

**HOPE STREET BOOST PROGRAM MAKING
A DIFFERENCE TO YOUNG PEOPLE:
PROGRESS REPORT OF THE HOPE STREET
ENHANCED YOUTH REFUGE RESPONSE
INITIATIVE STAGE 2**

JULY 2013

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Introduction

In August of last year, Hope Street was successful in attaining funding to deliver an enhanced youth response to young people in the Northern Division of Melbourne. The Enhanced Youth Refuge Initiative, Stage 2 funded by the State Government has enabled a more flexible and immediate response to be provided to young people experiencing homelessness. We have renamed this program the Boost program. The Boost program is a specialist program that provides flexible, client centred services to young people with high and complex needs.

Since going live in October 2012, the Boost program has achieved some impressive outcomes for young people including young families and the homelessness sector. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the outcomes of the Boost program and to highlight how the Boost program has had a direct impact on the lives of many young people.

Clients

In total, 105 Boost vacancies were filled (including 13 accompanying children), 92 Boost clients were closed during this period and at the time of publishing, 11 Boost support periods were still open.

Integrated Service Delivery

The Boost program is successfully integrated into the specialist youth programs operating at Hope Street, as outlined below, providing optimal client outcomes. Other benefits include the integration of knowledge, practice skills and resources, as well as enhanced relationships. This multi-disciplinary approach to case management is a key element of the Boost model of service delivery.

Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Persons Program (RDNS: HPP)

Young people presenting with untreated health and medical needs are identified by the Boost Specialist Practitioner who then connects the young person to the RDNS specialist youth nurse. The RDNS specialist youth nurse is co-located within the refuge, enabling immediate access and a youth focused health service. This has included linking young people in with a local General Practitioners (GP), specialist pre & post natal services, child and maternal health services, dental appointments & optical services. A reciprocated benefit



is that the RDNS specialist youth nurse is able to refer young people with high and complex needs requiring housing to the Boost Program for specialist support.

Homeless Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative (HYDDI)

The HYDDI program is a specialist Dual Diagnosis service funded as a part of the governments' youth focused initiatives. A key objective of HYDDI is to develop the capacity of youth homelessness practitioners and programs to better respond to the needs of young people with complex needs including dual diagnosis. The northern HYDDI initiative is located at the Hope Street refuge. The improved service delivery to young people is achieved via

- The implementation a mental health screening tool – the K10
- Secondary consultations
- Co-case management

Boost identified 6 young people with emerging mental health issues and no linkages with specialist mental health services. With co-case management the Boost Specialist Practitioners were able to provide a more targeted response to the 6 young people. Outcomes have been very effective and are described below.

| Mental Health Concern | HYDDI's role | Treatment plan |
|---|--|--|
| Anxiety | Had an appointment with the young person | Referred to a youth friendly GP in Craigieburn to assist |
| Schizophrenia | Secondary consult | Admitted to hospital |
| Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Anxiety | HYDDI conducted assessment with young person and organised to have ongoing sessions with young person. | Mental Health Assessment with GP in Broadmeadows. Referred to psychologist for treatment under the 'Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative'. |
| Depression & drug use X 3 clients | Secondary Consult | Harm minimization strategies were implemented into the BOOST Case plan. |



Youth Reconciliation Program (YRP)

The Boost Program has referred young people to the YRP. Six of the young people who were supported reported that it was their first experience of homelessness. The young people also identified that they were experiencing grief and loss issues regarding their disconnection from their family. The Client Feedback forms and the feedback received from the Boost Specialist Practitioners indicated that the YRP is a great resource. The benefit of having the YRP co-located within the refuge is that young people can immediately receive counselling around the issues and gain greater insights and understanding of their situation. In one case, a young man remained in his family home by engaging with the YRP program for personal counselling and family mediation. As a result, this young person was able to be diverted away from the homelessness system.

Youth Residential Program (Refuge)

The integration of the Boost program with the Youth Residential Program (refuge) provides a seamless and immediate youth specialist response 24/7 to young people. This is demonstrated by:

- the operation of the Boost Short Stay Bed
- the 24/7 coverage of the refuge
- highly targeted use of the Boost human resources
- Flexible access, for example co-location at access points
- flexible operating hours
 - enabling after hours off site outreach to clients
 - enabling support with private rental property inspections on weekends and in the evenings

Young people supported by Boost in the Short Stay Bed can access the Enhanced Youth Refuge Brokerage (EYRB) funds. This has enabled young people to continue with education and employment. Boost clients have used the EYRB funds for the following:

- School/TAFE fees
- School books
- Laptops
- Tutoring
- Transport tickets
- Clothes for school/interviews/employment.



Staffing

The Boost program is led by Lisa Tout as Boost Program Coordinator, and includes Jeremie Mbog Nyetam & Emily O'Dwyer as Specialist Practitioners, as well as a pool of Youth Residential Support staff.

The Boost team bring a high level of expert knowledge and competencies in the area of youth focused service delivery. The team collectively bring in excess of 30 years experience in working across youth, homelessness, child protection, youth justice, family violence, mental health, drug and alcohol and working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

Partnerships/External Service integration:

One of the key objectives of the Boost program is to enhance the Specialist Homeless Service System to improve the response to young people that are experiencing a housing crisis. This is being achieved by Boost staff being co-located at the access points and providing a youth specific response to young people attending these access points.

