

Introducing The Together Plan Global Communities United

November 2021

Our Mission

The Together Plan's mission is the revival of communities in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. With a current focus on Belarus, we help communities discover what can be achieved collectively and, through a range of pioneering year-round projects spanning Holocaust education, publishing, Archive services, youth work and the provision of humanitarian aid, we work alongside community members to develop skills and knowledge while providing the necessary training to build a sustainable future.

The Together Plan draws its inspiration for projects around three central pillars - 'past', 'present' and 'future' and each project drives a central belief which can be distilled into one line ...

Jewish people, wherever they are, are not alone.

Background

Located between Poland to the west and Russia to the east, Belarus is a young country which only became independent of the Soviet Union as recently as 1991. During seventy years of Soviet rule, the state exercised total control over, and intrusion into, every aspect of an individual's life. This divided people, led to widespread mistrust, fear and the destruction of community cohesion.

In Belarus, even to this day, there is no Holocaust education, and little is known about the 800,000 Belarusian Jews who perished during WWII. This is tragic and vital history that was consumed into the machine of ongoing War and, later, the communist narrative. There remains an incredible depth of history in Belarus, a past reaching back as far as the 14th Century, which reaches the heart of a global Jewish Diaspora, which was either destroyed or all but left to disappear forever.

Given the many years of devastation, it stands to reason that in western Holocaust education programmes, Belarus is barely mentioned in the curriculum, despite being such an important part of the Holocaust story.

Belarus' geography made it the gateway for the German invasion across Eastern Europe, and the only plan the Nazis had was ghettoization and eradication. It was a Holocaust by bullets. Sadly, the shadow of these dark times still looms over fragile Jewish community life today.

Yet Belarus, before the 20th Century, while marred with the challenges of persecution and pogroms for its Jews, was also a place of strong communities with rich, vibrant and modern cultural interests; art, music, food, language, agriculture and architecture. Indeed, Australia has a solid history of Jews contributing to its Arts - with the first Australian theatre being built by London born Barnett Levey (1798-1837), a merchant and theatre director, and early Jewish composer Isaac Nathan, is described to this day as the "father of Australian music".

This is why The Together Plan wanted to drive change in and for Belarus. As a country with one of the most sustained, tragic histories of the world for its Jewish people, behind the curtain remains a landscape that reflects every one of us today - **wherever we are in the world.**

Reaching out to Australia

The Together Plan has fought through adversity these last months and we are taking this opportunity, with hope finally on the horizon, to reach out to more communities globally, share news about the amazing progress of our work, seek stories to enrich our growing (and completely unique!) archive and, crucially, so we can provide answers to those who have questions about their family's past.

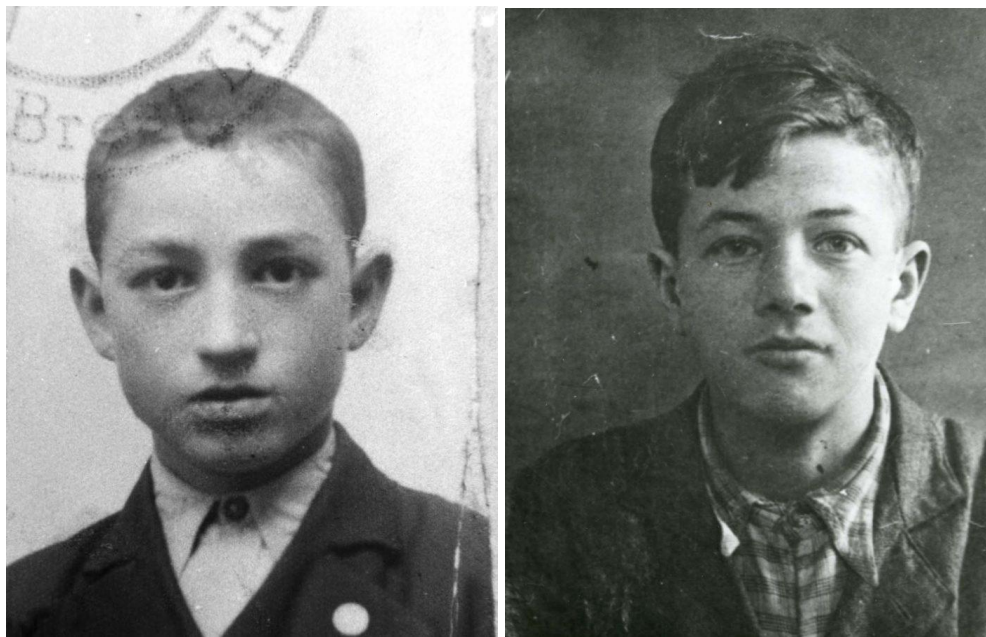
Our communities are dispersed as a result of the oldest form of hatred. After the influx of some Jews to Australia after WWI, another stream of Jews entered the country when Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933; that stream soon became a flood taking advantage of visas on offer for "victims of oppression". While we live our lives today, raise families and contribute to the countries in which we live, we are always reminded of our roots, what unites us and what constitutes our identity as Jewish people.

