We believe in our work and each other, in listening, innovating, and improving, every single day.

We lift each other up, sharing our stories and nurturing partnerships.

We never lose sight of the vision, and we never leave anyone behind.

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Letter From the CEO



Pursuing Client Impact

As we reflect on the past year, one theme has come to define our collective effort at Anchor: the pursuit of meaningful client impact at a scale that truly meets community need.

Every day, our teams walk alongside children, young people, and families facing some of life's hardest moments. Our responsibility is not only to deliver high-quality support, but to do so consistently, sustainably, and for more people who need it.

Scaling impact in a social services context is never as simple as doing "more of the same." It requires intentional design, disciplined testing, and the courage to pause and validate before expanding. As we look to grow the reach of our programs, we are equally committed to ensuring that what we scale is proven—grounded in evidence, driven by data, and reflective of the lived experience of the people we serve.

This journey comes with challenges. Operational systems must evolve to keep pace with growth, and this year with the help of some very generous donors who have invested in strengthening our capability— we have been able to refine processes, uplift our technology and people, and validate our programs effectiveness. Ensuring cohesion across our staff, leadership, Board, and external partners has been critical. Alignment is not a by-product of scale; it is a prerequisite. Only when strategy, operational readiness, and program design move in step can we grow responsibly and with integrity.

I am proud of the progress we have made in investing and embedding a culture of high-quality outcomes-driven processes and programs.

We have deepened our commitment to measurement and evaluation, strengthened our governance around program design, and begun to formalise the evidence base behind some of our most promising models. These foundations are essential—not to slow us down, but to ensure that when we scale, we scale what works.

As we enter the year ahead, we remain guided by a simple truth: growth is only valuable when it improves outcomes for the people we support. With a clear strategy, skilled and aligned teams, and a steadfast commitment to evidence-based practice, Anchor is well-positioned to extend our impact while staying true to our purpose.

Thank you to our staff, our partners, our supporters, and our community. Your dedication and belief in this mission continue to move us forward.



Heidi Tucker

Chair Chief Executive Officer



the pursuit of meaningful client impact at a scale that truly meets community need.

Impact by Numbers



Anchor supported more than

1,750

people across **Out-of-Home Care, Homelessness, and Youth-at-Risk services.**

This included:

over

38,200

nights of care and accommodation,

support for more than

700

people in short-term or transitional housing,

crisis assistance for

490

people,

and ongoing support to more than

200

foster and kinship carers.

These figures reflect the scale of Anchor's work, but each represents a person supported through a moment of instability toward greater safety and security.

This is a quantitative snapshot of Anchor's service delivery impact across 2025, showing the level of demand for support, the intensity of work involved, and the sustained nature of Anchor's three key social impact areas: out-of-home care, homelessness services, and early intervention in youth-at-risk. Together they help demonstrate how Anchor's work translates into tangible support for individuals, families, and young people.

Out-of-Home Care

Anchor supported **200 children and young people** through Foster Care and Kinship Care, providing over **35,000 nights** of stable care. This work was sustained by **211 carers**, supported through targeted advice and family services to help placements remain stable and consistent for children who had already experienced disruption.

Homelessness

Against the backdrop of ongoing housing shortages, Anchor assisted **490 people** through crisis response services. More than **3,200 nights** of emergency accommodation were provided, alongside support in short-term and transitional housing to help individuals and families stabilise and work toward longer-term housing outcomes.

Youth-at-Risk

Anchor supported **140 young people** through early-intervention programs, including intensive family reconciliation and preservation work. These services focused on addressing issues early to reduce the risk of homelessness and maintain connections to family, education, and community.

Across all three key service areas, Anchor's impact in 2025 was shaped not by scale, but by depth. These numbers reflect sustained engagement, complex casework, and a commitment to walking alongside people through some of the most challenging moments of their lives to co-build a pathway out of homelessness.





Section Two

Partnerships

Over the past years, a small number of passionate, devoted partners have played a defining role in strengthening Anchor's ability to deliver complex, place-based support. Through sustained commitment and smart, targeted investment, these partnerships moved beyond contribution to active participation in shaping programs, responding to local need, and supporting long-term solutions. The following examples highlight how our key partners have worked intimately alongside Anchor to enable significant projects with lasting impact for children and young people.