North East Housing (NEH):

The relationship with NEH Service has developed very well and is a solid working relationship. One of our Boost Specialist Practitioners attends NEH Service every Thursday afternoon. During these times, the Specialist Practitioner will assist any young person that presents. When the Boost Specialist Practitioner is not on site, the NEHS team will make appointments with young people to meet with the Specialist Practitioner when next on site. In the event that the situation requires a more immediate response, than the NEHS team will telephone to arrange an earlier appointment. The outreach capacity of the Boost program enables the Specialist Practitioner to provide an Interim Response 1 and Interim Response 2 (IR1 and IR2) to young people. NEH Service make up 45% of Boost referrals that have been received.

Homeground:

A Boost Specialist Practitioner is also co-located at Homeground on a Tuesday afternoon and provides the same service as described above to NEHS. This is currently being reviewed as the number of young people presenting to Homeground is low. This could be due to the proximity of Melbourne Youth Support Service (MYSS) and young people



accessing MYSS instead. It could be due to the Boost service to Homeground being in its infancy therefore is still being embedded.

VincentCare:

Many referrals have come from VincentCare despite not having a Boost Specialist Practitioner co-located at their office. Recently, VincentCare provided feedback about the Boost program which highlighted the programs approach:

- Refreshing and have enjoyed referring. Great dialogue with both staff.
- Immediate response. Notification the referral is accepted that day or the next day, in a recent case within the hour.
- Quick turnaround. Very prompt at responding to the young people.
- Likes that the program works with young people with limited supports and no restrictions.
- Fantastic communication between Boost team and IAP.
- Timely responses.
- Like the prompts via email when a vacancy has been posted on the register.

Private Rental Brokerage Program:

The Boost Specialist Practitioners have been very successful with attaining the Private Rental Brokerage (PRB) grants of \$2000 per single application. 15% (11) of the Boost clients have applied for the PRB grant. Of this, 82% (9) of the applications were successful. The grants have enabled young people to secure housing via the private rental market. The grants have assisted with payment of rent in advance and purchasing essential furniture.

Capacity building

Collaborating with access points to increase their skills and knowledge and improve their responses to young people in housing crisis is a key objective of the Boost program. The Boost team are steadily working to achieve this objective by:

- Conducting presentations on how to (tips and hints) attain private rental for clients
- Sharing of knowledge via co-location
- Role modelling practices and skills via co-location.



Promoting BOOST

The Boost program has actively developed a very high profile in the Northern Homelessness Service Sector. The Boost team have conducted a number of presentations & workshops, examples are: presentation at the ICMS breakfast seminar 'Youth Refuge Enhanced Models' in May; access points including MYSS, YSAS, Youth refuges, CALD services, Mental Health Services. Information is on the Hope Street website as well as the North West Homelessness Network website and in the NWHN Newsletter. In the initial stages of the program, a significant number of brochures were also distributed and this continues. The Boost program is well known in the North Division of Melbourne with a steady number of referrals coming from all of the access points in this Division. Refer to *How many referrals each month* table on page 13.

Short Stay Bed

The Short Stay Bed has successfully been operating since the start of March 2013. The Short Stay Bed is available to a young person for a week's stay (Monday to Monday). During this time, the Boost team provides intensive case management to the young person to secure accommodation. Outcomes from the Short Stay Bed have included successful referrals to youth refuges including Vicki's Place, Hope Street, Hanover, & Kirrang Willan; shared accommodation with friends; and exits to reputable & safe rooming houses.

The Short Stay Bed has provided, to date, 13 young people with safe & secure accommodation & food for the week. They have had the opportunity to access medical and other specialist services such as Royal District Nursing Service, HYDDI Initiative, and the YRP. 35% (5) of the young people who have accessed the Short Stay Bed remain connected to their education and training, sustained positive links in their community including sport, church, drawing classes, and were able to continue with their part time jobs.

The Short Stay Bed has proven to be an excellent way of increasing access to crisis accommodation in the present resource poor environment. The short term intensive support attached to the bed has enabled innovative and timely solutions to be found for the young person's short term housing, whilst keeping them connected to mainstream services. It also means there is less demand placed on the Housing Establishment Fund (HEF) for purchasing crisis accommodation.

Positive aspects of the Boost Program

The unique elements of the Boost model that provides positive outcomes for young people supported by the Boost program include:

1) *Immediate Response*

Boost provides an immediate response to young people. Once the Boost team receive a referral the young person is contacted immediately to arrange a time to meet. 100% of the referrals have been contacted within 24 hours of the initial referral. Overall the average time frame of contact is within 3 hours of the referral.

