

MECCA M-POWER

# THE BEAUTY OF CHANGE

Impact Report 2025



M E C C A M  
C C A R C H I V E



MECCA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live, work and operate, and pays respect to Elders past and present, extending that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We recognise their enduring role as the First Peoples of this land and honour their deep, ongoing connection to Country.

We are inspired by the power and resilience of First Nations women and girls, and through our Reconciliation Action Plan, we commit to listening, learning and taking meaningful action in partnership with First Nations communities.

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vision

Gender equality in our lifetime.

purpose

To embolden through beauty  
by helping people to look, feel  
and be their best.

A message from

*Lisa Keenan*

Chief Purpose Officer

At MECCA, we've always believed that beauty, at its best, can play a much bigger role than appearance alone. It can help people feel more like themselves, step forward with more certainty, and take up space in their lives in ways they might not have otherwise.

That belief has been there since the very beginning. Long before we spoke about purpose in formal terms, it shaped how the business was built, in a four-metre-wide store, in the way we showed up for customers, and in the kind of experience we wanted to create.

M-POWER - our commitment to advancing gender equality - was born in 2022, and since then, we've committed more than \$35 million, with our team raising a further \$300,000 themselves.

In 2025, having built a strong foundation with an award-winning impact program delivering genuine outcomes for women and girls, we made that commitment louder and more public than ever,

rearticulating the purpose at MECCA's heart: to embolden through beauty, helping people look, feel and be their best.

Today, purpose sits on our leadership team. It is core to how we trade, how we communicate and how we show up in the world.

At the same time, the world around us continues to shift. The pressures on women and girls, particularly in relation to identity, confidence and representation, remain significant.

Beauty sits right at the centre of that conversation. It can reinforce unrealistic expectations, or it can help create space for confidence, creativity and self-expression.

MECCA employs nearly 8,000 people, 95% of them women.

We have an extraordinary community of more than 5 million beauty lovers that we connect with every day.

So, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to influence what is visible and celebrated.



In 2025, the launch of the MECCA Archive marked an important moment for us. It is our way of responding to the fact that less than 1% of recorded history centres on women.

Through the Archive, we are beginning to rewrite that history through beauty, mapping the story of womankind through our looks, feelings and experiences, and the many ways women have expressed who we are.

Alongside this, we introduced the MECCA Prize, an annual award that spotlights female changemakers across the arts, health and education.

We also deepened our global commitment through a \$10 million, 10-year partnership with the Co-Impact Gender Fund, supporting leaders working to transform systems for women and girls across multiple regions.

This report captures some of these and many other moments from the past year. We think of them as part of a much bigger, ongoing story.

We're still learning.

We know there is more to do to make this work visible, consistent and deeply integrated into how we show up every day.

Because ultimately, this is about contributing, as authentically as we can, to a more equal future for women and girls.

Thank you for being part of it.

*Lisa Keenan*

**Lisa Keenan**  
Chief Purpose Officer



# How we make change

Aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, our three pillars – education, arts & culture, and health & wellbeing – reflect MECCA's core business, embedding purpose into brand, product and culture.

**In 2025 we strengthened the organisations doing the work.  
So they could reach more people.  
And over time, create lasting change.**

# Strengthening organisations

Our partners are all leading change in their fields. Our goal is to strengthen their organisations by investing in the people and capability behind the work.

This looks like multi-year, flexible funding, alongside strategic support and meaningful storytelling that amplifies their work.

In 2025, our partners told us that MECCA M-POWER's support is:



Chelsey Goodan, international author, gender justice advocate and empowerment coach, together with The Flourish Journey, hosted a conversation for parents on the wisdom and power of teenage girls - proudly supported by MECCA M-POWER.