A Shared Commitment To Investing In Anchor's Capabilities

Together Financial Services

Together Financial Services is a finance and mortgage brokerage based in Scoresby, Victoria, with a clear belief that business success can also drive positive social impact.

Directors Kris Faife and co-founder Hillary Van Estrop have been long term champions of community causes in Melbourne's east, with their philanthropy growing out of a shared commitment to ensuring vulnerable children don't miss out at key times of the year. Their relationship with Anchor reflects both their business ethos and their personal belief that stable housing and tailored support can change the trajectory of a young person's life.

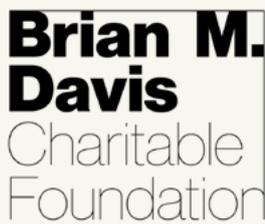


Together Financial Services' support of Anchor has evolved over the years, with their enthusiasm and dedication growing to match the need in the community. In 2025, they signed on as a financial sponsor of the MyLife project, marking in a major step in their commitment to young people in the community.

Delivering Christmas magic for children since 2017

Together Financial Services have coordinated an annual Christmas toy donation drive for the last eight years. They rally their network of partners and clients, and the ensuing generosity has seen each of the children in Anchor's foster and kinship care programs be provided with an age-appropriate gift under the Christmas tree. In all, their annual efforts have put well over 1,000 Christmas gifts under the Christmas tree for Foster and Kinship Care children.





The Brian M. Davis Foundation and Equity Trustees

The partnership between the Brian M. Davis Foundation, Equity Trustees and Anchor has been pivotal in turning a bold idea into a tested, place-based model of support for young people in regional Victoria.

Their initial investment enabled Anchor to pause, listen and properly understand on-the-ground needs in Gippsland. This culminated in a comprehensive Gippsland Roadmap Report that examined the local landscape, barriers and enablers for a trauma-informed MyLife Hub. This evidence base gave Anchor the confidence and clarity to move into an unfamiliar region thoughtfully, ensuring the model was responsive to local conditions rather than simply transplanted from metropolitan Melbourne. Through local interactions, we learnt that young people in Sale had different attitudes and priorities compared to their metro counterparts – for instance, while engagement with formal education and employment was sometimes lower, often due to a lack of local opportunities, the reliance on community connections was significantly higher. In these tight-knit populations, relationships were everything. The social fabric in Sale meant that young people were often more embedded in informal support networks, even if formal services were scarce. These were valuable localisation lessons that helped in our scalability ambitions.

What began as a feasibility and design phase has now evolved into a longer-term partnership focused on sustainability: backing the “back-end” of MyLife through property management, intellectual property protection, systems development, specialist training and evaluation so that the model can be scaled and accredited to meet growing demand across Victoria and, in time, nationally.

“We’re grateful for the opportunity to partner with Anchor on the MyLife Hub. We can already see the impact this initiative will have for young care leavers – particularly those living in regional communities – by giving them the support and opportunities they need to thrive. This project is also strengthening partnerships with government agencies and local services. When we think creatively and work collaboratively, we can find the solutions that young people deserve.”

Emily Cormack, National Manager, Social Impact Team

Together, The Brian M. Davis Foundation and Equity Trustees have played a pivotal role in addressing immediate gaps for care-leavers in Gippsland, while backing a long-term, systems-focused investment in a replicable evidence-based solution that can shift outcomes for young people at risk of homelessness well beyond this one region.



When we think creatively and work collaboratively, we can find the solutions that young people deserve.



Victorian Department of Treasury & Finance

Anchor's unwavering focus on measuring what matters in practice has been strengthened through an Empowerment Fund grant from the Victorian Department of Treasury & Finance. The investment has enabled Anchor to significantly improve how data is collected, analysed, and applied across key programs, ensuring insights are not only captured but actively used to support frontline practice. This work is equipping practitioners with clearer information, practical tools, and stronger evidence to guide decision-making, reduce duplication, improve data quality, and embed child-centred outcome measurement into everyday practice, planning, and advocacy.



Perpetual Trustees, Yarra Ranges Council & Community Enterprise Foundation

Through the support of our partners Perpetual Trustees, Yarra Ranges Council and the Community Enterprise Foundation, Anchor's Specialist Homeless Children's Worker pilot applied a full evaluation cycle, drawing on the tools and resources acquired through the Empowerment Fund alongside Anchor's Outcomes and Impact Frameworks, to capture changes in children's wellbeing, safety, and school engagement.