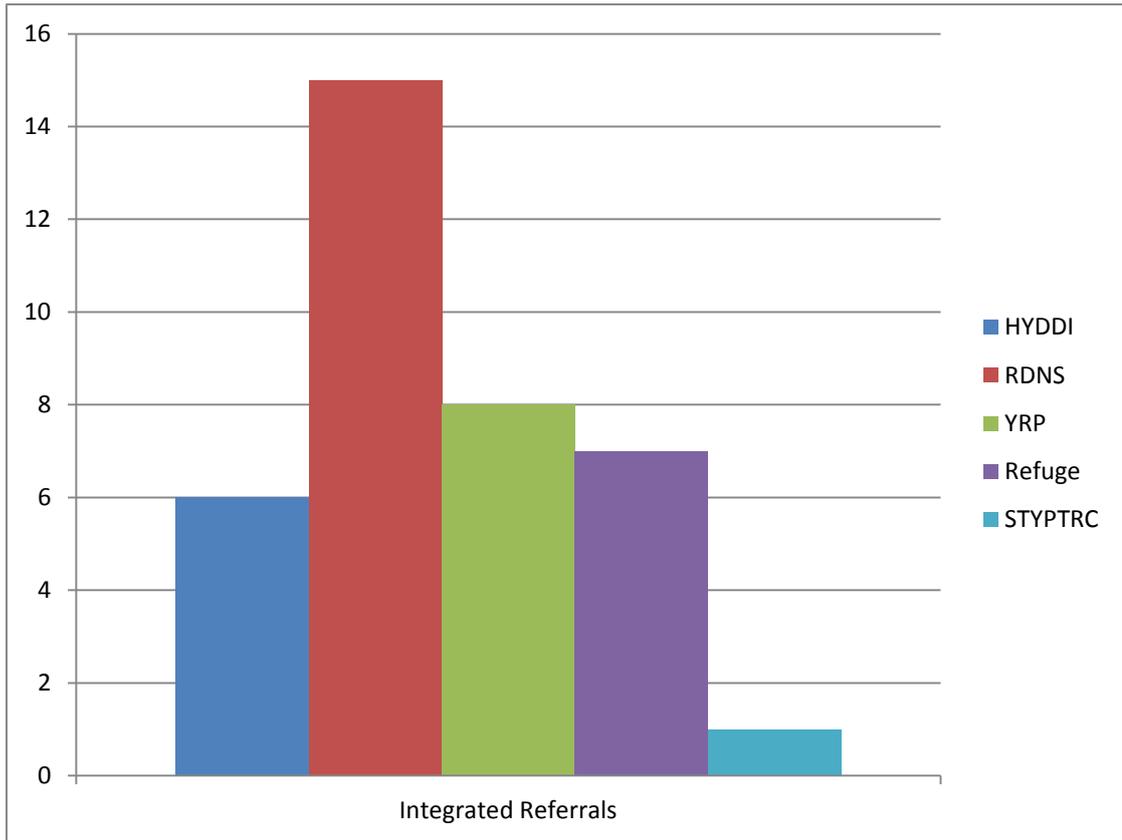
2) *Flexibility*

The Boost program operates outside of traditional working hours – up to 11.00pm during weeknights and on Saturdays. Being integrated with the Youth Residential program enables young people to continue to receive a response from the Youth Residential team outside of the above hours. Extended and flexible hours has resulted in young people receiving active support to access private rental and shared accommodation. Most open for inspections for rental properties occur on Saturday's and week nights. The Boost Specialist Practitioner rostered on is able to transport and support the young person at these inspections. This has resulted in a high success rate of young people accessing the shared/private rental and diverted from the homelessness system (refer to tables which are to follow).

3) *Integrated Response*

As described on pages 4-6, Hope Street has a suite of established youth specialist programs that respond immediately to a young person presenting via the Boost program. Enabling access and providing services to the young person within a very short time frame and whilst the young person is in the 'heightened period' of their situation often results in increased engagement with the worker and specialist program being accessed.

The integrated model of the Boost program with the refuge significantly increases the capacity of the Youth Residential program (refuge) to better respond to the needs of young people with high and complex needs.



4) *The Short Stay Bed*

One of the eight beds in the refuge is allocated as the Short Stay Bed in which a young person is accommodated for up to one week. This gives a young person the opportunity to experience a refuge setting and some respite from their situation. Notwithstanding the challenges of a one week time frame, the Boost team comprehensively assess the young person’s living skills, behaviours & how they engage with other refuge residents. This information is used to refer young people to the most appropriate accommodation and support services. As such, 50% of the young people who have stayed in the Short Stay Bed have exited to longer term refuge placements. This has been the result of the Boost Specialist Practitioner advocating on the young person’s behalf attesting to how well the young person has progressed living in a youth refuge model.

A young Person staying in the Boost Short Stay Bed is provided with a high level of one on one support which is used to intensively look for shared accommodation & private rental, assist with living skills, and discussing employment & education options.



Client feedback

Attaining feedback from young people who have utilised the Boost program is a valuable source of information regarding how well and relevant we are responding to young people's needs. To date, 9 Client Feedback forms have been completed. The program is reviewing strategies for a higher completion rate of Client Feedback forms and strategies for client feedback. The following is from the 9 clients who have provided feedback to date:

| Question | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| I was contacted by the service in a reasonable time after I was referred | | | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| The Worker explained to me what Other services are available to me at Hope Street. | | | | 4 | 5 |
| The Worker(s) made appointment times that suited me | | | | 2 | 7 |
| The Worker(s) listened to me carefully | | | | 1 | 8 |
| The Worker(s) are professional and treated me with respect | | | | 1 | 8 |
| I was given information about how to make a complaint about the service | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| I felt safe and secure in the service | | | 1 | | 8 |
| The Worker(s) respected my privacy | | | 1 | | 7 |
| The service was able to assist me with my immediate needs | | | | 2 | 7 |
| The service was able to assist me with you long term needs | | | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| If I needed to, I would use this service again. | | | | 1 | 8 |

The open comments from clients who responded included:

"Thank you for all your help. I appreciate it more than anything!"

