

## FIRST RESPONSE YOUTH MOBILE OUTREACH SERVICE, MELTON REPORT

The Hope Street First Response Youth Mobile Outreach Service, an innovative place-based model responding to youth homelessness, launched in the City of Melton in July 2018. The service is funded thanks to a four year, \$1.8 million Major Grant from The Ian Potter Foundation, a significant contribution from Hope Street, and contributions from other community and philanthropic grants.

The service provides local mobile crisis support for young people and young families experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness in the City of Melton. Young people hear about the service via word of mouth, from Melton City Council workers, via marketing posters and flyers around the community and via referrals from other local organisations. Available seven days a week, including after hours and public holidays, support is provided by a team of six staff members, including a Team Leader, four Case Managers and a Community Engagement Officer.

### Our young people

In the 2018-2019 financial year, the service supported 178 young people, including 24 dependent children, who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This significantly exceeded the anticipated annual target of 100 young people. Clients supported included individual young people aged 16-25 years old, single young parents and young families. During the year, 159 young people exited the program.

Of the 178 young people supported:

- 71 were male and 107 were female;
- The most common age brackets were:
  - o 18-20 years old (39%);
  - o 21-25 years old (33%);
  - o 15-17 years old (8%);
- 10% identified as being of Aboriginal heritage;
- The most common countries of birth included Australia (86%), Sudan (5%), Ethiopia (2%) and South Sudan (2%). Other countries each represented by one young person included Canada, Liberia, New Zealand, Serbia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Zimbabwe;
- 61% of clients were unemployed; and
- 37% reported mental health issues.

Clients self-reported the following challenges as being the main reasons they sought support:

- Housing crisis: 37%;
- Inappropriate or inadequate dwelling conditions: 23%;

- Relationship/family breakdown: 9%;
- Financial difficulties: 7%;
- Housing affordability stress: 6%; and
- Domestic and family violence: 5%.

### Our impact

The support provided to young people this year included:

- Crisis accommodation;
- Meal and grocery vouchers;
- Crisis response and service from Centrelink such as emergency payments and family violence financial assistance;
- Referrals and consultation with Headspace, Melton;
- Referrals and support sought from Djerriwarrh Health Services, Melton;
- Clothing;
- Emergency back packs containing personal toiletry items;
- Support to engage in employment and education opportunities;
- Assistance navigating the homelessness service system;
- Referrals to relevant services; and
- Securing of on-going accommodation such as private rental.

The highest allocations of client brokerage funding were utilised for:

- Emergency accommodation (43%);
- Material aid, transport, food vouchers (40%); and
- Support establishing and maintaining a tenancy (16%).

The following accommodation outcomes were secured for young people this year:

- Private rental accommodation (38%);
- Rent-free accommodation due to re-established connections with family and friends (34%);
- OoH (Office of Housing);
- Crisis accommodation;
- Short term accommodation;

- Supported accommodation;
- Transitional Housing Model accommodation;
- Shared space accommodation; and
- Foyer housing model.

Factors that contributed towards the positive housing outcomes include:

- The support of Case Managers to walk with young people through the process of applying for and securing private rental accommodation, such as assistance with looking online for properties, attending open houses, and completing application forms. This process often presents barriers to rental access for young people who are experiencing homelessness, which is successfully minimised with the support of the Case Managers.
- The success of the Case Managers in forming strong and supportive relationships with external housing services, and then their role in advocating on behalf of young clients to secure housing.
- The success of the Case Managers in building strong relationships with real estate agents in the City of Melton, and working with these agents to break down negative stigma associated with young people who are experiencing homelessness. Once real estate agents understood that young people had the backing and support of Hope Street, they were much more inclined to rent a property to a young person.

### Community engagement and partnerships

A large focus for the team this year was on introducing the service to the local community of Melton and integrating it via establishing partnerships with other local service providers and community organisations.

The service developed out-postings whereby Case Managers are available for one session per fortnight with local indigenous service, Kirrip Aboriginal Corporation, and Combined Churches Melton.

These out-postings increase the accessibility of the program by young indigenous people and young low-income earners who are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Partnerships were also established with the following community organisations:

- Helping Hands Victoria: providing house hold items and clothing for young people;
- Earth Village Melton: providing young people with cooked meals and fresh bread;
- Western Emergency Relief Network (WERN): providing donations of furniture items to assist young people set up their new homes;
- Youth Projects Melton: streamed referral process whereby young people can access educational opportunities and employment;
- Burnham Real Estate in Footscray: providing shared space accommodation for young people; and
- Child and Family Services in Bacchus Marsh: Assisting young people with funds for crisis or longer-term accommodation.

### BABBA fundraising event

Close to 200 Melton residents attended a BABBA show at WestWaters Hotel and Entertainment Complex on Saturday 20 October 2018 to raise funds and awareness for the First Response Youth Mobile Outreach Service. The evening event included a performance by the world's leading ABBA tribute group BABBA, entertainment by well-known comedian Elliot Goblett, a three-course meal, a live auction and a silent auction. Venue WestWaters sponsored the event, with Kieren Carson, Manager of Raine & Horne Real Estate, Melton, donating his time to be the auctioneer for the night. 20 businesses donated items for the auction and door prizes. \$12,367 was raised from the event and used to purchase emergency accommodation and meals for young people and young families experiencing homelessness.

### Grants

In addition to the four-year grant from The Ian Potter Foundation, The First Response Youth Mobile Outreach Service received the following grants this year to assist with crisis accommodation and emergency packs for young people:

- The Ballandry Fund, a sub-fund of Australian Communities Foundation, \$5,000;
- Melton City Council Community Grant, \$5,000; and
- Youth in Philanthropy, \$2,885.

### Media coverage

The First Response Youth Mobile Outreach Service was profiled in several media articles, including in the April 2019 edition of Parity, the national homeless magazine; The Melton Star Weekly; The Melton and Moorabool Star Newspaper; and Right Now online magazine.

Report written by Tegan Tregua, Team Leader.

“HOPE STREET’S FIRST RESPONSE YOUTH MOBILE OUTREACH SERVICE IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED WHEN SERVICE PROVIDERS WORK WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. BY OFFERING ASSISTANCE TO VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN COMMUNITY, HOPE STREET GIVES THEM THE BEST CHANCE TO AVOID LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS. IT IS EVIDENT THE CONTINUITY OF CARE MODEL EMPLOYED BY HOPE STREET WORKS VERY WELL IN BUILDING TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS.”

MR CHARLES GOODE,  
CHAIR OF THE IAN POTTER FOUNDATION.

