

Losing Mum, Graduating and Becoming Homeless During a Pandemic

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A story of a courageous young man who has faced his mother's death, graduating, and becoming homeless at the age of 18. He turned 18 in late October 2021, and all seemed to be going as planned. He was completing his final year at the local specialist school and was planning his graduation in the next few months.

What brought you to Hope Street?

'It was early December and mum's health was declining and on the 16th of December mum had a stroke and passed away the same day. Mum was trying to hang on for my graduation and she was a fighter and nearly made it.'

In early December 2021 the local specialist school contacted the Hope Street Youth and Family Services First Response Youth Mobile Outreach team. The school advised that he was graduating that night and would finish school the next week. The concerns they had were as follows:

- Has a place to stay now but not sure how long the rent has been paid for or what type of lease they have. Unsure if the rent is up to date or if any arrangements are in place.
- Disability Support Pension application has been made but unsure of progress.
- He does have family, but he doesn't know a lot about them, they are distant.
- NDIS funding should be coming through soon.
- The school suggested that supported accommodation

would be the best option and stated that he wouldn't be able to live independently.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you?

'At first, I didn't mind being away from school, but I found myself just wanting a social life and if you went out you would just get in trouble.'

Hope Street First Response Mobile Outreach team met with the young man whose first concern was the pending funeral for his late mother. It appeared that there was no prepaid funeral/plan in place and that this courageous young man would need to pull it all together.

The team explored his ability to provide food for himself and his level of independence. The young man enjoyed takeaway food and used the services of Menulog and Uber Eats.

What would you have done without Hope Street?

'I might have ended up in an SRS.'

The Hope Street team commenced with initial focus on alternative accommodation, exploring referrals with local Supported Residential Services (SRS) providers and refuge accommodation. The team discussed the options with the young man who thought that refuge style accommodation with support of a case manager would be the best option. An appointment was made with a Hope Street case manager to discuss the refuge option further. Following this meeting he was advised of the process to access a placement at the First Response Youth Refuge and that staff would assist him to do this when the next vacancy was available.

The Hope Street First Response Mobile Outreach team contacted the real-estate agent who was managing the property and established that rent was paid up until the end of December 2021; it was now the 18th of December and the young man had less than two weeks of accommodation available.

He asked us to contact the funeral home to find out how long it would be until he was able to start arranging his mother's funeral. He was anxious about the fact that he had not heard anything. We contacted the funeral home together and were advised someone would be in touch with him next week.

How do you spend your time now?

'I am still a bit lazy, but I am trying to improve everyday but sometimes old habits take over. Some days or certain times of the day I don't feel up to the challenge. Hope Street does give me the reason and motivation to improve.'

The Hope Street First Response Mobile Outreach team assisted the young man to meet with the NDIS and a Plan was developed that covered the following:

- accommodation
- mental health
- managing funds
- funding for community events
- finding work or volunteering.

A place became available at the First Response Youth Service Refuge. After a few days the young man reported that he made a couple of friends and liked the staff that worked at the refuge. He advised

that he felt safe and that he would feel less anxious when the funeral for his late mother was over.

How did Hope Street help?

'I am so grateful that they were able to offer me a bed in a refuge, the staff here are very supportive and helpful and offer me good advice. They really care about you and want to help you. My case manager has been helpful in finding options for me. It's hard for me to verbalise the help that Hope Street has provided..., they have helped me improve on my life skills. I can now use a washing machine independently.'

Hope Street First Response and the Public Advocate worked together to bring the arrangements together and the young man agreed that the plans for the day would be what his mother would have wanted. The funeral service was held, and the young man's mother was cremated.

What goals are you working towards?

'Living independently and trying to function independently. I believe I am getting there. I want to find a job and study as well and I hope to complete a novel.'

The young man is currently completing the final tasks for his Certificate II in community services before he will begin his Certificate III. He also volunteers at the local Specialist School two times a week and hopes to become an educational support worker.

What would you be if you could be anything in the world?

'Mum saw great ability in my writing and drawing, I would like to make something out of my creative abilities for the nation to see.'

He has agreed to be referred to the Hope Street in Melton Program (Foyer-like model) for longer term accommodation and would benefit from learning new living skills and how to live interdependently.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

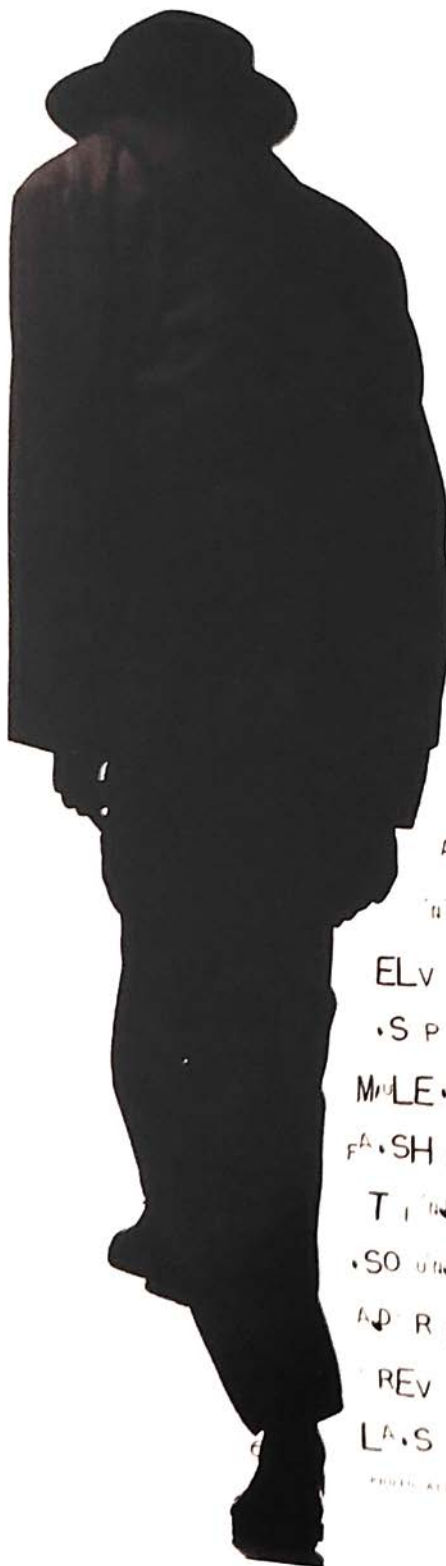
'Hopefully I will have long term accommodation, a job that pays right. I would also like to save some

money and go on a holiday and have a nice social life as well.'

He has been linked in with a grief counsellor and support coordination is assisting in finding employment. He has grown in confidence and has engaged with other young people, First Response Youth Service case managers and support workers throughout his time as a client of the First Response Youth Service programs and is eager to achieve his goals.

What would you say to someone else who may go through losing a loved one, finishing school and moving out of home?

'You will be ok, what you feel is valid. Finishing school was nervous and I was a school captain. The refuge is a good place to stay as the staff are helpful and care about your wellbeing. You must do chores like cleaning your room. They are trying to help me create habits that will last me a lifetime.'



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