"I would love to come back to the refuge because you felt safe. There were rules in place. Workers were very good & helpful. Emily was fantastic; I don't want to stop working with her"



“1 week is a lot of pressure in the short stay bed. Not long enough. Hard with other residents who stay longer. Good experience otherwise. Nice environment. Staff were lovely and helpful”

“Helped a lot. Was good. Really helped”

“I would like to thank everyone involved in the Hope Street Boost program. The group of staff are so friendly and have helped in every way possible which we are very thankful for”

“Pretty good

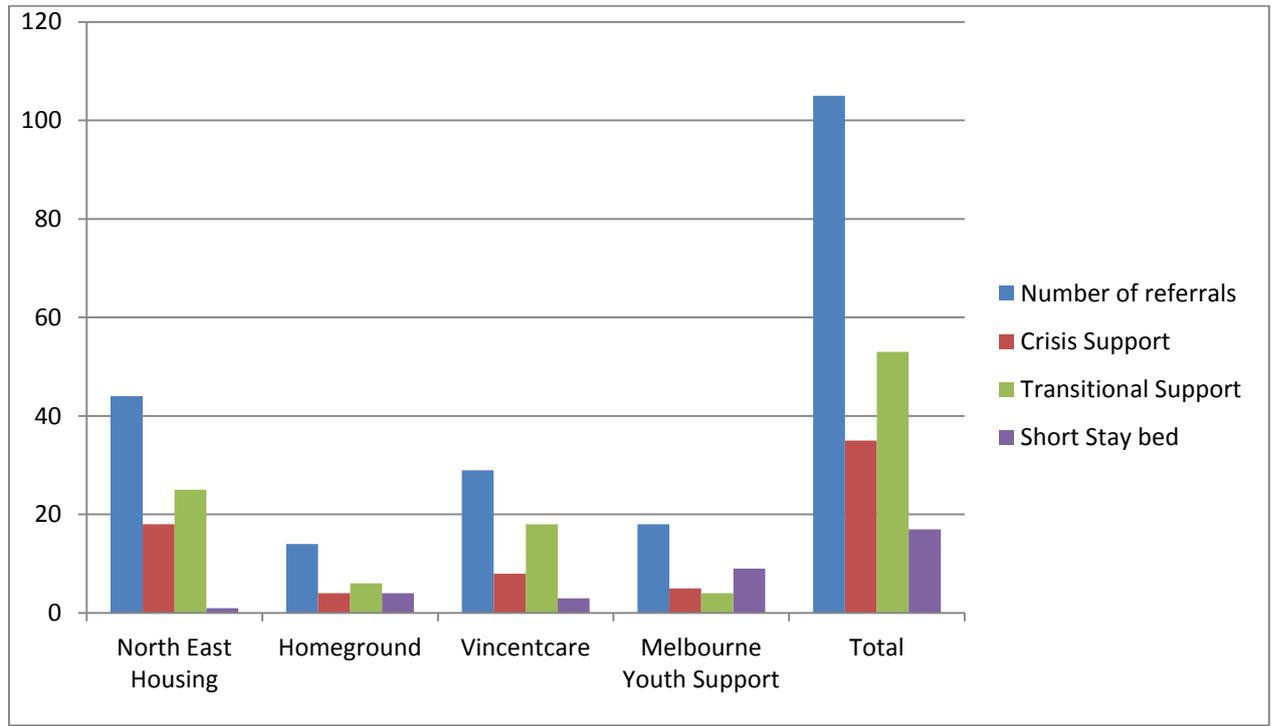
Targets

| Support type | DHS Yearly targets | Clients assisted by BOOST Nov - June |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Transitional | 48 | 53 |
| Crisis | 36 | 35 |
| Short stay bed | 48 | 17 |
| Totals | 132 | 105 |