**“MECCA M-POWER's untied funding approach is an incredibly efficient and effective way to fund the complex work of your partners. When coupled with a collaborative, high-trust relationship and a commitment to building networks and convening partners for shared learning, the impact of the actual financial support is significantly amplified. MECCA M-POWER is a clear thought leader in how you approach social change and impact.”**

**Alick Weber**  
Head of Partnerships & Innovation  
The Man Cave

# 85%

Strengthening partner profiles and reputation

# 75%

Strengthening fundraising capacity

# 71%

Strengthening networks

# 70%

Strengthening leadership capacity

# Expanding reach & impact

When we strengthen our partners, their impact travels further. In 2025, across the M-POWER network:

## Cultural & audience reach

# 10,160,000+

Readers, audiences and listeners engaging with stories, literature and women's sport through awards, events, programs, and channels. This is how culture shifts – at a scale no single program ever could.

## Total direct partner reach

# 269,503+

### Sector & advocacy reach

## 109,591

People reached through organisations working to shift systems and change how investment flows to women and girls

### In schools & education

## 121,561

Young people, families and educators reached through education programs – in classrooms, on Country, in communities and online. From inclusive learning and emotional intelligence to First Nations mentoring and VCE support, this is where knowledge, confidence and identity take root.

### Clinical & health service

## 21,000

Women reached through health programs tackling endometriosis and breast cancer – two conditions that have historically been underfunded and under-researched

### Direct, intensive programs

## 17,351

Women and girls in mentoring relationships, business building, managing Country, building disaster resilience, safe housing and staying in school. This is the most hands-on work in the network – and where change runs deepest.

**“To have people who not only understand, but believe you is priceless. After that very first meeting, I didn’t feel alone anymore.”**

**Patient**

Julia Argyrou Endometriosis Centre



2025 MECCA Prize recipient Associate Professor Helen Frazer, Founding Director of BRAIX, is revolutionising breast cancer detection through AI, and working toward a future where every woman benefits from earlier diagnosis, personalised care, and better outcomes.

# Lasting change

This is what lasting change looks like. Not overnight. Built through the work of our partners, the organisations we support and the communities they serve – and a belief that beauty can move the world forward.



Co-Impact supports organisations such as Girl Effect, who work on the ground in Kenya, to improve girls' health, education and livelihoods by connecting them with life-changing information, tools and support.

**“MECCA is an absolute leader in what high-trust philanthropy looks like. Thank you for believing in what Bridge It does and for putting the power in our hands to make decisions about how we use our funding.”**

**Carla Raynes**  
CEO and Founder of Bridge It

## Right now.

Immediate shifts in knowledge, confidence and access. Girls staying in school. Women accessing specialist healthcare for the first time. Boys learning what healthy relationships look like. These are just some of the shifts that tell us something is working.

## Over time.

Behavioural and capability change that sticks. Year 12 completions. Women equipped to start and grow businesses. Female learners reporting increased agency. Educators changing the way they teach.

## For good.

The long-term change we're working towards. Women leading emergency crisis response in areas impacted by climate change. Girls becoming empowered to mentor the next generation. Breast cancer screening algorithms entering clinical trials. Increased representation of women across Australian literature and the arts.



# Moments of impact '25

A movement for change can take many forms.

A store.

A stage.

A screen.

A conversation.



“The Archive is an invitation to the next generation to help write beauty's next chapter — so that decades from now, girls can look back and see their stories and experiences reflected there.”

Jo Horgan  
MECCA Founder and Co-CEO



Less than 1% of recorded history is about women.

In 2025, we launched the MECCA Archive – a living cultural collection preserving women's stories through beauty. The Archive is MECCA's commitment to making sure women's stories are recorded, celebrated and passed on. Our first chapter, 21st Century Girl, brought together our team, community, brand partners and world-leading creative minds to do exactly that.

104,000+  
Archive page views at launch

3.6M  
Social impressions

# MECCA Prize



On October 11 – International Day of the Girl – we announced our \$10 million, 10-year commitment to Co-Impact's Gender Fund and launched the inaugural MECCA Prize (think MECCA's version of Australian of the Year).

