

HOPE TO HOME PILOT PROGRAM REPORT

The Hope to Home pilot program was successfully piloted in Melton and Whittlesea thanks to significant partnerships with Gandel Philanthropy and The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation.

The program model aims to reduce the number of young people at risk of homelessness by addressing the barriers contributing to youth homelessness in the City of Melton and the City of Whittlesea. The program engages the support of community stakeholders, including local businesses, to respond to the needs of at risk young people and young families by facilitating more open and inclusive access to existing community life resources such as housing, employment, education, and social and wellbeing programs.

Hope to Home in Melton

Hope Street partnered with Gandel Philanthropy, Raine and Horne Melton, and Melton City Council Housing Services to implement a pilot project from January 2016 to June 2018 in the Growth Corridor of the City of Melton to test a model for transitioning – and where possible diverting – young people and young families out of homelessness by assisting them to access private rentals.

Hope to Home in Whittlesea

In January 2017 the pilot was expanded to the City of Whittlesea in partnership with The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Ray White Real Estate Thomastown, Barry Plant Real Estate, Whittlesea Council, and housing services in the Whittlesea local government area, with identical aims and rationale. The 18 month pilot project enabled Hope Street to test the leading Melton model in the Growth Corridor of the City of Whittlesea.

How the program works

Young people aged 16-25 years are supported to:

- **Gain accommodation** that is affordable, sustainable and long term;
- **Build their knowledge base** to maintain employment, education and training, connection to family, friends and other healthy relationships in their local community;
- **Develop valuable life skills and establish a rental history**, enabling access to other tenancies in the future and reducing the probability of returning to the homelessness service system.

The program offers:

- **Rental subsidies and joint lease signatories** to facilitate young people and their children's transition into private rental accommodation;
- **Linkages to local business for training/employment opportunities**;
- **A range of workshops** to help young people acquire skills to sustain private rental tenancies;
- **Support** to build capacity and maximise outcomes for young people.

Hope to Home Community Integration Facilitators work directly with young people to build their confidence and support them with advice, vouchers and items for any dependent children and to set up their new home, including linen, towels, crockery and kitchen utensils.

Hope to Home Research Evaluation by Victoria University

Over the past two years, Victoria University has undertaken a rigorous research evaluation of the Hope to Home model piloted in Melton and Whittlesea, with an interim report provided during this reporting period and a final evaluation report due to be launched in August 2018.

Drawing upon both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, the interim report findings presented by Dr Peter Gill and Dr Daniel Ooi, Victoria University researchers and members of the Institute for Health and Sport (iHeS), have been ground breaking for the youth homelessness sector.

The interim findings revealed that, on average, young people were successfully housed in private rental within five and a half weeks of commencing the program. The tenancies across Melton and Whittlesea were in diverse living arrangements with a significant proportion of young people being in single occupancy or one and two child households.

The average age of young people who came through the program at the time of the interim report being published was 20 years old with most of them reliant on unstable and/or unsuitable accommodation immediately before entry into the pilot. Reasons for requesting assistance included unsafe and stressful living situations, end of their previous tenancy, and inadequate housing. The number of children accompanying young people in the program was significantly greater than expected. Many of the tenancies were longer than six months' duration at the time of data analysis for the interim report, which indicates that young people succeeded in securing stable accommodation. More than 75% of young people reported that their accommodation was affordable, suitable for their needs, and gave them access to schools, employment, services, family, and friends.

What young people found beneficial

- **Wrap around service:** Young people were impressed with the broad range of services offered by Hope to Home for the entire duration of their tenancies;
- **Support from case managers:** The important role of case managers in relieving some of their stress relating to securing housing was emphasised by young people. Case managers were reported to have gone beyond expectations;
- **Lack of rental history:** Overwhelmingly, young people stated that their lack of rental history was a barrier to renting. Hope to Home services and lease co-signing helped to overcome this;
- **Knowledge and skills:** Young people reported gaining skills and knowledge that could help them secure and maintain leases in the future;

- **Flexibility to address diverse needs:** Hope to Home was able to tailor services for the diverse situations and needs of young people and young families.

Why is the Hope to Home model unique?

- **Supporting growth corridors in Melbourne:** Hope to Home was unique in targeting the Melton and Whittlesea areas. Providing services in the young peoples' neighbourhoods improved housing suitability and employment and education outcomes;
- **Supporting dependent children:** The number of dependent children housed highlights the need for services for young families. Hope to Home may help to relieve the pressure on family and child services;
- **Rental education:** Young people learned valuable skills and knowledge related to securing and maintaining rental properties;
- **Ripple effects:** Facilitating relationships between young people, the community and Hope to Home partners increased awareness and reduced stigma around young people experiencing homelessness. This effect could grow with greater community participation in Hope to Home.

The interim report confirmed that Hope to Home was accomplishing its primary goal of assisting homeless young people into the private rental market. Community Integration Facilitators Abeer Alzawada and Katie Mochan provided case management support and their exceptional commitment to their clients was a major factor in the successful transition of these young people and young families into private rental accommodation. They resolutely worked with them on securing properties, negotiating and signing leases, setting up bond and rental processes, acquisition of essential furniture items, provision of rental subsidy for six months and additional brokerage support for essential items, budgeting support, tenancy education, employment readiness, access to employment and community capacity building. Case managers noted that some of the young people used their rental history, and newly acquired skills and knowledge, to later move out of Hope to Home properties after securing private rental properties on their own.

The Hope to Home pilot demonstrated that it is important to build and nurture relationships with real estate agents to create access to private rentals, and to work with local businesses to create employment and training opportunities for young people and young families to maintain tenancies.

The final evaluation, due to be published in August 2018, will identify how the model can be improved to increase its capacity in providing services to more young people and children in growth corridors. Hope Street then plans to submit a proposal to the Department of Health and Human Services requesting funding for this program – an expanded model based on the learnings from the pilot. The outcome of this will be provided on our website in due course.

Hope Street congratulates the young people who are a part of Hope to Home. Special thanks goes to our partners and supporters who have made the pilot possible, the Victoria University researchers who are evaluating this new model, and the Hope Street team members who go above and beyond to provide vulnerable young people and young families with stability, a home, safety, a place to go to school and/or work, to be a family, to live, and to remain connected in their local community.

A copy of the evaluation report will be made available to download from our website in August 2018.



Norman Vella
Programs Manager
(North West)



Christine Fagan
Programs Manager
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"THE PROCESS OF TRYING TO FIND A HOUSE WAS REALLY HARD AND THE HELP THAT I GAINED AND THE CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORT THEY GAVE ME WAS REALLY GOOD".

AASMA'S STORY

Aasma (23) arrived in Melbourne from Perth with a suitcase and \$300 in her pocket after leaving her husband. She was told about the Hope to Home program, and inquired as to her eligibility. When asked about the program Aasma replied "It is still one of the best things that happened to me to be honest. . . I was couch surfing at a friend's house. . . I was doing casual shifts at Camp Australia. . . I found a place in Lalor".

Hope to Home helped Aasma with other many aspects of everyday life: "So if you look at what I have requested over a few months, I have done Myki, Kmart, Coles. . . they are always willing to cater to you as a specific person. . . sometimes I pay off rent, then there is no food".

Aasma had some suggestions for improving and expanding upon programs like Hope to Home: "There is nothing for people that want to study but can't afford it, like no company similar like this funding at the moment". Aasma also suggested that Hope to Home would be ideal for helping some of her friends who are single parents. She also wished there was some more cash brokerage, as some businesses like Halal butchers only accept cash.