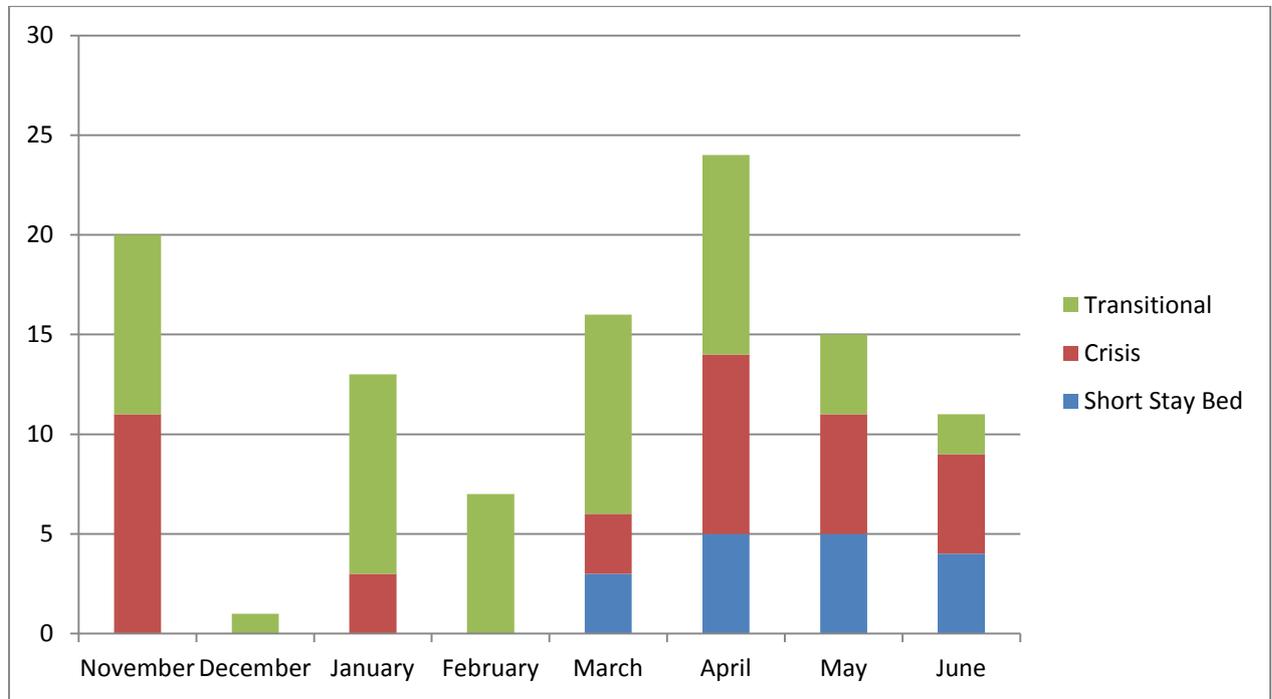
Boost is doing very well in reaching the targets for the Transitional & Crisis support elements of the program.

From November to the end of February the Boost program was operating with 2 staff instead of the anticipated 4 due to difficulty recruiting quality staff for short term employment. Therefore, the Short Stay Bed component is under target. Given this situation, the staffing model of the program was reviewed and changed to 3 full-time Specialist Practitioners and use the fourth position to employ part-time workers to provide support to young people in the refuge in the evenings. Since this model was introduced in February the Short Stay Bed has been fully operational with 100% occupancy.

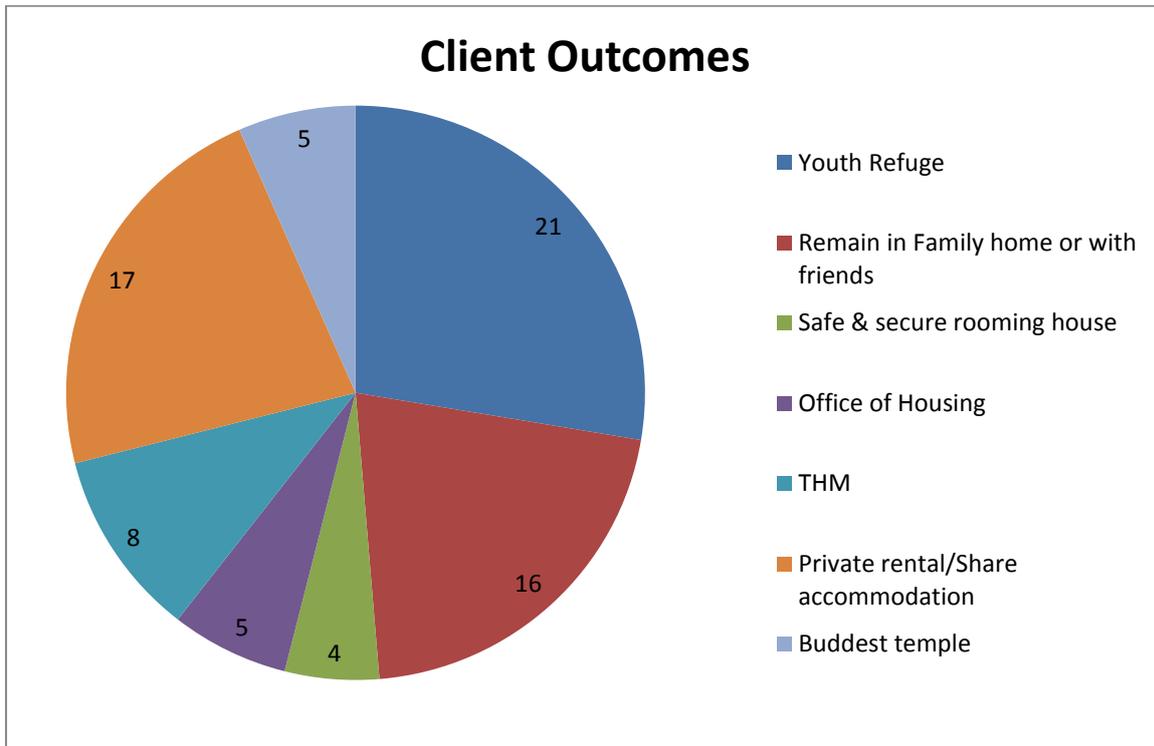
Access Point Referrals



How many referrals is Boost receiving each month?