The findings from this pilot were shared widely at key sector events in 2025, demonstrating how rigorous evaluation can both inform practice and contribute valuable insights for the broader sector.

Working alongside the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Anchor has taken an active role in sharing outcomes and learnings from its work with the homelessness sector. Through participation in sector conferences and professional forums, Anchor has reported on evaluation findings, practice insights, and lived experience outcomes to engage with peers and contribute to the broader national conversation on youth homelessness, with a focus on strengthening child-centred responses for families in crisis.

The National Homelessness Conference

The lead practitioner of the pilot project along with Anchor's Executive Manager of Homelessness and Youth Services presented to the National Homelessness Conference 2025 held in Queensland.

In a session titled *Preventing Homelessness and Focusing on Lived Experience*, they shared insights, evaluation findings, and case studies with a large homelessness sector audience.

OPEN Symposium 2025

The OPEN Symposium brings together leading experts, practitioners, and innovators from across the homelessness and child protection sector.

Anchor presented insights from our pilot to our sector colleagues and industry influencers in a session titled "Disrupting the Trajectory of Homelessness" which looked at the role of early intervention and prevention for children and families experiencing homelessness.



Partner-Led Impact: Where Real World Change Happens



Partner-led giving initiatives play a direct role in translating community effort into frontline support for Anchor.

When partners mobilise their networks, host campaigns, or lead donor action, the outcomes are immediate and tangible. Funds raised through these efforts directly support care, accommodation, and practical assistance, ensuring resources reach young people and families at the point they are needed most.

Funnelled directly into Anchor's Client Support Fund, it provides essential, flexible assistance for families or young people in our programs

not covered by government funding. This direct form of support is needed to ensure stability of placement and provides practical help for people under our care and can include (but not limited to): emergency assistance, household items, groceries support, religious celebrations and cultural experiences, medications, animal boarding, and more.

Our sincere thanks goes out to all supporters who have contributed to the Client Support Fund over the years. Every single contribution plays an important role in helping Anchor respond to individual circumstances, ensuring they receive timely help where most needed.



Myer Eastland's Enduring Commitment to Change

The staff of Myer Eastland have done a phenomenal job of supporting Anchor, with fundraising activities ranging from movie nights, trivia nights, and barefoot bowling events over the years that have brought people together for fun and an important cause. Their round-up campaign has helped customers at their Eastland location make a difference.

Since 2017, the staff have raised **over \$90,000** for those experiencing homelessness.

We were thrilled in 2025 to see Irene Grant, who has tirelessly led Myer Eastland's fundraising activities, awarded the Australian Heroes of Retail Risk – Community Hero Award.

Inspired by our partners?
Email contact@anchor.org.au today.



Jacinta and Bass' Epic Run to Shine a Light on Youth Homelessness

When former Anchor board member Jacinta Brouwer and her colleague Bass Srour crossed the finish line after 100 gruelling kilometres through the mountain, rain, and relentless hill climbs, they were both hit with a wave of emotion—relief, pride, exhaustion, and deep gratitude.

Jacinta's journey at the Buffalo Stampede wasn't just a huge personal endurance test; it was a powerful statement of solidarity with young people experiencing homelessness.

All up, Jacinta and Bass managed to inspire 112 individuals to donate to her run, raising a total of \$38,633 to support young people experiencing homelessness.





Section Three

Outcomes

Anchor has a deeply entrenched evidence-based, methodologically rigorous approach to understanding and measuring specific outcomes that are being achieved, and where support makes the greatest difference.

By constantly refining and improving our data, analytics, and business intelligence capabilities, we gain clearer insights into what supports children, young people, and families through complex and often overlapping challenges. This growing evidence base helps Anchor respond with greater clarity and confidence, guiding decisions that ensure support remains effective, timely, and grounded in the real experiences of the people we serve.

Anchor's MyLife Project



MyLife is an intensive support program for young people aged 16 to 18 transitioning from statutory out-of-home care into semi-independent living.

The program operates at a critical point when young people exit residential care and statutory orders expire. MyLife provides stable accommodation alongside structured, individualised support to support improved outcomes and provide hope for the future.

The project is designed to support young people with complex needs, including those with history of trauma, disrupted attachments, and limited informal support networks. MyLife provides a supported transition that strengthens independence, wellbeing, and longer-term stability.