Sadly, across the world, we are seeing an upsurge in antisemitism; an increasing number of incidents affecting people in all age groups. By coming together and sharing knowledge, filling in the blanks that remain from lives left behind in pre-War and War time Eastern Europe, we are collectively building a picture of what Jewish communities stand for, have endured and are capable of. Knowing the past is how we can build a better future. We are, as in our Charity's name, better Together.

Our projects, which we are so excited to roll out to communities in Australia, speak for themselves. We bring you this overview in sincere hope of this being a start of a new journey with you all ...

Preserving the Past

The Making History Together Project



Josef Lewinski and Aria Averbach – b.1925. Child Victims of The Brest Ghetto.

This year, The Together Plan has been rolling out its flagship international Holocaust Education project. In partnership with UK Charity, **Jewish Child's Day**, The Making History Together Programme for Bar and Bat Mitzvah aged children in the UK (Year 7 and 8) and, in parallel, to young people in Minsk, Belarus. In this first year, we invited 20 children in the UK to take part through an open application process which saw such significant levels of interest, a waiting list is now filling up for next year's project!

This new 'Making History Together' programme is so called as we are literally making history - through the eyes of both Jewish and non-Jewish children across borders. This is the first time two organisations in the UK have collaborated in an informal and international educational project like this and the programme we have built is entirely unique to anything else in existence.

We have also been delighted to be working alongside **The Jewish Chronicle** as official media partner for the project, the oldest continuously published Jewish newspaper in the world. This has meant that throughout the project's journey, there has been huge opportunity for editorial, advertorial, social media engagement and vital narrative increasing the impact of key outcomes and fixing the project itself as an obvious opportunity for all Bar and Bat mitzvah aged children and their families going forward.

The Making History Together project has done as much for young minds in Belarus as it has for children in the UK, as together they have made discoveries about history that will change and inspire their lives forever.

With participation from across the world featuring Ambassador Jacky Perkins, the UK Ambassador to Belarus and Ambassador Maxim Yermalovich, the Belarus Ambassador to the UK and headlined with inspiring and tragic testimony from Minsk Ghetto survivor Frida Reizman, The Making History Together Project is now being extended to a special pop up exhibition that will tour across the UK and Belarus, populated with key facts alongside letters from participating children.

The Together Plan registered charity number 1154167 · Jewish Child's Day registered charity number 209266

Let's Make History Together

The Together Plan and Jewish Child's Day are inviting Jewish children in year seven to take a journey of discovery and become History Makers.

The Together Plan charity works with Jewish communities in Belarus, helping people return to Jewish life. The powerful story of the Soviet Jews is immensely important - yet little spoken of. With the support of the charity Jewish Child's Day, 'Making History Together' a unique and exciting programme, has been created for young people to help them explore this fascinating strand of our past.

In parallel to the English-speaking children, Making History Together will also be run in Belarus, for children who are not Jewish. There is no Holocaust education in the Belarusian official curriculum, so few Belarusian youth have any idea about the 800,000 Jews who perished in Belarus during the Second World War, or as it is called in Belarus "The Great Patriotic War."

With every new generation, history becomes more and more distant, but in this case, it has yet to be learnt.

The lives of the Jewish people in Western Europe during the Second World War have been well documented in museums, education programmes, memorials, books and films, but this is only part of the story. Making History Together has been designed for children in year seven, having bar or



Leo Levine, the Making History Together project coordinator

batmitzvah in year eight. They will receive never-before-seen historical documents about children their own age, who were prisoners in the Brest ghetto, to give those children a voice of their own. The programme will be a fusion of Holocaust education (to inform and educate and sensitively deliver the narrative) and informal Jewish education which will enable participants to explore the relevance to their own lives, so they leave each session feeling challenged, positive, resilient and inspired.

