



**Our Village
Vision and Strategy**

It takes a village

Share More. Waste Less. Every Child Thrives.



Thank you to our staff, volunteers and other community members who contributed to the creation of this strategy.



Our Village acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and acknowledges and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and future.



Share More. Waste Less. Every Child Thrives.

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A message from our Chair and Chief Executive Officer



John McCluskey, Chair



Dr Ruth Holdaway MBE, Chief Executive Officer

Imagine a world where we share more, waste less and every child thrives. This is our vision for the future. Is it bold? Yes. Is it possible? **Yes, with your help.**

You may have heard the saying “It takes a village”. It means it takes a community to help a child grow in a secure and healthy environment. This is the sentiment behind the way we work to achieve a better world for children and the planet.

We can’t achieve this alone, so we invite you to support us as we set our ambition for the future of our children and the planet. Community, supporting children to thrive and respecting the planet, are core to who we are. These are the things that inspired the way we began in 2009 in St Kilda, Victoria and they have continued to shape what we do as we continue to grow and help more children.

In 2022, after extensive consultation with our stakeholders, St Kilda, Geelong and Eureka Mums, as we were then known, published a Vision for 2030. We took a close look at how our world was changing, the pace of this change and the impact it has on the people who need our help. We sought to better understand where and how we can have impact by rehoming children’s essentials like cots, car seats, prams and clothes. We considered how needs were changing and how important it was, and still is, to adapt as a result.

With this in mind, and in collaboration with our supporters, we reimagined our future – what we do, who we serve and how we do it.

In 2024, St Kilda, Geelong and Eureka Mums joined forces under one new name and brand, Our Village. Together, as Our Village, we will increase our impact for vulnerable babies, children and the environment.

This move enables us to put more resources on the frontline to achieve our ambitions of reaching every Victorian baby and child up to the age of six that needs us, while significantly reducing the waste that ends up in landfill.

This strategy, *It Takes a Village*, is the next phase of our journey to achieve our vision:

Share More. Waste Less. Every Child Thrives.

We invite you to join us as we step boldly forward and help us turn pre-loved into re-loved so every child thrives.

John McCluskey
Chair, Our Village

Dr Ruth Holdaway MBE
Chief Executive Officer



From humble beginnings

Our purpose has not changed since 2009, when the passion and hard work of five Melbourne mums led to the formation of the charity.

From the collection of items in their own homes, to the expansion of the service to Geelong, Ballarat and right across Victoria, our dual purpose has stayed the same. Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill and reusing and rehoming essentials to children facing disadvantage who would otherwise go without.

Whether it is providing a pair of shoes and a hat to a toddler, providing nursery essentials and clothing to a new parent or emergency carer, or providing a safety-checked car seat to get a child from A to B safely, we know our service helps.

- It alleviates the immediate anxiety a parent or carer might be facing.
- It helps the bond between a child and their parent or carer.
- It provides a parent or carer with the ability to participate in their community.
- It lifts people up with dignity and respect.
- It sends a message to people needing help that they are valued and cared for.

And what's more, the way we provide our service, with the help of incredible volunteers, provides opportunities for people to be part of our village: To give back, to be part of a community of care and impact, to develop skills and to use their talents for good.



What has changed, and changed quickly, are the levels of hardship, anxiety, financial and social distress in our community. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting cost of living crisis accelerated this change. We're seeing more parents, carers and children left homeless or at risk of homelessness, struggling to earn a living wage and being forced to make difficult choices for themselves and their young children. In the two years following the COVID lockdowns, we saw demand for our service increase by around 30%.

We continue to see people experience unexpected emergencies, resulting in children and their carers not having the essentials they need just to get by. Family violence is continuing to rise, impacting children's sense of security and self worth.

Social workers, maternal child health nurses and many support agencies are stretched. The number of people in need continues to grow in Victoria, and nationally.¹

Community attitudes and expectations are also changing. We've seen concern about climate change rise and increasing calls for environmental sustainability, social justice and equity.

