



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

KIDS UNDER COVER 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Thursday 21 March 2019

Mr Colin Radford, Chair, and CEO, **Ms Jo Swift**, Kids Under Cover

The Honourable John Brumby AO, Former Premier of Victoria

Mr Ken Morgan OAM, Founding Patron, Kids Under Cover
and **Mrs Lenka Morgan**

Kids Under Cover Patrons and Life Ambassadors

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders here with us this afternoon.

I am delighted to welcome you to Government House to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Kids Under Cover. My husband is disappointed that he has been called away elsewhere, but sends his warmest greetings.

Thirty years of work to prevent young people from experiencing homelessness. Thirty years of important outreach and support. And thirty years of lifechanging interventions.

We know that on the night of the last census, 39% of those experiencing homelessness in Victoria were under 25 years of age. And we know that, on the streets, we see only the tip of the iceberg. Those who sleep rough are only a small proportion of those with no stable housing.

Youth homelessness was a pressing problem when you started three decades ago. It remains a problem today, and – unfortunately – it will not just disappear. And so, it is how we respond to it that matters.

What stands out to me is how Kids Under Cover responds. It is not only with compassion and kindness, but also with creative solutions. And with creative solutions based on listening to and understanding the needs of the young people you help.

I particularly applaud the initiative of your demountable studios. Early on, you realised that young people often wanted to stay within the safety of a family home, but adequate space was an obstacle to them. To meet the need, you designed the demountable studio, and since 1990, almost 1000 such studio homes have been built.

You have been thoughtful too as to the major risks for young people. And you have recognised that education is a key factor in reducing risk.

Since 2004, you have awarded just shy of 950 scholarships.

These Scholarships have ensured support for the educational prospects – and employment outcomes – of young people, while reducing the financial burden on carers.

Last year alone, more than 4,000 cars were donated to raise much-needed funds for your work.

These are just some of the initiatives of Kids Under Cover, in order to meet the multifactorial risks that would have faced - and potentially defeated - these youngsters.

Instead, they have had the assistance of your practical help, your generosity, and the knowledge that someone both understands and cares about the issues for them.

Due to your work, thousands of young people have been able to stay connected to family. To experience independence. To feel a sense of privacy. To enjoy the privilege of education and training. To develop self-belief. To know dignity.

I am pleased for this opportunity to commend the ongoing work of the Founding Patron of Kids Under Cover, Ken Morgan OAM and Lenka Morgan. You have been a critical and inspiring voice for those who have experienced homelessness.

Congratulations to Jo Swift, CEO of Kids Under Cover, for her vision and leadership. You have led the organisation from strength to strength, across one third of its life.

And all the heartiest of thanks to your volunteers – Colin Radford, as Chair, and members of the Board, Kids Under Cover Patrons and Life Ambassadors and all those who volunteer their time and their skills in the office.

There is no more worthwhile investment than in a young person. Thank you for all that you do to enrich our State by bolstering our future in the best and kindest of ways: by protecting and promoting these youngsters.

Which leaves me only to say: 'Happy 30th Birthday, Kids under Cover'.