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As CEO I have embedded within the culture of Hope Street the principles of community development as the core driver of partnerships and relationships within communities when responding to youth homelessness locally. A strong demonstration of this is the leadership Hope Street has taken in achieving significant resources for the development of the Hope Street First Response Youth Service in Melton.

Hope Street became a member of the City of Melton community in 2009 with the delivery of specialist youth homelessness outreach support services and later supported accommodated services as a part of the *Support for Young People that Really Count* Victorian Government funded initiative targeting under-resourced growth corridors. Due to our presence in the local community it became evident that youth homelessness was a major issue that was projected to grow simultaneously with the population of Melton. Given the socio-economic demographic of the City of Melton and no youth specialist crisis support or accommodation response within the local government area (the nearest located 27kms from Melton) it was evident that Victorian Government resources were critical to the solution.

As the only specialist youth homelessness agency in the City of Melton Hope Street embraced the responsibility to broadly identify and frame the issue as well as broadly identify a solution and strategy to address the issue. This marked the beginning of a purposeful campaign. Given the resources required to build and establish a youth homelessness crisis support and accommodation service I knew this could only succeed with strong community support and genuine ownership of the campaign/project.

Given Hope Street's expertise our role was then to facilitate awareness of youth homelessness in the local community including causes and the impact on young people and children experiencing homelessness. Developing the community's awareness of the solutions and benefits to responding and preventing young people experiencing homelessness was just as critical as informing the community of the damaging consequences of youth homelessness. Likewise, Hope Street's campaign included raising community awareness about how youth homelessness affects individuals, families, schools, businesses, agencies, Victoria Police, local government, Victorian Government and so on.

Equally important was highlighting the necessity to invest in the local community to enable interventions that would provide meaningful and lasting benefits in addressing youth homelessness.

The people and groups impacted then became the stakeholders of this campaign. Facilitated discussions about solutions then occurred and how they could be achieved including exploring specific actions different members of the community could undertake.

Once again as solutions and actions were explored, the stakeholders grew, encompassing service clubs, local newspapers and radio. The Hope Street vision soon developed into a shared vision of what the community wanted to achieve. This was done via consultative processes involving a facilitated workshop, many meetings and presentations to groups, clubs, businesses and Victorian Members of Parliament. Young people were central to the campaign and were engaged via consultation, research, interviews with the local media and as guest speakers at targeted events.

In the interest of transparency and accountability an Advisory Committee was established with Terms of Reference providing a governance structure to the campaign. The Advisory Committee provided valuable connections to other community members, knowledge about processes, practical hands on support, in kind resources such as hosting a Corporate Breakfast, specialist skills and advice, for example marketing, focus and highly motivated energy with a 'can do approach' to make this work. This infectious energy recognised that each member brought a different skill, knowledge base, and connections to the campaign.

It also recognised that collectively the community was in a stronger position to succeed with achieving the vision.

Some of the critical elements central to the success of the campaign have been:

- building on relationships that Hope Street developed since first becoming a member of the local community in 2009
- providing leadership and a strong presence (as a member of the local community) thus demonstrating our commitment to the local community

- identifying and engaging key community leaders and stakeholders (including young people who experience homelessness) in the discussion of the issue and to develop a shared solution
- understanding the expertise, strengths and abilities of key community leaders and stakeholders and enabling them to utilise these attributes
- jointly acting on the advice of community leaders and stakeholders
- resourcing and supporting community leaders and stakeholders when required
- facilitating effective communication including consultation, planning, informing, problem solving, developing agreements
- following through on agreements and completion of tasks.

Hope Street also led the campaign with investment of resources such as CEO and Executive Management time (lots of this), funds, research, relationships outside of Melton, promotion, bringing additional resources into Melton for new services. This was critical to the demonstration of our commitment to the community and to addressing youth homelessness within the local community.

The response from the community of Melton has been overwhelmingly positive with an unwavering commitment to take action and address the needs of local vulnerable young people. The extensive nature of the community engagement necessary to achieve this encompassed: the City of Melton Council early in the campaign providing in-principle support to provide land for the Hope Street First Response Youth Service to be built; local Member of Parliament Don Nardella providing information and advice, informing government colleagues, attending joint meetings; Khalil Eideh Member for Western Metropolitan for also informing government colleagues; Natalie Hutchins writing a letter to the Minister for Housing supporting the vision; young people sharing experiences via research, the local media and special events; Raine and Horne Real Estate entering into a Pilot project and presenting on the model at the National Housing Conference in Perth; Gandel Philanthropy for supporting

the piloting of an innovative model in the City of Melton; Bunnings in Melton consistently participating in and donating to activities; TabCorp Park conducting a Corporate Breakfast, hosting all Advisory Committee meetings and hosting a City of Melton Service Clubs dinner to promote the campaign; Service Clubs welcoming Hope Street to speak at meetings and events as well as providing grants; Woodgrove Shopping Centre nominating Hope Street as Charity of Choice for two years, marketing the campaign and supporting fundraising events; the Melton Leader for instigating a partnership promoting the campaign; the Star Weekly for also promoting the campaign and being a member of the Advisory Committee; the members of the Hope Street Corporate Committee contributing via marketing, event management, fundraising, wider community connections, advice, attending meetings including with the Minister for Housing; local builders/developers including Varcon Group and Victoria Investments and Properties contributing their expertise as members of committees; and much more.

The other key stakeholder is the Victorian Government. While already in partnership with Hope Street with the funding of existing specialist homelessness services to young people and their children, engaging the

Government in this campaign and vision was critical. Aware of our limitations, the community of Melton and Hope Street could not realise this vision alone. To succeed required the social vision, financial and expert contribution of the State Government as a partner in the construction, establishment and delivery of the Hope Street First Response Youth Service in Melton. As outlined in the *Community Investment with Hope* article by Service Development Manager Bruce Tucker in this edition, Hope Street succeeded in securing this partnership.

In partnership with the community of Melton and the Victorian Government the vision of establishing the Hope Street First Response Youth Service in Melton has significantly progressed to the stage of planning the construction of the facility and preparing for the roll out of initial services. In my opinion this is the result of extensive community engagement and ownership achieved with robust community development. Hope Street's investment of time, communication, effort, relationships and resources were essential for this locally led response to youth homelessness in the City of Melton. The success of this campaign however is the result of a truly collaborative community effort. I commend the community of Melton for their compassion, action and drive to support their local young people and young families.



Community Development in Melton