

HOPE TO HOME, WHITTLESEA AND MELTON REPORT

Hope to Home is a unique, evidence-based model that transitions young people aged 18-25 from homelessness into private rental accommodation. Hope Street implemented successful pilot programs for Hope to Home in the following growth corridors:

- The City of Melton, Jan 2016 – Jul 2018, funded by Gandel Philanthropy
- The City of Whittlesea, Jun 2017 – Jun 2019, funded by The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Program overview

- **Aim:** To reduce the number of young people (18-25 years old) and their children at risk of homelessness in growth corridors by providing supportive access to private rental housing.
- **Approach:** To engage the support of community stakeholders, including local real estate agents, private landlords and local city councils, in providing more open and inclusive access to private rental properties for young people who are at risk of homelessness.
- **Key features:**
 - Cost effective with no capital investment required
 - Utilises existing housing stock in the communities where young people want to remain
 - Exclusively youth-focused (18-25 year olds)
 - Hope Street co-signs the rental agreement for the first six months
 - Rental subsidies for four months
 - Case management and episodic wrap-around support (including an after hours telephone support response) for up to 12 months
 - Workshops to help young people acquire tenancy life skills
 - Tailored training and employment opportunities from local business
 - Local place approach, assisting young people to remain connected to their local communities
- **Outcomes:**
 - Homelessness is prevented and diverted;
 - Young people have a rental history, enabling access to other tenancies in the future and reducing the risk of returning to the Homelessness Service System; and
 - Young people have a place they can call home that is affordable, sustainable and long-term.

“HOPE TO HOME IS UNIQUE IN THAT IT ADDRESSES HOMELESSNESS AT INDIVIDUAL, RELATIONAL, AND COMMUNITY LEVELS. AS SUCH HOPE TO HOME CAN MAKE A SUSTAINED CONTRIBUTION TO HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRALIA.”

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS DR PETER GILL AND DR DANIEL OOI.



Evaluation report launch

An external research evaluation was conducted by Victoria University, with an evaluation report released on 17 August 2018 at Victoria University's Footscray campus. The evaluation report demonstrated the model's uniqueness, impact and potential for scaling.

The evaluation launch event featured presentations by:

- Donna Bennett, CEO of Hope Street;
- Dr Michelle Ball, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Victoria University, member of the Institute for Health and Sport (iHeS) and Deputy Head of the Clinical and Community Health and Wellbeing Research Program;
- Dr Peter Gill and Dr Daniel Ooi, authors of the evaluation report, Victoria University researchers and members of the Institute for Health and Sport (iHeS); and
- Zara, one of the young participants in the Hope to Home in Whittlesea pilot program who, through a live interview with Hope Street Programs Manager (North East), Christine Fagan, recounted how the program helped her and her young family to find a safe place to call home and enabled her to continue her studies.

An article about the Hope to Home program's research evaluation findings was published in the Melton & Moorabool Star Weekly on 28 August 2018, entitled *Rental Trial Provides Hope*.

Client impact

Hope to Home accomplished its primary goal of assisting homeless young people into the private rental market. By participating in the program, young people also began developing a rental history, as well as gaining valuable knowledge and skills relating to securing and maintaining leases.

More than 75% of clients found their Hope to Home accommodation both affordable and suitable. Overwhelmingly, participants felt the accommodation was suitable for their needs and gave them access to schools, employment, services, family, and friends.

From Jan 2016 – Jun 2019 across the City of Melton and the City of Whittlesea:

- 87 people housed across 40 tenancies (55 young people and 32 dependent children);

- Average client age: 20 years;
- Average time between commencing program and being housed in private rental: 5.5 weeks;
- Client situation prior to program: most were relying on temporary, unsuitable accommodation with family and friends;
- Percentage of tenancies that lasted longer than 6 months: 75%;
- Percentage of clients who were within the homelessness service sector prior to the program: 31%;
- Range of services provided:
 - o Assistance finding houses available to rent;
 - o Assistance with inspections and the application process;
 - o Liaising with landlords;
 - o Securing properties (bond and rent);
 - o Setting up the house for the occupancy;
 - o Provision of cash brokerage and shopping vouchers which helped clients maintain their tenancies;
 - o Tenancy trainings and mentoring; and
 - o Support to pursue employment and education.

From July 2018 to June 2019, 10 young people and five dependent children in the City of Whittlesea joined Hope to Home, whilst previous clients in both City of Whittlesea and City of Melton received ongoing case management and tenancy support.

Community partnerships

Community partnerships with local real estate agents and city councils were critical to the success of the Hope to Home program. In the City of Melton, Hope Street partnered with The City of Melton and local real estate agent, Raine and Horne Melton. In the City of Whittlesea, partnerships occurred with The City of Whittlesea, Ray White Real Estate Thomastown and Barry Plant Real Estate.

Philanthropic support

In addition to Gandel Philanthropy and The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, who both provided significant grants for the Hope to Home program, a grant was also received from the Michael Martin Fund, a charitable fund account of Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation.

Into the future

The Hope to Home program is currently continuing in the City of Whittlesea thanks to funding from Hope Street and corporate partner ALH Group. Hope Street is working to secure ongoing recurrent funding of the program from the Victorian State Government in the future, and to this end a proposal has been submitted.

Report written by Abeer Alzawada, Hope to Home Whittlesea.



ARAMINTA'S STORY

Araminta*, 20, first got involved in Hope Street's Hope to Home program in 2017. She had recently moved to Melbourne from Perth, was unemployed and had been homeless for three months, couch surfing at friends' houses. She had left Perth suddenly, taking only a suitcase of clothing with her, after her relationship ended and her ex-boyfriend kicked her out of his house.

Her time of couch surfing at different friends' houses was challenging. "I felt really vulnerable and a bit lost, to be honest. I would just get comfortable and then I'd have to switch to another house. It feels very strange when people ask you for your address and you have to say 'I don't really have a home.'"

Meeting Abeer, the Hope Street Hope to Home worker, was a turning point for Araminta. With Abeer's support, Araminta enrolled in a diploma in early childhood care, completed a first aid certificate, created a CV, and then secured a job as an assistant with a before and after school care program.

With a few months' income behind her, Araminta was able to rent a room and, with the Hope to Home Moving In Kit, to purchase furniture and food. It was a good feeling. "I felt settled, like I'd finally settled down, my clothes were hung and weren't in my bags. I could do things according to my schedule not the schedule of the person whose couch I was crashing on."

Araminta is currently working as a co-ordinator at a before-and-after-school care program and has completed her Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care. When asked what she hopes to be doing five years from now, Araminta replies "Teaching, having my own classroom, leaving an impact like the impact that Abeer left on me, working with youth and giving back."

"Thank you for being there when not a lot of people were. And thank you for always giving the right advice and leaving the best impact on my life. It's nice to know that there are people out there who don't judge and are just willing to help. We all have our story."

*Name changed to protect client's identity.