Project Rationale

For most young people, the transition to adulthood occurs gradually, supported by family, financial assistance and enduring social connections. For young people leaving care, this transition is often abrupt. The shift from a highly structured environment to independence occurs with limited safety nets and places young people at heightened risk of homelessness, disengagement from education or employment, and poor wellbeing.

Evidence consistently shows that the period immediately following exit from care is a key point of vulnerability. Young people often present with complex trauma and require more than housing alone, instead needing structured, developmentally informed support that recognises both past experiences and current readiness for independence.

Anchor identified this transition window as a critical opportunity for early intervention to prevent homelessness and support sustained independence. The MyLife program began with a single hub, initially supporting three individual young people. It has since grown to three hubs across metropolitan and regional Victoria, each supporting six young people in co-located accommodation. To date, approximately 70 young people have transitioned through MyLife, with some completing the full two-year program and others engaging for shorter or longer periods depending on their needs. This figure reflects young people supported within the hub model.

Project Design and Delivery

MyLife is being delivered in alignment with Anchor's Outcomes and Impact Framework, which prioritises meaningful measurable outcomes over simple output measures. While traditional indicators such as rent payment and school attendance remain important, MyLife places emphasis on internal drivers of sustainable change.

Wellbeing measurements in MyLife is aligned with the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci), focusing on autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The program tracks shifts in motivation from externally regulated behaviour to intrinsic motivation, recognising that sustainable outcomes are more likely when young people value and internalise life-building behaviours.

Support is delivered through consistent staffing, flexible pacing, and individualised goal setting. The program emphasises relational practice and adapts expectations based on each young person's trauma history and readiness.

MyLife provides a supported transition that strengthens independence, wellbeing, and longer-term stability

The MyLife Academic Review



About the MyLife Academic Review

Anchor commissioned an independent academic evaluation of the MyLife program to examine its effectiveness, quality of implementation, and overall impact for young people transitioning from care. The review assessed the alignment between MyLife's Theory of Change and frontline practice, explored the lived experiences of participating young people, considered program fidelity and consistency, and examined whether existing measurement tools adequately capture meaningful developmental outcomes.

Conducted between August 2025 and January 2026, the evaluation drew on interviews with young people and staff, as well as a comprehensive review of program documentation and international literature. This combined evidence base provided both external validation and constructive insight to inform the program's continued evolution.



Evidence from Program Delivery and Independent Review

One of the key findings from the academic evaluation is that **MyLife strongly aligns with the international evidence base**, consistently identifying extended care, stable housing, and relational support as central predictors of successful transitions, with MyLife operationalising these mechanisms with fidelity, placing it in the top tier of contemporary leaving-care models that emphasise long term developmental stability rather than short term crisis response.

Relational practice emerged as the program's defining strength. **Young people described MyLife as the first service in which adults were reliable, emotionally available and genuinely invested in their wellbeing.** Staff practice demonstrated trauma informed awareness, flexibility, and consistency, attributes strongly associated in the literature with improved developmental outcomes. Consistent staffing remains a deliberate feature of

Anchor's approach. Supported by a workforce with diverse and advanced skill sets reflective of the complexity of client needs, this stability enables adaptive responses to changing circumstances while maintaining relational continuity.

Housing stability was identified as a foundational enabler of progress. Young people consistently linked secure accommodation with improved emotional regulation, the capacity to establish routines, and engagement in education, training or employment. The evaluation reinforced that housing functions as a developmental platform from which relational engagement and long-term capability building can occur. Anchor will continue strengthening this integration of housing and relational practice to ensure stability remains embedded as a structural feature of the model.

The review also found clear evidence of meaningful developmental change. Participants and staff described improvements in emotional regulation, confidence, independent living skills, future planning, and help seeking behaviours. These outcomes align directly with the program's Theory of Change and contemporary best practice.

Alongside these strengths, the evaluation identified areas that can further strengthen delivery and impact. Variation in how the youth worker role is interpreted across the program suggests an opportunity to articulate a more explicit and shared practice framework. Anchor will use this insight to refine role clarity, enhance professional development, and embed consistent developmental coaching across all staff. This work builds on an already strong practice base and is intended to deepen coherence rather than correct deficiencies.