Awarded annually, the Prize recognises the people and projects driving bold, lasting progress towards gender equality. Throughout 2025, we worked closely with each recipient to shine a light on their work and bring their ideas to our community and beyond.

Our teams in-store also came together to celebrate the incredible power of women and girls – from scrunchies and soundtracks to meaningful conversations about how they've discovered their own sense of self through beauty.

The MECCA Prize recipients for 2025 were:

**MECCA Prize for Technology Innovation — Assoc. Prof Helen Frazer**

Pioneering the use of AI in breast cancer screening through the BRAIx algorithm, now in a Randomised Controlled Trial across BreastScreen Victoria and South Australia, with findings published in Lancet Digital Health.

**MECCA Prize for Science and Sport — Dr Stacy Sims**

Rewriting the science of female physiology and empowering girls to make informed choices about health, performance and wellbeing through her Next Gen program.

**MECCA Prize for Cultural Inquiry — Katy Hessel**

Restoring women's voices to art history and exploring how beauty has shaped gender norms.

Assoc. Prof  
Helen Frazer



Dr Stacy Sims



Katy Hessel





# A Global Commitment

## MECCA M-POWER x Co-Impact Gender Fund

Lasting change happens when power and resources are placed in the hands of those closest to both the challenges and the opportunities. Change led by the people who know their spaces and communities best.

In 2025, MECCA announced a \$10 million dollar, 10-year partnership with the Co-Impact Gender Fund – supporting local changemakers across Africa, Asia and Latin America who are transforming systems in health, education and economic opportunity for women and girls.

### \$10M

Committed to Co-Impact's Gender Fund

### 10 years

Partnership with the Co-Impact Gender Fund

### 3 regions

Africa, Asia and Latin America

### 50+ programs

Supporting women and girls



# YWCA Aotearoa

—Y25 Program

25

Wāhine and gender-diverse rangatahi – plus the ripple effect in their communities – supported in 2025

3

Y25 alumni contributed to the MECCA Archive

2.8M

Media impressions across TV, radio, print and online

**“This weekend's wānanga was nothing short of transformative. The stories shared, the honest conversations, and the bold collective vision have reignited my passion to lead with purpose and uplift others.”**

Anne Joseph  
Gender Equity & Global Diplomacy Activist  
Y25 2025

**“A huge thank you to everyone at Mecca for the incredible care and love you showed our Y25 cohort last night. Your generosity and warmth made such a difference, the cohort looked stunning, but more importantly, they felt confident and celebrated.”**

Valerie Bold  
YWCA

Supporting the next generation of strong leaders.

Every year, YWCA Auckland runs the national Y25 program across Aotearoa New Zealand. The Y25 brings together 25 extraordinary wāhine and gender-diverse rangatahi aged 15–25 – poets, Paralympians, policymakers and entrepreneurs from marginalised communities who rarely see themselves represented as leaders in mainstream spaces.

In 2025, M-POWER supported Y25 end-to-end – from nominations through our store network to a national launch event, a three-day workshop co-designed by Y25 alumnae and online learning. On the night, a team of MECCA artists provided makeup services for every winner.

People like Ashley Vaotuua, a proud tamaitai Samoa whose storytelling centres the experiences of Samoan women, and Aalyana Partsch, an entrepreneur reimagining health and wellbeing for Māori and Pasifika young adults. Three Y25 contributors also shared their perspectives in the MECCA Archive – because emerging voices belong in the record too.

Through M-POWER's platform, several participants went on to secure new speaking engagements, media opportunities and community leadership roles.

# Celebrating Women in Design

Chapter 2: Moments of Impact

MECCA M-POWER



2025 Women in Design Commission recipient — Nipa Doshi

# 620

Guests attended the drop-by workshop at the NGV with Nipa Doshi

# 80

Guests attended the Nipa Doshi Commission reveal

The MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission is a major series inviting internationally renowned female designers and architects to create significant new work for the NGV Collection. The five-year program is supported through M-POWER and ensures their contribution becomes part of the permanent record.

