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“I couldn't afford to pay rent and started couch surfing and then slept on the floor of the cafe,” he told news.com.au. “At the time I didn’t think too much of it as I was a battling entrepreneur. Later on, as I was reflecting on the situation I developed a strong passion for youth homelessness, how people ended up in that situation and what support was available.”

Luckily for Mr Green, he managed to sell the cafe and used the proceeds to pay off his debts. In thinking about his next venture, he started looking into starting a not-for-profit or becoming a social worker.

“But that wasn’t in my personality,” he said. “I’d always been an entrepreneur. So I picked up this book by Richard Branson called Screw Business As Usual which talked about using business as a force for good.

“I hadn’t thought about the two — business and social enterprise — together until then.”

From that revelation, Mr Green was accepted into an incubator program which helped him form his concept for One Night Stand, a sleepwear brand that seeks to alleviate youth homelessness. After months of testing, One Night Stand was officially launched with an experiential stunt and crowd-funding campaign through ING Direct’s Dreamstarter program. Mr Green stood on a Melbourne CBD street inside a Perspex box for 24-hours to raise awareness of his company and cause. It brought in $27,000 within the week from people pre-purchasing his sleepwear range. It was enough money to kick off manufacturing the first line.

Taking inspiration from US shoe brand Toms (which gives away a pair of shoes to an impoverished child with every pair sold), Mr Green’s model works on that with every purchase from One Night Stand, his company will provide a meal to homeless youth.
One Night Stand’s Jamie Green’s journey from homelessness to social entrepreneur

Working with Open Family Australia, he said it’s not just about providing a meal. “The meal is just an attraction for homeless youth, it’s about building relationships and rapport with people, and having a chat, helping them into programs and employment, and gaining skills and confidence.

“Homelessness is such a huge issue and it’s so broad. There’s no one solution for the problem. There are many different tiers and it includes not having a job and sleeping in your car. Actors and comedians often get themselves into that situation.

“Everyone’s different. Some are really keen to study and get a job. For others it’s hard because once you start running in that circle, it’s hard to break out of it. My experience led me to a different path.”

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there were 26,238 homeless people aged between 12 and 24 on Census night in 2011. But the ABS warned homeless youth are likely to be underestimated because many young people couch surfing with mates weren’t distinguishable from people who were just visiting friends for the night.

Mr Green said he has also started looking into how One Night Stand can launch an employment program for young people. In the meantime, he’s focused on getting One Night Stand stocked in a large retailer and looking to partner with someone who can help them reduce their international shipping costs with 20 per cent of the business’ sales coming from the US.

This week, the G20 Young Entrepreneurs Alliance will convene in Sydney to tackle the issue of global youth unemployment and underemployment.

While Australia has compared favourably with many countries around the world, including those which were hit by the eurozone crisis, the issue of youth unemployment has again come to the fore locally with controversial budget proposals which would see young people stripped of Centrelink benefits for six-month blocks.

The EY G20 Entrepreneurship Barometer found small businesses accounted for 69 per cent of overall employment growth in Australia.

G20 Young Entrepreneur’s Alliance spokesman Aaron McNeilly said in a statement: “I invite Australia’s leading entrepreneurs, small business owners and the organisations that support them to join us at the G20YEA Summit to instigate change and ultimately transform the lives of youth not only in Australia, but from all over the world.”

Freelancer.com chief executive Matt Barrie, a speaker at the event, said: “Entrepreneurship is the solution for young people in Australia, and globally, who are struggling to find work.”