Programme participants will receive exciting monthly packs by post with information and activities to prepare them for each of the six, monthly interactive, Zoom sessions. At the end of the programme, all participants, including those in Belarus, will be asked to write a short piece sharing what they've learnt and asking them how relevant this history is and why it matters. These pieces of writing will be included in a travelling exhibition in Russian and English.

Leo Levine, the Making History Together project coordinator, has strong connections to Belarus. His mother was born in Brest and his grandparents still live there. His grandfather's book of stunning pencil illustrations depict life in the city, as witnessed by himself and others, between 1930 and 1960. Leo helped to translate the text - he is a fluent Russian speaker who has been to Belarus with The Together Plan on several occasions. He is a Masters graduate of



Illustration by Leo's grandfather Vladimir Gubenko in his book 'Brest of My Memory'. The image is of Jewish prisoners in Brest, Poland in 1941, which is today Belarus.

history and his dissertation focused on how the Second World War was taught during and after the Soviet period.

Says Leo: "We wanted to make this programme unique and allow the children to really get the best out of themselves. Through an informative and exciting journey, together with their Belarusian counterparts, participants will be shining a light on a piece of history which few people know about - and believe me when I say it is such important history."

"As part of the seven-month interactive virtual programme, participants will receive special monthly packs full of ideas, quizzes,

information and tools opening their eyes to Jewish history, values and traditions and what it means to be part of a Jewish community while exploring their own identity.

"Yes we will talk about what happened to Jewish people between 1941 and 1944, but it will be sensitively done and totally age-appropriate. It will be a journey of self-exploration through history and it is going to be amazing. I really can't wait."

To learn more about the programme and fill in an application go to www.togetherplan/makinghistory

The first Jewish Chronicle article featuring Leo Levine, The Making History Together project Coordinator. Leo has been a Youth for Youth leader and long-time volunteer with The Together Plan. As we invest in our young people, they become the leaders of today.

With support we are seeking, it is our ambition to capture the template of The Making History Together Project and coordinate the initiative for children in Australia. Their family backgrounds are as interwoven with the history of Belarus as their peers in the UK and, now we have seen such success with year one, we are confident in delivering an incredible learning opportunity for Australian children going forward.



Making History Together
be a changemaker!

a unique, global, virtual programme
discovering hidden history
designed for years 7 & 8

innovative & interactive 7-month
Holocaust education programme

discover what happened to the Jews of Belarus

monthly packs with hidden history including
never before seen archive records delivered to
your door!

be a part of a groundbreaking exhibition
giving the past a presence

Jan 21st 2022 enrollment deadline

Jan 27th 2022 Holocaust Memorial Day
programme launch

Feb - Jul 2022 monthly programmes

Only 20
Places
Available!