For years, we've been accustomed to the 'take-make-buy-dispose' way of living that negatively impacts people and the planet – creating economic, social and environmental stress. For example, the World Resources Institute estimates that we waste enough clothing globally to fill Sydney Harbour.²

Unfortunately, Australia is the second largest consumer of textiles and we waste 93% of the textiles we consume.³ With increases in population levels, the demand for textiles will grow, and unless we take action, so will the amount that goes to waste. Toys spark joy but are often discarded when a child's interest wanes. Almost 80% of all toys end up in landfill, incinerators or the ocean – a complete and unnecessary waste.⁴ These are just two examples of waste and pollution that are opportunities to do better.

From humble beginnings in the suburbs of Melbourne it is now time for us to expand our impact and make a lasting difference to the environment and the lives of children across Victoria and beyond.

This strategy sets out the progress we believe we can make and the way we will do it.

1. <https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/covid-inequality-and-poverty-in-2020-and-2021/> and https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/SCLSI/Inquiry_into_Homelessness_in_Victoria/Report/LCLSIIC_59-06_Homelessness_in_Vic_Final_report.pdf
 2. <https://www.wri.org/insights/numbers-economic-social-and-environmental-impacts-fast-fashion>
 3. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. (2021). TC waste: National clothing textile waste roundtable. Australian Government, Canberra.
 4. <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/articles/creating-a-circular-economy-for-toys>



Our vision

Share More. Waste Less. Every Child Thrives.

Our purpose

We rehome essentials to give kids the best start in life.

Why it matters

The First 2,000 days

Our lives are impacted by our experiences in early childhood. The attachment between a child and their primary carer in the first 2,000 days of life influences that child's health, development and resilience. If there is economic, psychological and/or physical distress, the ability to develop this bond is at risk. Our Village alleviates these pressures and creates the opportunity for every child to feel secure, safe and to thrive.

Circular economy

The world has finite resources. The way we buy, use and dispose of goods has a negative impact on our planet. We're investing our energy into changing the way we consume goods. As part of the circular economy, we are reducing waste and pollution by extending the life cycle of kids' essential goods through repair and reuse.

Our pledges

Support every child up to the age of six that needs us, first in Victoria and then beyond.

Reduce waste by ensuring children's products are used for their full safe lifespan.

Contribute to thriving communities, social connection and employment opportunities by providing enjoyable and fulfilling volunteering experiences.

Our operational priorities

Reach, progress and impact | Reducing waste | Our people | Operational excellence

Our way of working

Community, Respect, Caring for the planet, Collaboration, Accountability, Joy

Our focus



The first 2,000 days

We are focusing our service to use our limited resources where they will make the biggest long-term impact. This means we are aligning with the extensive research outcomes that show the first 2,000 days of life are essential for forming a secure and healthy future.

Our lives are impacted by our experiences in early childhood. The attachment between a child and their primary carers in the first 2,000 days of life influences that child's health, development and resilience. If there is economic, psychological and/or physical distress, the ability to develop this bond is at risk. We alleviate these pressures and create the opportunity for every child to feel secure, safe and to thrive.

Whilst we support older siblings, our service is primarily geared towards children up to the age of six who need our help and for whom the research tells us our impact will be greatest.



Circular economy

We will do more to promote the philosophy of reuse.

The world has finite resources. The way we buy, use and dispose of goods has a negative impact on our planet. We're investing our energy into changing the way we consume goods. As part of the circular economy, we are reducing waste and pollution by extending the life cycle of kids' essential goods through repair and reuse.

Re-use of clothing has significant environmental, social and economic benefits which are underpinned through evidence by Charitable Recycling Australia. "The Waste Hierarchy ranks Reuse as a higher level intervention than Recycling, and the road to circularity necessitates maximising higher level interventions like reuse and repair, before recycling is considered at the end-of-life."⁵ The application of this intervention has seen 100,000 tonnes of pre-loved wearable/usable clothing generate \$50 million for social welfare causes in Australia.