The review also highlighted that while relationships with staff are strong, young people may continue to experience vulnerability within their broader social networks. In response, Anchor is progressing more intentional approaches to prosocial network building, as well as meaningful community connection, to ensure relational capital extends beyond the life of the program.

Strengthening Measurement and Continuous Improvement

The evaluation affirmed that MyLife is a mature and promising program delivering the mechanisms shown in the literature to support safe transitions to independence. At the same time, it identified opportunities to strengthen how outcomes are measured and articulated.

Anchor will be moving to refine its measurement approaches to better capture dimensions such as psychological safety, emotional readiness, reflective capacity, emotional pacing, cognitive stability, and neurodiversity. These refinements are designed to ensure tools are developmentally appropriate, accessible, and responsive to lived experience. They will remain aligned with the Realist Framework while improving the precision with which impact is understood and communicated.

This forward program of work reflects Anchor's commitment to disciplined learning, evidence informed development, and continuous improvement grounded in client experience.

Anchor extends sincere thanks to the young people who participated in the evaluation and shared their experiences. Their contribution ensures that MyLife continues to be shaped by lived reality. Anchor also acknowledges the financial support and confidence of its partners and donors, including Equity Trustees and The Brian M Davis Foundation, whose commitment to rigorous evaluation and practice development has strengthened the program's future direction.



Anchor extends sincere thanks to the young people who participated in the evaluation and shared their experiences.



Outcomes | Case Study

Kelly's Story

Rebuilding Direction
and Purpose
Through MyLife

When Kelly speaks about her time in residential care, her tone carries warmth and certainty.

“I love resi(dential care). I know I’m an outlier, but I had the best experience. The workers were fantastic. Their experience and the way they genuinely cared about each other helped them care for us.”

It was in residential care that Kelly first began imagining a future for herself. The relationships she experienced there left a lasting impression.

“Those workers inspired me to want to become a youth worker and do that for young people who have gone through the same experience as me.”

Transition, however, brought unexpected challenges for Kelly. She did not initially want to leave residential care. **“I don’t do well with a lot of change all at once. All my comforts and sense of safety net seemed to be disappearing.”**

Although she had been relatively self-sufficient, the move unsettled her foundation. **“I went backwards a bit when I came to MyLife. When I felt that I was going backwards, I half gave up. I just thought, ‘there’s no point’. I’m falling behind after trying really hard.”**

Her education stalled and she was unemployed. After having largely stopped using substances while in residential care, she started using again as she struggled to cope with the loss of familiar supports. **“I wasn’t taking care of myself. My house was a mess.”**

At a critical point, Kelly was connected with a MyLife case manager whose approach shifted her trajectory.

“She made me feel like there weren’t expectations hanging over me. She validated what I was going through.”



That relational foundation mattered. Feeling understood created space for accountability without pressure. **“Having that connection with her made me look up to her. I didn’t want to let her down.”**

Through consistent support, Kelly began rebuilding from the ground up. The first step was reconnecting with education.

“I realised how much I missed studying. That really reignited my drive to become a resi worker.”

With renewed direction came practical change. She began taking greater responsibility for her wellbeing and environment. **“You can’t be a good youth worker if you don’t work on yourself.”**

Kelly prioritised finding part time employment to build savings and independence. Gradually, stability returned. **“It all just started falling into place a bit more.”**

Today, Kelly is nearing completion of her Community Services qualification and plans to continue toward her Diploma. Her goal is now crystal clear.

“I want to become a resi worker and help young people have the kind of experiences that I had coming through the system.” Her hope has extended beyond personal achievement, and is now a reflection of her desire to influence how young people in care are understood and supported.

Her hope has extended beyond personal achievement, and is now a reflection of her desire to influence how young people in care are understood and supported.

Kelly is acutely aware of the narratives that surround young people in the child protection system.

“They’re seen as bad, as a problem, as kids who just end up locked up.”

She has lived the impact of those assumptions and the risk they create. **“It means poorer experiences for young people. It risks trapping them in cycles where they fall back into the system as adults. They get stuck in a cycle of constantly giving up.”**

Her aspiration is to interrupt that cycle.

“The thing I’m hopeful for is that I’m able to make a difference in the system and help change other young people’s experiences. I want to use my own experience to broaden the community’s knowledge.”

Kelly’s journey through MyLife reflects the program’s core mechanism: sustained relational support that enables young people to stabilise, re engage, and move toward independence with purpose. Her story demonstrates that progress is not always linear. It requires patience, trust, and space to regain momentum.