scan here
to learn more

the together plan
the Jewish Child's Day
JC
British Embassy
Warsaw

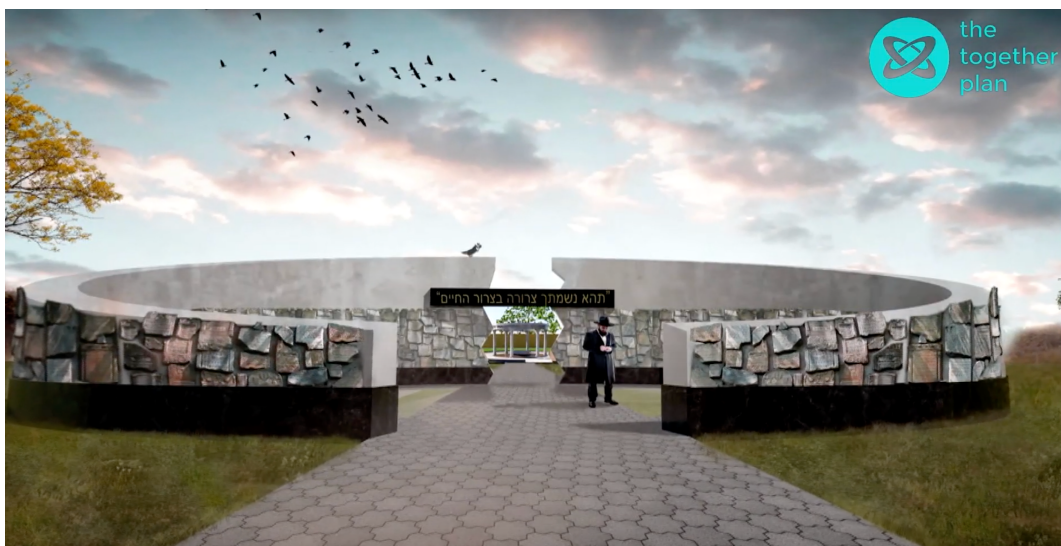
The Brest Headstones Project

The Brest-Litovsk Jewish Cemetery provided the final resting place for more than 30,000 over two centuries, including renowned rabbis and talmudic sages. During their occupation of Belarus, the Nazis tried to destroy the cemetery by selling off headstones; reducing them to mere building material. It remains barely fathomable that to this day, these incredibly emotive Jewish headstones had been left in tatters and passed from pillar to post with no resolution to their story.

We could not be more delighted that after many months of diplomacy and discussion, The Together Plan was recently able to secure agreement with the Brest Municipality so next steps can be taken with confidence and finality.



Since we came to learn it back in 2013, we knew the full story of the Brest-Litovsk cemetery was important, and we have never wavered from our calling to legitimately plan for an ambitious, globally relevant memorial in a key location. We can now see to it that a safe, lasting and fitting memorial is finally achieved after so many promises of the past have been made and broken. We have also stayed true to our ethos throughout the process, by engaging the local Jewish community, speaking to them about what they want to see as a reflection of their past, asking how they would want to engage with a memorial on this scale and how this connects to their lives today. Suffice to say, the people, what this project is all about, are playing an active role right alongside us and significant work has already begun on weighing, measuring, translating and recording every piece of headstone so no ounce of this human history, OUR history, will be forgotten again.



Render of a suggested design in a park area to be created on the site. Presented by Nikolay Vlasyk, Chief Architect of Belarus in this video <https://thetogetherplan.com/heritage/brest-headstones/> this sanctuary for the headstones will be supplemented by historical information contextualising the story of the Jews and communities that have been lost.

Supporting People Today Aid Together

The Together Plan's established 'Aid Together' project sees the collection, sorting, packing and transportation of approximately 12 tonnes of humanitarian aid and resources each year to communities across Belarus. Beneficiaries include individuals and families in extreme financial difficulty, the elderly and those with disabilities; all eligible by local law to receive aid from overseas. Many of these people exist on a meagre income, even if they are in work. For single parents or families with many children, among other marginalised groups, this extra support is a lifeline and aid to some of these regions would be entirely absent if it were not for our work.

The Aid Together project functions as a community building tool. Recipients are encouraged to co-ordinate the distribution of aid themselves, thereby giving some of their time back to their communities and building connections to encourage morale and self-help skills. Aid Together allows community members in Belarus to feel empowered and valued.



Each year, our dedicated team of volunteers in London collect, sort and pack mountains of donations; items coming from individuals and a variety of other sources including synagogues, community centres and Jewish and non-Jewish schools, comprising clothes, shoes, toys, stationery, computers, kitchen equipment and educational resources. Also, crucial when it comes to building community connection and faith, Judaica of all kinds is transported enabling the practice of Judaism and community infrastructure to strengthen and blossom – vital in these times of such devastation, loss and isolation.

The Together Plan's Aid Together project has not been deterred by Covid. In spite of the many challenges, we successfully delivered crucial aid to the Country in autumn 2020 and, as is happening RIGHT NOW, through Aid Together 2021!! Fundraising is underway to help us with ongoing, significant storage costs, lorry hire fees, boxes/ packing materials and even PPE, such are the times, to ensure we live up to our mission for 2022 and beyond.

Securing the Future

The Jewish Cultural Heritage Route

With all our work collectively, from mapping personal histories, creating lasting memorial, providing Holocaust education globally and supporting communities on the ground, everything leads to an end goal where the people of Belarus take control of their history, thereby paving their way to a better future for us all.