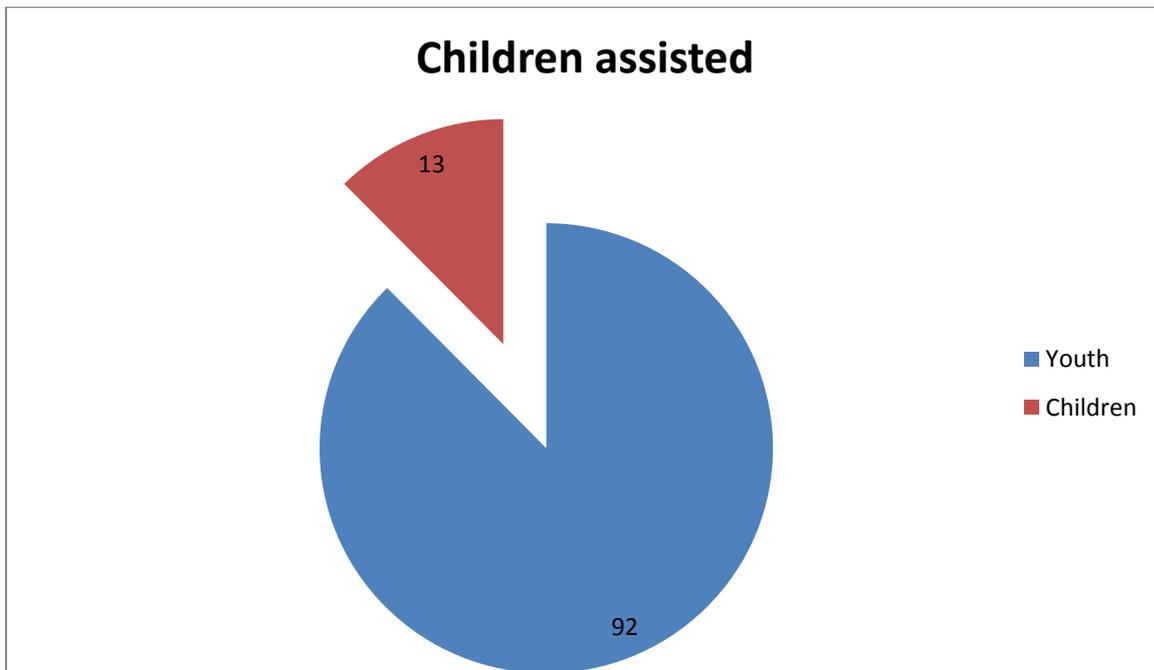


What are the outcomes?