“I guess my hope, is that I want to help others to have hope.”

As Kelly prepares to step into the sector as a qualified practitioner, she carries with her lived experience, professional training, and a clear sense of purpose. Her pathway illustrates how targeted, self-determination-based support can transform a period of instability into a foundation for long term impact.

Names have been changed to protect the identity of individuals quoted in this article.

“ Most people don’t know what resi is. Most people don’t understand programs like MyLife or youth foyers. That lack of knowledge makes it harder to get support and funding. It makes stigma worse.

Anchor's Specialist Homeless Children's Worker Pilot



Project Overview

The Specialist Homeless Children’s Worker Pilot was developed to address a critical gap in homelessness services by placing children at the centre of crisis response. Each year, Anchor supports more than 720 individuals and families to stabilise and work toward long term housing solutions, responds to over 240 reports of people sleeping rough, and provides more than 3,200 nights of emergency accommodation. Demand for these services continues to grow, and through this work we see first-hand the profound impact homelessness has, not only on adults, but on the children who experience crisis alongside them.

The Unmet Need

Homelessness services are typically structured around adults navigating housing crises. In these environments, children are often treated as secondary to their parents’ support needs rather than as individuals experiencing homelessness in their own right. While parents receive case management and housing assistance, the distinct trauma experienced by children frequently goes unaddressed.

This gap represents a serious developmental risk. Childhood homelessness is associated with poor emotional wellbeing, disrupted education, and long-term disadvantage. Anchor’s local data

revealed that in the Yarra Ranges alone, **119 children accessing homelessness services** were exposed to ongoing instability without access to specialist, child-focused support.

This local gap mirrors a national trend. Census data shows a **12% increase in children under 18 experiencing homelessness between 2016 and 2021**, yet access to free or funded therapeutic services for homeless children remains limited. Anchor recognised that without intervention, these children risked carrying the impacts of homelessness well beyond the crisis period.

Anchor’s Response

Anchor responded by establishing the Specialist Homeless Children’s Worker Pilot, grounded in the principle that children need their own advocate within homelessness services. The pilot embedded a specialist therapeutic practitioner directly within crisis teams, ensuring children’s emotional wellbeing, safety, and education were actively supported alongside housing responses.