In March 2019, The Together Plan became a member of the AEPJ the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage, which supports the preservation, appreciation and promotion of Jewish culture and Jewish heritage in Europe, notably achieved through its two leading programmes – the **European Days of Jewish Culture** and the **European Routes of Jewish Heritage**.

Through our work over the last ten years, we have found just as Jewish people in the Diaspora want to seek connection to their Belarus ancestry, Jewish people in Belarus have an equal level of yearning to talk about their heritage and identity. In association with the AEPJ, as a part of their Jewish Routes Programme, we are building a formal Route through Belarus with the local Jewish and wider non-Jewish communities at the very heart; sign posting key sites across the nation to ground this increased energy from Jews all over the world. The AEPJ Jewish Routes Programme is the coordination of all European Routes of Jewish Heritage; which is one of the 40 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

The route itself is founded upon a community-building project from The Together Plan, supporting the revival of Jewish community life, benefitting wider civil society, and attracting interest from outside of Belarus. Jewish communities, as well as representatives from the wider non-Jewish community, will be involved in researching and building the route which will highlight sites of cultural interest while giving communities ownership of their local Jewish heritage, and will give visitors, tourists and diaspora Jewish communities an opportunity to find a way back to their ancestral homes. The route will show visitors that there is Jewish life in Belarus; additionally, one of its key aims is to develop responsible Jewish heritage tourism, credibly researched and approved.

The Jewish Route through Belarus will develop in phases as the project grows. Initially, the Route will be represented in Brest, in the south of the country on the border with Poland; Slutsk; Minsk; Novogrudok; and Polotsk and Vitebsk in the north of the country. These centres are now featuring in phase one of this project, as The Together Plan has a presence in these areas with community representation who will play a role in developing the route at a local level.



Alongside the development of our Jewish Cultural Heritage Route, recognising that history comes to life through human stories, we have launched a new interface to collect stories from everyone The Together Plan encounters. We invite everyone to contribute their personal family story to our new 'Story Bank' wherever they are in the world. We can't wait to hear your stories.

Many people who once lived on the territory that is modern day Belarus, were forced to leave in search of a better life – escaping pogroms, rampant antisemitism, war and communism. These people continue to exist in our families, memoirs, photographs and across the globe. We are welcoming everyone to help us build a richer, deeper and more informed history of Jewish Belarus for the Route. All anyone needs to do is complete the form on our website, which will directly feed the Story Bank, enhancing the depth and sincerity of the knowledge we gradually amass.

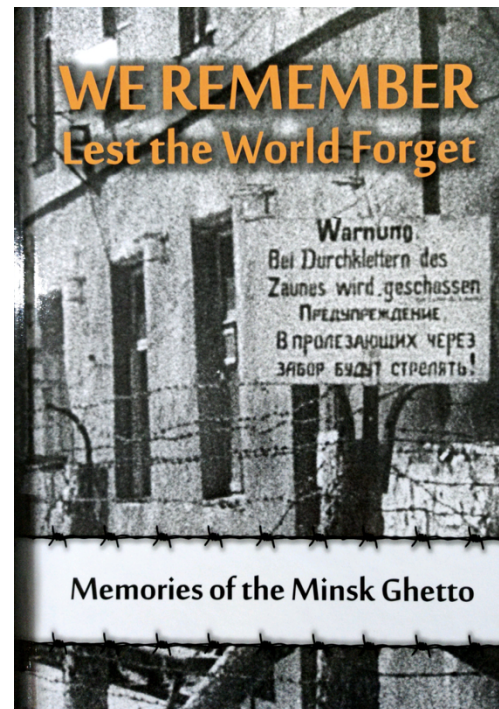
The landmark Heritage Route, and all its key components, is fixed as a fundraising priority as we move further into planning.

Publishing

While travelling on foot through the country or accessing stories via resources online, education initiatives or events, books are of course another major component of building a future based on knowledge. And with one powerful book 'We Remember, Lest the World Forget' –, which is available to purchase - we are brimming with confidence about the two further books we are currently translating - both uncovering and sharing vital testimony from survivors of the Minsk Ghetto.

Publishing holds a real key for our work to expand globally.

The backstory to the first publication is being shared [here](#).