Only 13.7% of living artists represented by galleries in Europe and North America are women, and art by women

accounts for just 3.3% of all auction sales globally. MECCA's partnership with the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) exists to change that.

In 2025, internationally recognised designer Nipa Doshi was the commission recipient. Her piece, *A Room of My Own*, draws on memory, ritual and the women who shaped her, inspired by the Indian kaavad – a portable shrine that unfolds into a space for storytelling and reflection.



# 2

NGV events and multiple activations at MECCA for team members and customers

# 2

works added to the NGV Collection, growing the representation of women in the arts



Nipa Doshi's piece 'A Room of My Own' is displayed as part of the NGV's permanent collection.



**“My experience as a female artist is that it's been really hard work. There's still huge gender disparity in the art world. I want to see women doing well in their 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s — not just celebrated once or twice, but sustained.”**

**Karen Black**  
2025 MECCA Holiday Artist



2025 Holiday Artist  
– Karen Black.

For almost a decade, MECCA has also partnered with the NGV to support and profile an Australian female artist through MECCA's iconic Holiday packaging. In 2025, we partnered with Australian artist Karen Black, bringing her signature style to life. Her bold, emotionally layered work reframes the female experience in every line, drip and stroke.

A new piece of Karen's work was also added to the NGV's permanent collection to help inspire the next generation of aspiring artists and designers.



MECCA at the Australian Open and the Launch of Momentum.



**52,598**  
visited the MECCA Summer Club

**30%**  
MECCA generated 30% of all footfall to AO TOPCOURT (the new AO Gen-Z Hub)

**\$5K**  
Scholarship for a rising female tennis star through the Women's Tennis Foundation

**Momentum Podcast**

**#1**  
Women's sports podcast in Australia on Spotify

**352,000+**  
Plays since launch

**16,700**  
Average listeners per episode

Tennis is one of the most gender-equal sports in the world. In January 2025, MECCA showed up for it.

MECCA Summer Club made its debut at the AO TOPCOURT precinct, bringing beauty, culture and conversation into one of the world's biggest sporting moments – and with more women than ever watching and playing, it was a natural fit.

M-POWER also launched Momentum, a podcast series created with Missing Perspectives and dedicated exclusively to women's sport. It opened on the Centre Stage with a live panel hosted by sports presenter Kat Sasso, bringing together professional tennis player Destanee Aiava, Sarah Styles from the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, and Nicole Pratt – former Australian number one, coach and President of the Women's Tennis Foundation.

Through the Australian Women's Tennis Foundation, M-POWER is helping to fund scholarships and pathways for the next generation of female tennis players.



# Letter to Beauty & Melbourne

3

Floors of beauty

2000

Square-metres dedicated  
to MECCAVERSITY – our  
community education and  
learning auditorium

40000

Square-metre flagship store



Picture of the all-female team behind MECCA Bourke St. Story entitled "How MECCA's female leaders changed beauty retail forever" featured in Insider Retail.

**“The significance of this space lies not in its scale but in what it represents: 27 years of evolving alongside the people who make MECCA what it is.”**

**Jo Horgan**  
MECCA Founder and Co-CEO

Nearly three decades in the making. MECCA opened the doors to its most ambitious project yet on the 8th of August.

MECCA found its new home inside a restored heritage-listed 1930s building on the former site of Cole's Book Arcade – once the grandest bookshop in the world. MECCA Bourke Street spans 4,000 square metres across three levels, bringing together more than 200 brands, 80+ services and more than 500 team members in a space designed for exploration, innovation, education and joy.

And, inside the physical space, purpose is woven into every corner – from more than 20 works by women artists displayed throughout, female founders and women-led concession partners celebrated across the floor, and products that support initiatives for women and girls.

