

# Future Housing and Accommodation for Young People with Complex Needs

## Hope Street Youth and Family Services

Jarrold was 17 years old when he was referred to Hope Street's First Response Youth Service (Mobile Outreach) in Melton to address his housing needs. Jarrold had been asked to leave his family home located in Sunshine after Child Protection involvement regarding allegations of sexual abuse incidents against his younger sister a number of years ago. According to Jarrold, at the time, no assistance was provided by Child Protection in obtaining housing for Jarrold and when Hope Street began working with him, he was sleeping rough.

Immediately, the First Response in Melton Mobile Outreach team worked with Jarrold to place him into a motel for four nights (emergency accommodation), completed a safety plan and provided food vouchers. During the initial period of working alongside Jarrold, it became apparent that Jarrold did not have any identification documents that could be used to help obtain Centrelink. This greatly hindered his ability to access any housing or accommodation options. The team therefore supported Jarrold to access interim emergency accommodation for an extended period while assisting Jarrold to secure longer-term housing. The Salvation Army Youth Service agreed to fund Jarrold with 40 days of emergency accommodation utilising Housing Establishment Funds.

The assessment of Jarrold's situation by the housing referral agency was based primarily on the Child Protection information. Combined with Jarrold breaching his Intervention Order conditions (enforced by Child Protection), it compounded the challenges in securing supported accommodation for Jarrold with eight to 10 referrals for vacancies declined.

In reassessing the situation, the First Response in Melton Mobile Outreach team contacted Jarrold's mother to better understand the concerns in place and to review the Initial Assessment and Planning (IAP) so it was more reflective of his situation. Jarrold's mother revealed that they were subjected to family violence for a long time. With this and other information, the First Response in Melton Mobile Outreach team updated the IAP and adjusted their advocacy for his housing requirements.

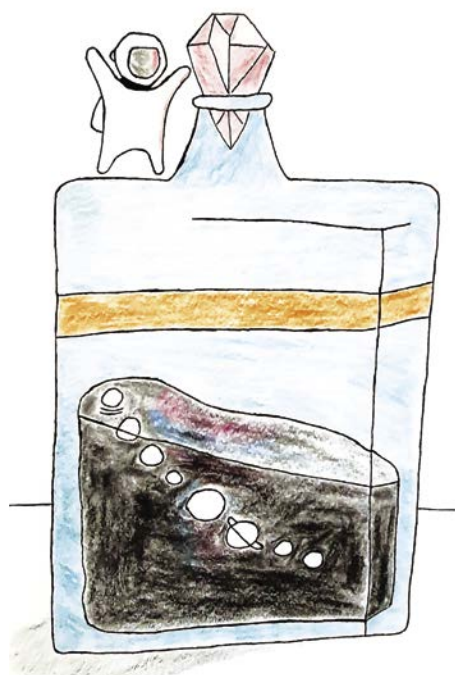
The team successfully referred Jarrold to the Frontyard's Accommodation Program. This program had a vacancy for a tenancy with eligibility criteria for those clients who *'have been unsuccessful in gaining referral to all subsequent refuges due to risk or behavioural issues'*. Jarrold was accepted for the medium-term vacancy. When Jarrold exits from

Frontyard, he will be 18, which increases his eligibility for more housing options for him to explore.

On the basis of Jarrold's story, it is critical that future housing and accommodation includes:

- specialist youth focused support programs where the young person is the primary client
- a co-ordinated approach between all agencies, with the young person being the centre and driver of the planning and implementation as much as possible
- access to funding to provide extended emergency accommodation in recognition that a lot of options are not readily available and it will take time to secure suitable accommodation or housing
- pathways that eliminate (not create) barriers
- conducting a comprehensive assessment of a young person's situation utilising a holistic approach and, as required, may occur over a number of weeks as the client develops trust and rapport with the specialist support or housing worker
- increased specialist youth-focused accommodation and housing programs tailored and equipped to support young people with complex needs with the aim of preventing long-term homelessness and further trauma and disadvantage.

Note: The Hope Street in Melton Mobile Outreach Program is funded in partnership with The Ian Potter Foundation.



Artwork by Chris Larritt