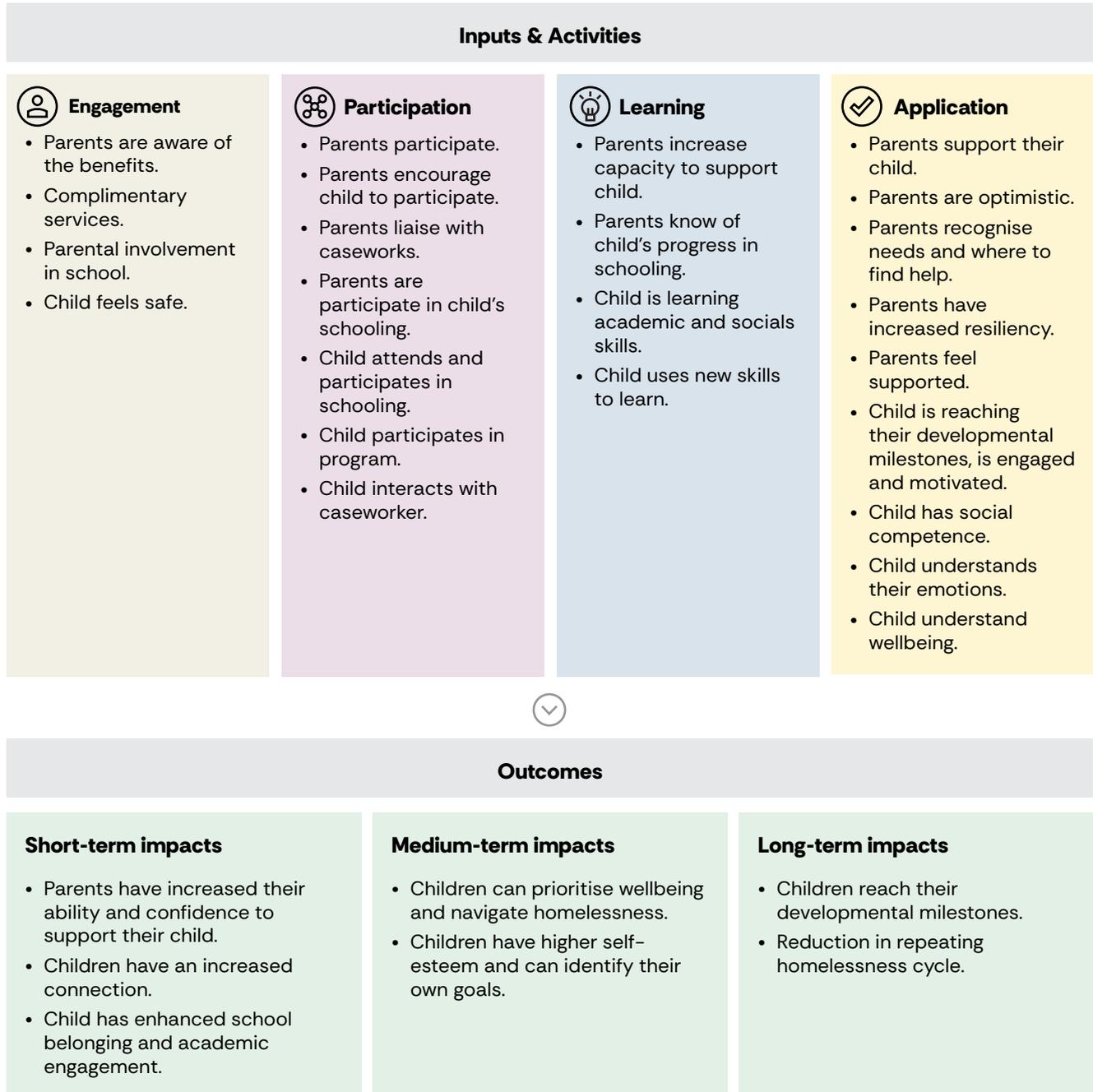
The program was developed in collaboration with sector specialists and people with lived experience, including consultation with the Statewide Children’s Resource Program. This ensured the approach was developmentally informed and responsive to the realities faced by families in crisis.

Anchor supports more than 720 individuals and families to stabilise and work toward long term housing solutions, responds to over 240 reports of people sleeping rough, and provides more than 3,200 nights of emergency accommodation.

Theory of Change

The pilot was guided by a clear Theory of Change with two core drivers:

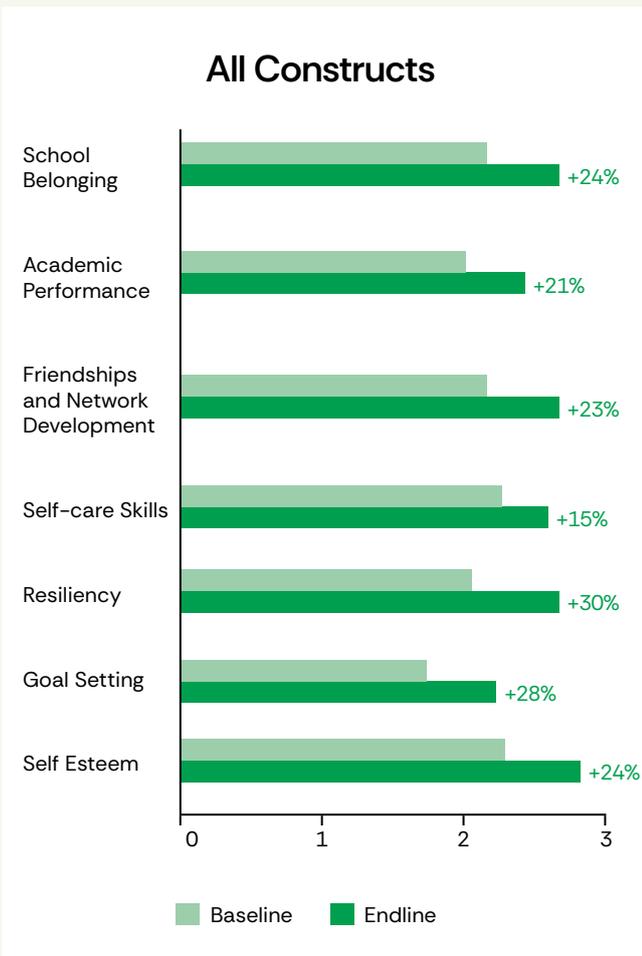
- strengthening the parent–child relationship as a protective factor against trauma, and
- working directly with children to support emotional regulation, resilience, and engagement in education during periods of instability.