**4x**

Female-founded concession partners

**26+**

Works by women artists throughout the space curated by Charlotte Day

**250+**

points of innovation

**500+**

Team members

**50,000+**

Beauty lovers welcomed every week

# Economic Empowerment in Action



Angie Poller is a single mother from Queensland living with Chronic Regional Pain Syndrome—sometimes described as the most painful condition known to humankind.

She created Remedii because she couldn't find what she needed to help ease her pain. Lightweight, discreet, wearable, hot and cold pain packs, designed for people managing pain with dignity.

Through M-POWER's partnership with Global Sisters, the MECCA team worked alongside Angie, providing business mentoring, packaging support, eCommerce content and in-store team training. What began as a micro-business became a retail-ready brand. In 2025, Remedii landed on the shelves of MECCA Bourke Street Apothecary.

**“To see my Remedii on shelf at Bourke Street Apothecary is beyond my dreams. To me it means people can for the first time see, feel and hold it before purchase.”**

Angie Poller  
Founder of Remedii

# WEAR IT YELLOW

for Children's Ground

Supporting First Nations young people means investing in communities for the long term.

Children's Ground works with First Nations communities in Central Australia and the Northern Territory, taking a whole-of-community approach to change that starts from birth. Their model is built on the belief that lasting change – in health, education, culture and self-determination – takes a generation. Women are at the centre of it. As employees, educators, cultural knowledge holders and community leaders, First Nations women drive Children's Ground's work.

2025 marked our third year supporting Wear It Yellow. MECCA stores and

the Support Centre turned into vibrant seas of yellow, celebrating Children's Ground and their long-term, community-led work with First Nations young people.

During National Reconciliation Week, we welcomed Jane Vadiveloo, CEO of Children's Ground, to our Monday Morning Meeting for an honest conversation about shared history, privilege and what it really means to confront racism and drive change.

We backed this movement through action too – an additional \$20,000 matched-giving donation to help Children's Ground continue their life-changing work. Whether it's wearing yellow, raising funds or learning something new – we're all invited to keep showing up.



# 265

First Nations women supported into employment from 2023 to 2025

## 36

Young women aged 9–17 learning from Elders and cultural leaders

## 241

Women engaged in First Nations governance and decision-making over the same period

## 19

First Nations women presented at 21 local, national and international conferences from '23 to '25

## \$20K

Donated to Children's Ground

## 3

Years of MECCA's ongoing supporting for Wear It Yellow

## 112

Stores & thousands of our team members participated

# M-POWER CONNECT



# 100%

Of participants said their leadership skills improved and they would recommend CONNECT to another not-for-profit leader

“Leadership can be quite solitary. The CONNECT program allowed me to engage with some of the most intelligent and inspiring CEOs and share the highs and lows of this important role.”

CONNECT participant



An ongoing initiative building connection and better leaders.

M-POWER CONNECT is a personal and professional development program for the CEOs and founders of our partner organisations – going beyond financial support to invest in the people leading the change.

Since CONNECT launched, every participant has said the program strengthened their leadership. Every single one would recommended it to another not-for-profit leader.

In 2025, CONNECT continued to bring together small groups of not-for-profit leaders every quarter – for peer learning, shared problem-solving and honest conversations about what it really means to lead a purpose-driven organisation. Together, they explored challenges, exchanged insights and built real connections with people navigating similar terrain.

The impact is reflected, not only in stronger leadership and more confident decision-making, but also in reduced isolation and a deeper sense of support among leaders at the top.



# Partner stories

Behind every number in this report are real people and organisations doing extraordinary work to improve the lives of women and girls.

These are their stories.

# THE FLOURISH JOURNEY



# 4,342

## Young people reached through programs in 2025

61

Teenage girls at Flourish Day

192

Parents at Teen Girls Unfiltered

### Who are they?

The Flourish Journey runs wellbeing and empowerment programs for young girls in schools – creating spaces where students can be honest about what they're going through, build emotional resilience and find their voice. Their work sits at the intersection of mental health, identity and connection.

