

## HOPE STREET IN WHITTLESEA PROGRAM REPORT

The Hope Street in Whittlesea program offers young people case-managed supports together with medium-term transitional housing. This year the program team has continued to help young people engage with education, employment and their community in flexible and structured ways.

### Client Demographics

Within the 2017-2018 period the program provided 48 support periods, 22 of which were ongoing from last year. Almost 78% of the 40 young people assisted were 18-24 years old. There were four children under ten being supported within their family group.

Most young people supported were born in Australia (40%), including 5% identifying themselves as being of Aboriginal heritage. Overseas-born young people originated from 12 countries with the majority born in Somalia (25%), Afghanistan (8%) or Ethiopia (5%).

The most common reason young people sought assistance were housing crises and affordability stress (60%), domestic and family violence (17%), and financial difficulties (8%).

### Achievements and Highlights

During the year, the Whittlesea program provided young people and their children over 8,000 days of support including over 5,700 days of accommodation. The Youth Foyer-like model, upon which this program is based, has demonstrated that providing people experiencing homelessness with stable accommodation and links to education, training and employment can break the cycle of homelessness.

### READ MORE: Operation Manager's Report

### OzHarvest

Each week an OzHarvest van pulls into the driveway and provides us with fresh produce salvaged from supermarkets that would otherwise go to waste. This enables us to provide young people with meat, fruit and veggies and whatever surprises OzHarvest brings us. It also alleviates food insecurity for young people on a tight budget and subsidises our Wednesday get together meals.

We have had great success in the simple act of a weekly meal together. Young people are invited to share a meal, help cook and prepare, but are under no obligation to attend. This relaxed approach has resulted in many lively discussions and a noticeable improvement in mental health, social connectedness and general wellbeing.

### L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program

We enjoy a continuing partnership with Darebin and Whittlesea L2P programs. The L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program helps learners who are under 21 years old, and who do not have access to a supervising driver or vehicle, to get driving experience so they can apply for a probationary licence.

Three of our five staff members have trained and registered as volunteers to mentor young people on learner permits to gain this driving experience. As a result, we have had three young people recently successfully obtain their probationary licences. This is a huge milestone in a young person's life that is otherwise unattainable for many of our client group.

### Group Outings

We have also endeavoured to have group outings every school holidays. We would like to give a big shout out to Captain David of "The Punt", who kindly let us come aboard for a private tour of the waterways around Docklands. A fantastic and memorable way for our young people to experience their city.

### Whittlesea Homework Club

The Whittlesea Homework Club started organically with young people onsite expressing a need for support with their study skills, access to computers for word processing/printing and internet, time management, and understanding course content. Furthermore, some of our young people had indicated that they held a poor self-belief that they could actually complete their qualification as they may have been disengaged from education for a long time.

This club provides quiet, structured time at the office where they can concentrate without being distracted. As a result, the young people improve their study skills and the ability to focus on single tasks to get their homework done more effectively. Self-discipline is hard enough for the rest of us, let alone when you are starting out.

Sometimes we will have two or three young people at the office and even though they will be zoned off in different areas, they still enjoy the camaraderie of each other as they share the experience and acknowledgement that others in their situation have to work hard to achieve upward mobility through reaching their education goals.

At other times young people roll in and out though a shift and end up with one-on-one support with their homework and then it becomes possible to have longer discussions and analysis of the homework task at hand.

Young people who participate learn quickly that staff will not give them the answers or do the homework for them, rather they will be challenged and supported to discuss their ideas and how to use research skills to find the correct answer. After the Whittlesea Homework Club staff have a strong sense of satisfaction when the work is done and the positive feedback is absorbed by our young people. The club provides the weekend support staff with an excellent tool for engagement and informal discussions about other issues that might be present in the young peoples' lives.

### Networks and Partnerships

The Department of Health and Human Services owns the properties utilised in the Hope Street in Whittlesea program, VincentCare provides tenancy management and operates in partnership with Hope Street, who provide the case management support and staffing for young people.

As mentioned earlier in our report, other partnerships this year include OzHarvest and Whittlesea Community Connections (specifically the

"THE WHITTLESEA PARITY COOKING SKILLS WORKSHOP HAS TAUGHT ME A LOT. IF I COMPARE BEFORE AND NOW WITH REGARDS TO EATING HEATHY FOOD, I CAN SEE THAT I HAVE GOT MORE ABILITY TO COOK AT HOME AND TO MAKE MEALS WITH VEGETABLES IN THEM."

L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program and legal support program). We have been actively involved with Whittlesea Youth Commitment Community Team, Melbourne Polytechnic, Chin Up and Crossroads Salvation Army, Darebin Information Volunteer Resource Service DVIRS.

### Program Overview

The Hope Street in Whittlesea program is based on the Foyer model of supported transitional housing for young people and young families who are provided with safe, secure and affordable accommodation for 12 months to two years. Support is provided within a model of seven self-contained units at Thomastown including two family units and four family units at Preston.

Case management helps young people identify their goals and how they can transition out of the homelessness service system. Hope Street is responsible for the holistic programs and activities that are designed to achieve development in four core areas:

- Employment, education and training – including living skills development;
- Maintaining successful tenancies;
- Social and recreational development;
- Citizen participation.

Our program team plays maintains a safe and healthy environment for young people including supporting them with their Wellbeing and Safety Plans. Young people exiting the program are also provided with outreach support as they determine.



Christine Fagan  
Programs Manager  
(North East)

## LAURA'S STORY

Laura has experienced much grief and loss in her life: her father fled the home when she was born and her mother passed away when she was only three. Consequently, Laura's grandmother became primary caregiver to Laura and her brother.

When Laura's grandmother passed away mid last year, Laura decided to stay with her older brother in the family home. In December 2017 Laura had to flee the home as her brother was physically and verbally abusive towards her. Since then Laura has been couch surfing and looking for safe and stable housing.

As an outreach client of Hope Street in Whittlesea, Laura has been engaging well with the program and working on the following goals:

- Obtaining a private rental or Transitional Housing Management (THM) property;
- Passing her VCAL at a secondary college;
- Getting her driver's licence through the L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program.

Meanwhile, Laura's case manager has:

- Been working closely with the family who are supporting Laura until she has appropriate housing;
- Obtained approved funding for Laura to go to America with family members to help rebuild her relationship with them;
- Working with Pets of the Homeless Australia to support Laura's puppy until she secures housing so she can have her puppy back. A foster parent is looking after the puppy in the interim.

Laura is someone we can all look up to. She is an incredible, resilient young person who keeps on striving for the best out of life.