Outcomes and Key Findings

A robust evaluation framework was applied to understand not only if the pilot worked, but how it directly influenced children’s developmental trajectories. The evaluation combined baseline and endline quantitative measures, with closed loop qualitative feedback from children, parents, and practitioners.

Seven developmental constructs were tracked, selected through academic research and best practice. These included school belonging, academic performance, friendship and network development, self-care skills, resiliency, goal setting, and self-esteem. Each of these constructs have six criteria defining them for this cohort.



The evaluation demonstrated **an average improvement of 24% across all constructs**, despite the short-term and high-pressure nature of crisis intervention. Key results included:

- **30% increase in resilience** driven by improved capacity to cope with adversity (**36%**) and increased persistence and tenacity (**43%**)
- **28% improvement in goal setting** indicating a shift from survival thinking toward future orientation
- **41% increase in emotional wellbeing**
- **37% improvement in stress management skills**

Children showed improved engagement with school, stronger emotional regulation, and greater confidence in navigating challenges. Parents reported reduced pressure and greater reassurance knowing their children had dedicated therapeutic support.

The findings confirm that when children are provided with targeted, trauma-informed support during homelessness, measurable developmental gains are possible even within crisis settings.

Next Steps

The pilot demonstrated that child-centred intervention within homelessness services is both feasible and effective. Support for children during homelessness should not be viewed as an optional add-on, but an essential ancillary component of effective crisis response.

The evaluation also highlighted the scale of unmet need across the Melbourne’s east, where access to specialist support for homeless children remains limited. Anchor is now using the evidence generated through this pilot to advocate for sustained investment and broader service development.

The next step for Anchor is to transition this model from a time-limited pilot into a permanent element embedded within homelessness service provision, while continuing its advocacy role by sharing evidence and insights through sector forums and conferences. This ensures children remain visible within systems that support families in crisis, and that the experiences and needs of young people continue to inform practice, policy, and service design.

James's Story

Providing Calm in the Storm

James is 11 years old. He is an Aboriginal boy who lives with his mum and his five-year-old brother.

For much of his early childhood, home life was shaped by family violence and drug and alcohol use. Instability followed him into other parts of his life. Within twelve months, he changed schools twice. Ongoing challenges with his mother's mental health meant he was missing significant time in school. But behind the attendance records was a quieter story.

Despite being primary school aged, James had taken on responsibilities far beyond his years. Anchor's Specialist Homeless Children's Worker observed that he had become "parentified" within the household. He was managing practical tasks and emotional burdens that no 11-year-old should have to carry.

For the first time, James had someone whose role was focused entirely on him.

Through consistent, one on one engagement, the Specialist Worker created space for James to speak about what homelessness felt like from his perspective. He was able to share worries he had been holding on his own. Having a trusted adult to offload to helped ease the weight he had been carrying.

With support, James began reconnecting with parts of childhood that instability had interrupted. He expressed interest in martial arts, and the worker helped enrol him in regular classes, attending alongside him to ensure he could participate consistently. Routine provided structure, and the physical outlet helped his confidence. It was a safe space where he could simply be a child.

Support extended beyond James individually. Anchor's Specialist Worker attended care meetings with his mother and school staff, advocating for his needs within education settings. His mother was supported with practical parenting strategies focused on routine and consistency, helping to create a more predictable home environment for both children.

The pilot project is designed to ensure that children experiencing homelessness are not invisible within family support responses. For James, that meant having someone in his corner whose priority was making sure his voice was heard.

With targeted, child focused support alongside assistance for his family, James's school attendance improved. Stability began to return. He was back in the classroom, engaged in learning, and connected to activities that strengthened his confidence.

James's story shines a spotlight on the importance of early, specialist intervention for children experiencing homelessness. When given consistency, a safe space to grow, and practical support, children are better able to re-engage with school, reconnect with their interests, and regain a sense of stability during periods of significant disruption.

Names have been changed to protect the identity of individuals quoted in this article.



James was able to share worries he had been holding on his own. Having a trusted adult to offload to helped ease the weight he had been carrying.

ANCHOR

Pathways
from
Homelessness

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