### Key initiative

In 2025, M-POWER supported The Flourish Journey to deliver Flourish Day – a one-day immersive event bringing 61 teenage girls aged 13–15 together with acclaimed international gender justice advocate, author and empowerment coach Chelsey Goodan for a day of creativity, mentorship and community. 192 parents joined Teen Girls Unfiltered – an online conversation on how to support the teenage girls in their lives. The partnership enabled The Flourish Journey to pursue larger, more ambitious projects that require upfront investment and long-term thinking.

“I learnt that it's so important for me to open up and tell people how I'm feeling. Celebrate my wins and support others' wins to allow growth and compassion between myself and others.”

**Year 10 participant**  
The Flourish Journey

“Above all else, you both made me realise it doesn't have to be all doom and gloom with a teenage girl. I just need to look at them a bit closer again, see them in a more positive light and know it just might be ok to have two teen girls in the house.”

**Parent**  
Teen Girls Unfiltered webinar

# The Man Cave



# 23,403

Boys and young men engaged in 2025 – the largest year in the organisation's history

221

Schools reached through programs

864

Teachers reached

100,000

Boys reached through programs delivered over the last 10 years

## Who are they?

The Man Cave believes that when boys understand themselves, the world works better for everyone. Through school workshops, long-form programs and educator training, they create spaces where teenage boys can build emotional intelligence, healthier identities and stronger relationships – the foundations of gender equality from the other side.

## Key initiative

In 2025, M-POWER supported The Man Cave to expand its school workshop programs, educator professional development and long-form interventions—including Caveboy X, a 12-week hybrid program where boys work through identity, relationships and consent in depth.

New workshop formats were delivered across both primary and secondary schools, reaching students, teachers and parents.

“I am motivated to grow and change to be a healthier person.”

### Participant

The Man Cave workshop pre/post survey

“There's definitely been a decline in school refusal and far more engagement in the classroom – because now they're less concerned about the issues they're harbouring inside and whether they stick out to their peers.”

### Educator

The Man Cave

# Australians Investing



AUSTRALIANS INVESTING IN WOMEN

## GENDER EQUALITY: OUR URGENT UNFINISHED PROJECT

### AMPLIFY KIT

Gender equality has tangible benefits for individuals of every gender, our society and economy. It is an urgent and unfinished project that needs investment.

# in Women

# 88,538

People reached through advocacy channels in 2025

63%

Of survey respondents said AllW has influenced their giving

18%

Year-on-year growth in influence among the corporate sector

5.6 FTE

Team growth from 2.8 – driven by the stability of multi-year funding provided by M-POWER

### Who are they?

Australians Investing in Women (AllW) works to grow – and improve – the quality of philanthropic and corporate investment in gender equality across Australia. As a convener, advocate and evidence-builder, they equip funders and investors to give more strategically, making the case for gender-wise giving and showing what it looks like in practice. Their work operates at a systems level: changing how money flows, so more of it reaches the people and causes that need it most.

“AllW serves as an important connective tissue and an enabler of so many domains of society that need to work together to foster gender equality – and that work is often unsung and underestimated.”

**The Governor-General**  
AllW's 15-year anniversary event

### Key initiative

In 2025, M-POWER supported AllW to deliver its landmark State of Gender-wise Giving survey – the sector's primary evidence base for understanding where investment is going, and where the gaps remain. Funding also supported the Amplify Kit, a new resource helping funders engage more strategically with gender equality. And through a collaboration with Per Capita, AllW brought together funders, investors and partners to drive cross-sector action on gender-wise housing outcomes across Australia.



# Global Sisters



Chapter 3: Partner stories

# 2,941

Women reached in 2025 –  
the biggest year in the  
organisation's history

## Who are they?

Global Sisters supports women facing barriers to employment – including single mothers, women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and those experiencing disadvantage – to build sustainable livelihoods through self-employment and enterprise. Through mentoring, business education and a community of support, they help women move from economic vulnerability to financial independence, on their own terms.