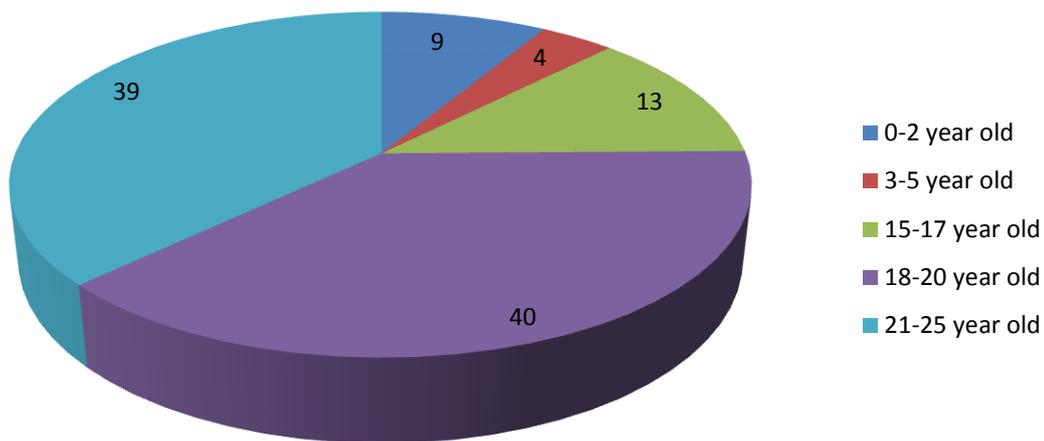


Youth & children assisted

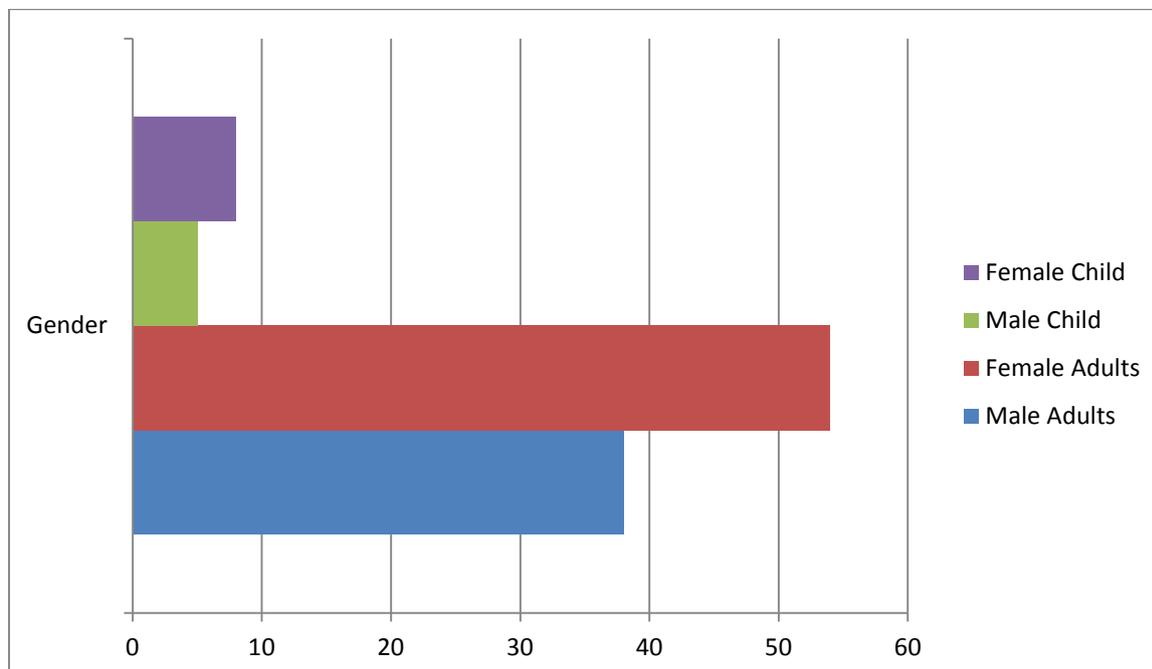
81 Adults 13 Children 94 Total



Ages of BOOST clients

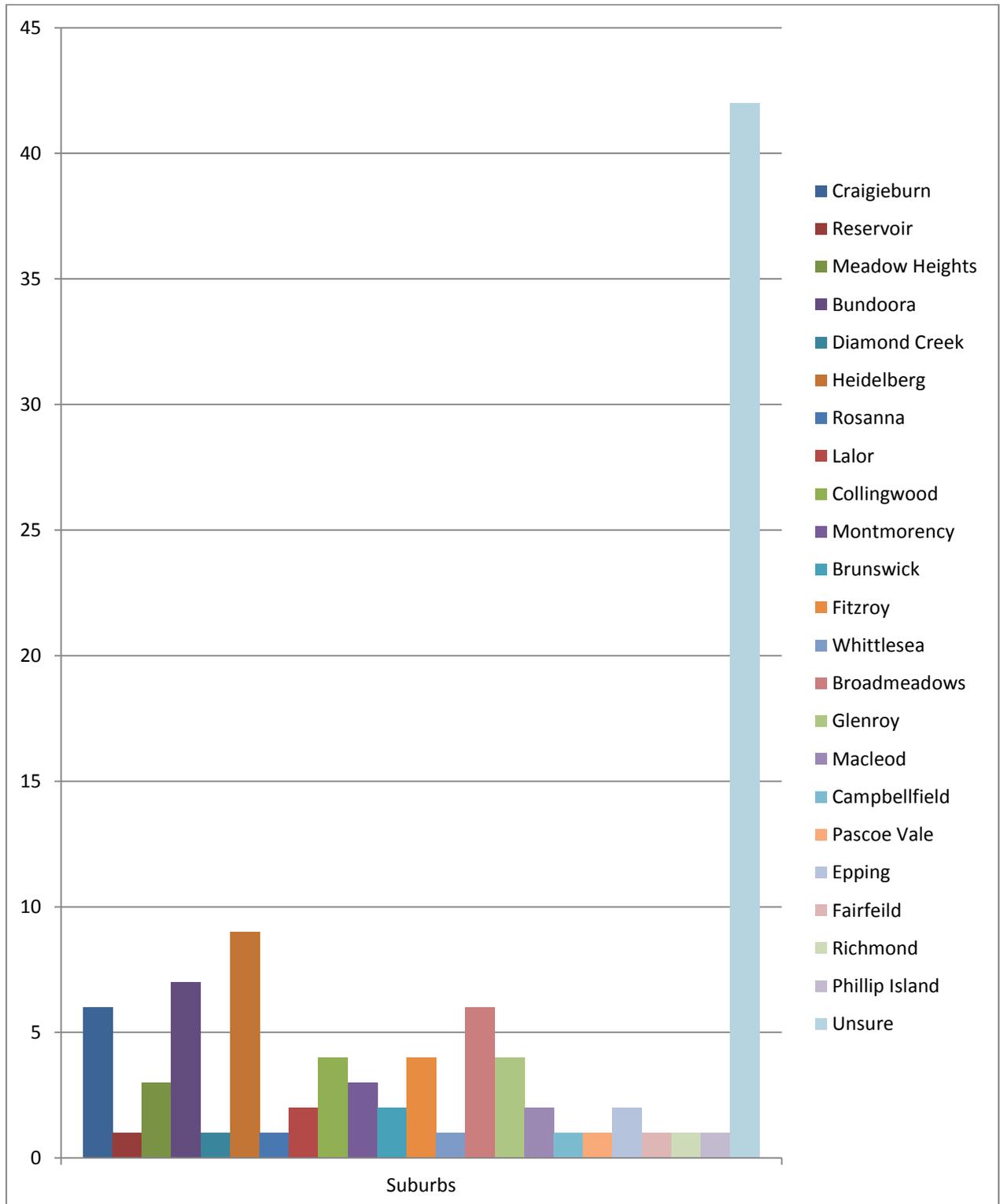


Gender

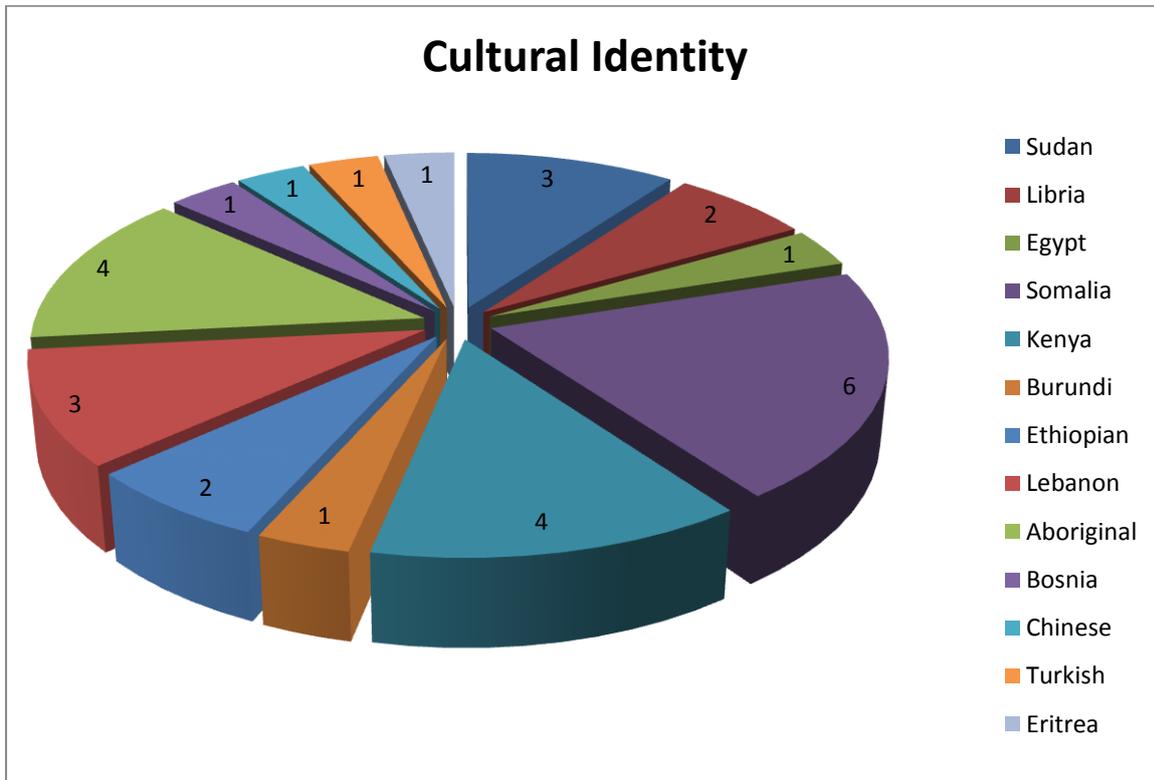




Suburbs Youth & Children residing before Boost assistance



Cultural Identity (other than Australian)



Reference Group

Early in the establishment of the Boost program, a reference group was formed to advise the program in therapeutic responses, capacity building initiatives and to capture and analyse data. The reference group has terms of reference and meets monthly. The members represent a variety of agencies within and outside of the Homeless Service System resulting in a range of expertise. Agencies represented include; RDNS Homeless Persons Program, Mind Australia, Nexus (dual diagnosis), the Northern Homeless Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative, North East Housing Service, Hope Street Youth Reconciliation Program and the Department of Human Services.

Evaluation

Hope Street engaged the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) to complete a comprehensive evaluation on the Boost program. The purpose of the evaluation



is to determine whether Boost, as the Hope Street service delivery model of the Enhanced Youth Refuge Response initiative, is an effective and innovative way to assist young people at risk of homelessness. The evaluation also considers the impact of Boost in enhancing service system responses to young people. The final report will be available by the end of July 2013. Hope Street has invited the Hon. Wendy Lovell, Minister for Housing to launch the report on Monday 5th of August 2013.

Conclusion

The Hope Street Boost program model of service delivery of the Enhanced Youth Refuge Response initiative Stage 2 has been operating since October 2012. The Victorian government's objective with this new initiative is for a more innovative, flexible and immediate response to be provided to young people experiencing homelessness. Diverting young people from the Homelessness Service System and/or intervening earlier and immediately to prevent medium to longer term homelessness are also key objectives of the initiative.

The Boost program has developed good collaborative relationships with key homelessness and non homelessness services to ensure supported access and an immediate response is provided. The program has been integrated into Hope Street Youth Residential Program including co-location providing seamless and immediate access to the other youth specialist programs operating from the one site. A multi-disciplinary team approach has resulted in young people receiving an array of specialist services without delay.

Hope Street is committed to seeking and responding to ongoing feedback from clients and other stakeholders. We look forward to receiving the final evaluation report from AHURI and to continually building the program as an innovative program that makes a difference to the lives of young people.



Hope Street Youth and Family Services Inc. ABN: 82 083 119 731
Boost Program Making a Difference to Young People – July 2013



Hope Street Youth and Family Services' Boost Program is supported by the Victorian Government.