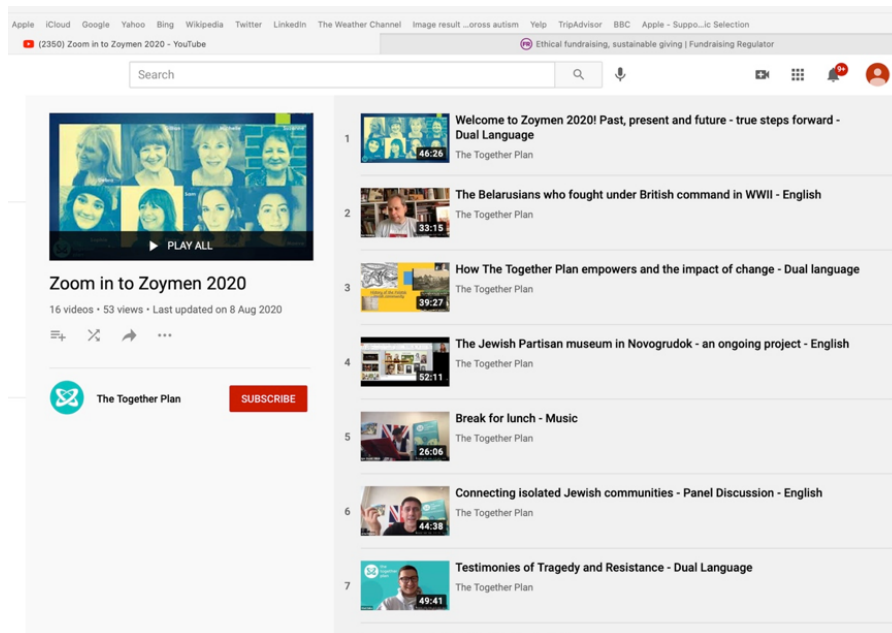
Youth for Youth

Youth for Youth, an established programme from The Together Plan, is about youth helping youth believe in themselves through responsibility and accountability. This peer driven membership programme develops leadership and success skills in a cross-section of young people around the world, empowering them to create solutions and make a difference in their places of study, communities and beyond!

Youth for Youth is all about social activism, and how better than through drawing people together in spaces (virtually and otherwise) to discuss key topics such as mental health, identity, history and equality. Members also gather, COVID allowing, each Summer in Belarus to share skills, deliver workshops, volunteer and engage with communities across the country.

It is as a direct result of years working on the ground, building trust and practical connections across Belarus and, increasingly, in other parts of the world, that Youth for Youth was able to swiftly and successfully move their events on-line through 2020 and this year.

A prime example of their efforts is 'Zoymen 2020', a dual language (English/ Russian) conference that featured a myriad of incredible guest speakers, exemplifying real bravery and self-belief on the part of Youth for Youth members. Past events are presented on The Together Plan's YouTube Channel and website via this [link](#).



Zoymen 2020 demonstrated what can be achieved in the face of adversity, and it is this successful experience with feedback from hundreds of people which has informed the entirely online programme to continue with Zoymen 2021/2022!

Collaborating with outstanding organisations across the world, and with sessions presented at times of the day to engage people far and wide, we are thrilled to share these events with your community as we broaden our connections in Australia.

As the impact of the pandemic continues, the Youth for Youth model has evolved out of not just necessity, but dynamism and sheer will. Youth for Youth welcomes new members and offers a fantastic opportunity to engage and support young people all over the world.



Conclusion

While we look forward with faith that life will start to resemble 'normal' in the months ahead, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on The Together Plan, as for so many organisations across the world, will be felt for years to come. To successfully secure support from and engagement with communities in Australia would help propel our impact to even greater levels of success.

There are approximately 113,200 Jews living in Australia today, out of a total population of nearly 25 million - with major communities living in Melbourne and Sydney, but also growing communities in Perth, Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Adelaide. How wonderful it would be to galvanise our energies and track **Australian family stories** back by generations, connect to young adults through **Youth for Youth**, engage Australian children in our unique brand of **Holocaust education**, share our **publications** and move forward together!

If there is one positive to emerge from the experience of these last months, perhaps it is that we have all been reminded of our obligations to one another, and that only through cooperation, collaboration and togetherness can we truly overcome challenges in society.

We look forward to being in touch and, in the meantime, please come and see us via our [website](#) for a wealth of ways to find out more and be part of something truly special.

THANK YOU AUSTRALIA