## Key initiative

In 2025, M-POWER opened new doors for Global Sisters – expanding what they could do and who they could reach. Highlights included a GLO Youth Entrepreneurship workshop in Armidale, the launch of Angie's Remedii products at MECCA's Melbourne flagship store and a Global Sisters photoshoot at MECCA HQ. We also delivered leadership sessions – including an AI masterclass – that Global Sisters described as fundamentally shifting how their organisation operates.

“At MECCA M-POWER, we believe financial independence is transformative. Seeing Remedii on shelf at Bourke Street Apothecary is more than a commercial milestone – it's a powerful example of what's possible when women are given practical support, long-term backing and the opportunity to scale.”

**Sarah Bailey**  
Head of MECCA M-POWER

# Missing Perspectives



**“We had a vision for what women's sports media could be. MECCA had the conviction to back it before it was proven. That partnership is what got Momentum off the ground — and what it's become since is proof that the audience was always there, waiting.”**

**Phoebe Saintilan-Stocks**  
Founder, Missing Perspectives

## Who are they?

Missing Perspectives is a women-led media company on a mission to make women's voices impossible to ignore. Through journalism, podcasts and digital storytelling, they platform female founders, athletes, creators and cultural leaders – the women who shape culture but rarely make the front page. Their flagship podcast, Momentum, is dedicated exclusively to women's sport. In 2025 it became the number one women's sports podcast in Australia on Spotify.

## Key initiative

M-POWER backed the very first season of Momentum and that early investment was catalytic. It gave Missing Perspectives the runway to test, refine and build a product that has since expanded to television distribution via BINGE and Fox Sports.

- Over 5 million people reached per month across social and web platforms in 2025.
- Momentum surpassed 150,000 downloads in its first funded season.
- Nearly one million people reached across podcast, social and broadcast platforms to date.
- Angel investment round progressed and new brand partners attracted – building Momentum into a sustainable product beyond the initial funding period.

# Bridge It



# 16

Young people housed in Bridge It's Cocoon = full capacity

## Cocoon 2

Secured under a 20-year lease at \$1 per year

## 83%

Of Cocoon residents transitioned into safe, sustainable housing in the community

### Who are they?

Bridge It runs the Cocoon – safe, supported housing for young women and LGBTQIA+ people in Melbourne who have experienced homelessness or domestic violence. More than just a roof, the Cocoon is a community: a place where young people can rebuild their sense of self, find belonging and start mapping a future on their own terms. They call their past residents "butterflies" – young people who have moved through and moved forward.

### Key initiative

In 2025, M-POWER's funding gave Bridge It's leadership team the time and space to think beyond the day-to-day – and the results were significant. Bridge It secured a second building, Cocoon 2, under a 20-year lease at \$1 per year. The leadership team built extensive pro bono partnerships with the aim of completing a \$1 million renovation for less than \$100,000. M-POWER's increased funding this year enabled Bridge It to build its first dedicated leadership team – a critical step toward their goal of 4–5 Cocoons by 2030.

MECCA team members also visited the Cocoon during the year to host a pamper session for residents – for many, their first. A few shared it was the first time they had felt truly special and seen.

"It's the best thing ever – I have never felt more at home."

#### On belonging

"I come home to laughter and people who I can call family."

#### On community

"Having a stable place to live means I get to focus on education and work."

#### On independence

"I want to make a change in the system."

#### On the future

# More ways we made the world over in 2025



## CAMFED

99% of CAMFED alumnae in Zambia and 91% in Zimbabwe are actively supporting other children in their communities – each one paying forward to at least three more (2024 data).

## Stella

14 free Stella Days Out delivered across Australia in 2025 – regional and metro – reaching 40,000 readers, audiences and writers.

## Karrkad Kanjdji Trust

Women now make up 46% of the Warddeken ranger workforce and 42% at Mimal – across both programs, First Nations women are leading land management on Country.

