

**THE BIG
ISSUE**

Social Impact Project

University Proposal



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Frequently Asked Questions

For answers to some of the most commonly asked questions, please click here:

go.thebigissue.org.au/FAQ

Become a participating university in The Big Issue's Social Impact Project 2026.

Register your interest by February 2026

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Welcome to the Social Impact Project 2026

For 29 years The Big Issue has supported more than 7500 Australians experiencing homelessness and disadvantage to make positive changes in their lives. While we are best known for *The Big Issue* magazine, we are also proud of our highly-regarded education programs which have given people on the margins an opportunity to share their stories of lived experience and earn a meaningful income.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to The Big Issue's university education program, the Social Impact Project. In this program students are challenged to develop a concept and plan for a project or business that will create positive social or environmental change. Students participating in the Social Impact Project will gain real-life experience in developing their concept into a workable business or project, guided with exclusive resources, advice and feedback from a senior staff member at The Big Issue. Students will receive valuable insights into developing and running a social enterprise and gain employability skills such as problem solving, leadership and self-motivation.

Students will also have the opportunity to hear from a guest speaker who has experienced homelessness and disadvantage, allowing them to consider the impacts of social enterprise from a participant's point of view, while also creating valuable work for people on the margins.

This proposal provides more detail about the opportunity and what universities and students gain by participating. If you would like to discuss how the Social Impact Project might work at your university, please don't hesitate to contact our Social Impact Project team.

We look forward to working together to develop our next generation of social entrepreneurs.

With warm regards,

Steven Persson

Chief Executive Officer

The Big Issue and Homes for Homes



Outline of resources

The Big Issue's Social Impact Project asks students to develop a concept and business plan to address a community need. The Big Issue provides the following resources to support students' learning:

Social Impact Project podcast series

Exclusive access to interviews with social enterprise practitioners giving behind the scenes insights to The Big Issue's enterprises and programs.

Project Management Support

- A tailored calendar of events and implementation plan to suit your university's delivery model
- Regular communications from The Big Issue for support

Student Learning Resources

Written resources to help guide students through the process of developing their idea.

Professional Development

Advice to students on sharing their Social Impact Project experience on their CV and in job interviews.

Feedback from The Big Issue

Personalised feedback sessions and/or judging from a senior staff member at The Big Issue.

Introductory online lecture

Lecture focus can be either:

- Introduction to Business Planning *or*
- Introduction to Disadvantage

Guest Speaker panel

Participants in The Big Issue's enterprises share their lived experience of disadvantage and employment in a social enterprise.

Delivery models

The Big Issue's team will work with your university to tailor the delivery model that best complements your existing offerings. The Social Impact Project is flexible and can be adapted to your requirements. Some of the options include, but are not limited to:

- Can be offered at any time of the year, according to your university's schedule
- Allows for students to work in multidisciplinary teams
- Can be integrated into coursework or offered as a co-curricular option
- Can be built into existing social enterprise offerings at your university
- Can be run as an internal university competition
- Can be offered as part of an industry consulting project or Work Integrated Learning experience



Investment

Participation costs for the Social Impact Project 2026 are outlined as follows:

Package inclusions

Most suitable to the Social Impact Project being integrated into one subject or being offered in one semester.

Includes:

- Project management support
- Tailored calendar for your university
- Access to exclusive podcast series
- One introductory lecture
- One guest speaker panel
- All student learning and professional development resources
- Up to 8 hours of personalised feedback and/or judging from a Big Issue senior staff member (maximum 10 student groups)
- Participation certificate for each student
- Social Impact Report for your university

Investment: \$5800 + GST



Photo credit: Mark Avellino

Optional additions

- Additional feedback from The Big Issue
- Additional guest speaker panel
- Additional lecture
- Offering the Social Impact Project to a second cohort of students
- On-campus visit*

* Pending location and availability

Each option incurs an additional fee. Please talk to us about adding any of the above options to your package, and we will provide you with a tailored quote.

Background

The Big Issue's education programs have been operating since 2009. Beginning with workshops for secondary schools about homelessness and disadvantage, demand quickly grew and we expanded our reach to speak to primary, tertiary and corporate audiences.

As one of Australia's longest-standing social enterprises, The Big Issue responds to the demand for social enterprise education by drawing on a wealth of knowledge and experience. Between 2012 and 2020, The Big Issue ran The Big Idea: a national social enterprise immersion and competition for university students. Students were challenged to develop a concept and business plan for a new social enterprise and present their ideas to a panel of judges. During this period, students from 22 universities participated, with some going on to explore their ideas further and become change-makers in the non-profit space.

In 2021 we built on our experience delivering social enterprise programs and launched a new university program, the Social Impact Project. The flexibility of the Social Impact Project allows it to be implemented in a way that suits the university's timetable and complements existing offerings. The following universities have taken part in our program:



Billy Blue
College of Design



Spotlight on Torrens University



Billy Blue
College of Design



In 2022, teams from Torrens University's design school participated in the Social Impact Project. One team's idea is described below.

The idea:

The team created “Tekio” – a cross-compensation social enterprise that sells on-trend clothing, and uses the profits to fund free tailoring services for those living with limb differences, disabilities, and sensory needs. Tekio aims to bridge the gap between disability and mainstream fashion by including people experiencing disability, who are often unrepresented in the fashion industry, with the mission of bridging the gap between fashion and disability, so all individuals can express themselves through their own personal sense of style.

The student experience:

“By participating in the Social Impact Project, we gained insight into forward thinking ways of using design to foster a better future. This pushed our design thinking beyond what we believed we were capable of, and discovered how we can play a valuable part in creating a more inclusive society in our future careers.

“It was interesting to learn about the positive impact companies and major corporations could have in the world, if they put people and the planet first. Knowing that our hard work has paid off and has been appreciated not only by our lecturers, but also The Big Issue, is incredible.”

The academic experience:

“The Big Issue Social Impact Project Challenge is a great learning experience for students. Not only do they gain a deeper understanding of social enterprise, but they also develop valuable employability skills.

“The students have built on their creative problem-solving and design thinking expertise they’ve learnt in other subjects, to create and pitch a commercially viable solution.

Not only have they gleaned real-life insights from a successful and well-known social enterprise like The Big Issue, but they’ve also gained skills that give them the edge over other graduates.”

Credit: Hannah Cooper, Tehgan Brink & Rebecca Bartlett



Registrations for the Social Impact Project 2026 are now open.

Universities are encouraged to register their interest by February 2026, as places are limited.

To register your interest for participating in The Big Issue Social Impact Project 2026 or to discuss any other details of this proposal, please contact us.

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