We will prioritise pre-loved items to be confident that as well as supporting children in need today we are also creating a long term sustainable environment in which those children will grow up and thrive.

Our pledges

We've made bold decisions. We're addressing how we can best serve those who need us and achieve our vision of sharing more, wasting less and supporting every child to thrive.

We will:



1. Support every child up to the age of six that needs us, first in Victoria and then beyond

2. Reduce waste by ensuring children's products are used for their full safe lifespan



3. Contribute to thriving communities, social connection and employment opportunity by providing enjoyable and fulfilling volunteering experiences



Our operational priorities

To achieve our pledges we have established four pillars of work and activity.

Our business plans will map out measurable objectives, priorities and actions against each pillar to enable us to deliver our strategy over the long term.

We value transparency, and trust this shows how we organise and prioritise our work.

Our work

01.

Reach, progress and impact

Establish and protect our brand equity, and develop and leverage stakeholder engagement to broaden reach and impact.

02.

Reducing waste

Establish partnerships for items we can't reuse, promote benefits of reuse, and increase the 'greening' of our own practices.

03.

Our people

Enhance health and wellbeing of employees and volunteers, focus on learning, development, and succession planning.

04.

Operational excellence

Ensure financial sustainability, good governance and compliance, digital capability and enablement, and continuous improvement.



Our values

Our pledges outline WHAT we want to achieve while our values explain HOW we will achieve it.

Our values drive our behaviours and decision making. We hold one another to account to ensure we are all living our values.



| We value | What it means for the people we work with and our supporters | What it means for our team |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Community | It takes a village. We're inclusive – everyone is welcome. We're here for all children under the age of six who need us, whatever their circumstances or background. We welcome everyone to donate their time, money or goods. We make connections and enable communities to support one another through the reuse of the essentials children need. | We're building a diverse team that represents the community – we value difference and leverage it for success. We care for one another. We build connections and support our community of volunteers and donors. We use our networks to achieve our goals. |
| Respect | We only rehome items we'd be willing to give to our own families and friends. We treat every child and their carers with dignity. We have high standards and constantly improve our work in the search for excellence. We respect the planet and look after it. | We listen to each other and take time to understand each other's views. We are kind to each other, always. |
| Caring for the planet | We recognise the climate crisis and help alleviate it by considering the impact on the environment of everything we do. Our reuse approach is long term and means we help children in a moment of need while also creating a more sustainable planet for them to live on. | We consider the environmental impact of every decision we make. From the small things, like car sharing where we can, to the big things, like reviewing and improving our supply chain management – we reduce waste and set the bar high for reducing the environmental impact of our work. |
| Collaboration | We work with others to achieve our goals. We are more powerful and impactful when we partner with people and organisations that add value to our work and the children we support. | We are one team – we trust each other. We work together proactively. We keep each other informed. We welcome new ideas and value diversity in our team. We innovate together to constantly improve our work and ourselves. |
| Accountability | We deliver. If we say we will do something, we do it. | We seek constructive feedback from one another and act on it. We check and challenge our work. |
| Joy | The challenges of the children we support are many and varied and we deal with tough stories every day – through all of this we find and create moments of joy for our partners, the children we support and ourselves. We create moments of joy for children receiving gifts from us. We create moments of joy for people who donate their children's essentials so another child can feel special. We create moments of joy for our volunteers who give us their precious time to help children in need. | We love what we do, we are proud of our work and each other and we celebrate success. We are positive and seek solutions not problems. We prioritise staff and volunteer wellbeing and we have fun! |



We've served thousands of children, families and carers across Victoria working closely with our social work, maternal child health and social welfare agency partners. We're proud of the work we do with them and our supporters, and we're proud of the joy and hope we create together.

Yet there is so much more to do. There's no time to waste and we need your help. We invite you to be a part of Our Village and get involved – whether you're an individual, group of friends, or business who can donate time, goods and/or dollars – everyone is welcome, and very much needed.

Let's get to work on delivering our vision.
Contact us today on 1300 789 509 or hello@ourvillage.org.au