## IWDA

21,053 women and girls reached through IWDA's 22 partner organisations across the Asia-Pacific in 2025.

## Skyline Education Foundation

85 students supported in 2025 – first-generation students and young women from low socioeconomic backgrounds accessing VCE support and post-school pathways.

## ActionAid Australia

11,000 women across 5 islands in Vanuatu supported to prepare for and respond to disasters and climate change in 2025 – and in 2024, Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITTT) launched as a national women's federation.



CAMFED alumni. Photo courtesy of CAMFED

## Wellsprings for Women

880 women supported across education, family violence, settlement and community programs in 2025. M-POWER also invested in the Afghan Girls Program, funding a volunteer program coordinator to support volunteers in Australia to teach English to high school-aged girls in Afghanistan who are now prevented from attending school. The program is also designed to foster friendships and connection.

## First Australians Capital

5 First Nations women founders supported through intensive 1-on-1 capacity building in 2025 – strengthening financial systems, governance and growth strategy. One founder – a women-led native foods manufacturer – scaled from small-batch production into wholesale retail with support from structured mentoring and operational planning.

## the dinner party – Sanskruti Banerjee

a group of beautiful women enter the dinner party;  
each a tapestry of heritage – woven with legacy  
in a multicultural world, where people’s hearts and homes  
are oftentimes, in more than one place  
beauty is the spreading of branches in these new places  
whilst remaining steady in your roots

a grove of hearts, voices scattered in constellations  
murmuring minds. the teacups are filled to their brims  
with stories whose inked footprints, lie in chapters  
bound by the threads of culture

amidst the tall paraffin candles, intricate tablecloths  
and glowing hues of gold – if you look closely every  
seat is dressed in a different story

one woman shares her pepeha,  
pois attached at the hip, tā moko ever present,  
pounamu adorning her neck, her ancestors echoing  
gracefully in every move she makes  
another arrives in a baby blue and white hanbok,  
delicately pouring a carefully brewed tangerine tea,  
sourced from Jeju Island  
radiant skin hailing from the land of sun and snow

bright colours, bold jewellery and vibrance  
embellish another guest – she speaks of festivities,  
food and dance back home during *el Día de los Muertos*  
and her childhood, playing football in the alleys of Barcelona  
a certain poise and wit fill the air of the woman next to her,  
the sleeves of her soft orange hanfu flow delicately, a  
direct mirror to the sunsets she witnessed amidst the  
modern metropolis of Guangzhou

as more guests trickle in, their stories cascading in trails  
behind them, a twinkle of culture in their outfits or mannerisms –

the host announces a cheers,  
she hails from the land of spice and silk,  
patterns of rich heritage knitted into the fabrics of her  
salwar kameez, jhumkas in her ears and kajal decorating her waterline

there is something cataclysmic in the realisation  
that our strength, our beauty – it lies in the reclamation  
of *who we are* – and our cultures serve as the epicentres  
upon which we walk, create and build  
in a world that is so divided, by casting webs in our communities  
we bridge fragments, carrying the past forward and carving space  
for future generations – rupture transforms into rhythm in cracks  
the world tries to silence  
*you belong and you are beautiful,*  
let your culture serve as a compass, a looking glass into your ambitions

we remember that belonging and beauty  
are not found, but made –  
woven gently, like kinship, around shared tables  
and so with a newfound sense of purpose, after the sharing  
of foods and teas and conversation, hearts full  
the group of beautiful women  
leave the dinner party



### Sanskruti Banerjee

A YWCA's Y25 Alumni - Sanskruti is a poet, dancer, journalist and changemaker. She fuses activism with artistry to advocate in her communities. Sanskruti's poem – the dinner party – was contributed to the MECCA Archive in 2025. It imagines a dinner party where guests from many cultures gather to celebrate beauty in their own unique ways.

We can't wait to share  
what's next in 2026.  
Together, let's make  
the world over!

**MECCA M-POWER**

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