

## BOOST PROGRAM REPORT

The BOOST program is an enhanced youth refuge response that offers vulnerable young people an integrated approach and immediate response to their situation and needs. The program aims to divert young people from the homelessness service system by preventing them from entering the system in the first place. The BOOST program is co-located at Hope Street's Youth Residential Program (Refuge) in Brunswick West and is a key part of our integrated service delivery approach. The BOOST program consists of three specialist practitioners staffing the program weekdays until 11.00pm, and Saturdays.

The Boost program model includes the provision of short-term accommodation for up to seven nights (Short Stay Bed) in the Youth Residential program (Refuge); short-term crisis support for up to six weeks (Crisis Response); or case management for three months (Outreach).

Young people are supported with a range of issues including private and public housing applications, Centrelink advocacy, linkages to health-related services, referral to counselling, assistance with education, parenting support and budgeting, access to resources such as food aid, material aid and income support and legal services. Often young people in the outreach program can be diverted away from the crisis accommodation sector through timely referrals and support.

### Our young people

The BOOST program assisted 110 unique individual young people, including 11 accompanying children aged 0-11. 132 clients were newly assisted throughout the year, with 21 carried over from 2018/2019. 126 clients exited the program during the year.

- The most common age brackets were 20-24 (54%), 18-19 (21%) and 17 years (9%).
- The most common countries of birth were Australia (69%), Somalia (8%) and Ethiopia (6%).
- 8% of clients identified as being either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 31% identified as being of CALD background and
- 4% of clients had a disability
- 73% of clients received government pension or benefits
- 53% Newstart or Youth allowance
- 10% Parenting payment
- 10% Disability Support Pension
- 7% Employee salary
- 20% Nil income

Young people told us their reasons for seeking assistance. The most common reasons for seeking assistance were: housing affordability stress (68%), housing crisis (12%), relationship/family breakdown (6%) and domestic and family violence (5%).

### Client service delivery

In total, the BOOST program provided 153 support periods throughout the year, with an average length of support of 59 days.

Financial assistance was provided to clients with 41% of these funds used to assist with establishing or maintaining a tenancy or to pay for short term/ crisis accommodation options such as hotels or rooming houses. Other areas of expenditure included clothing, education/training/employment, phones, or phone credit, medical and pharmaceutical items, and travel expenses.

The BOOST short stay bed in the refuge provided 49 support periods accommodating 35 individual young people for a total of 325 bed nights. At the end of their stay, more than half of these clients secured ongoing crisis accommodation, whilst others reconnected with family or were accommodated with extended family or friends.

### After hours outreach support

A key part of our youth-focussed approach is flexibility of services, including when they are available to young people. The BOOST Specialist Practitioners are therefore rostered to provide services during weekdays until 11pm, and Saturday from 9.30am to 5.30pm. This enabled both on-site supports, as well as responsive outreach support provided to young people after hours. This flexibility is critical in providing outreach contact with young people who are only available after hours due to work, study or family commitments. After hours service delivery also enables the team to provide active support to clients with property inspections, resulting in a greater success rate with young people securing private rental and diverting young people from transience, crisis accommodation and the many negative impacts of homelessness. The evening hours assist with fostering connection and stability as a part of the client:worker relationship, as it is a suitable time to contact outreach clients to check in with them about their situation and their needs being met. This practice also aids in minimising situations from escalating, potentially

resulting in young people losing their housing. For example, a young person may have lost their job and require linking to financial assistance to maintain their housing while they secure another job. Often young people are not forthcoming in requesting assistance, so a regular phone call or contact initiated by the worker enables this communication to occur, solutions to be explored and supports to be implemented, preventing the young person from becoming homeless.

### Service collaboration:

The BOOST specialist practitioners also provide a weekly outpost for young people at the Access Point in Preston run by Haven Home Safe. This aligns with our approach to deliver our services flexibly, for ease of access by young people, and expanding our reach to young people seeking assistance as much as possible. This collaboration with Haven Home Safe provides young people with a seamless referral process, which allows for a smooth and successful transition from program to program, while also keeping the young person at the centre of the process.

### Outcomes

The BOOST program has had numerous successful housing outcomes which have resulted in young people either being diverted from the Homelessness Service System, or successfully accessing specialist medium term accommodation that is aligned to their needs within the Homelessness Service System. The outcomes included some young people gaining long term housing with Sandridge, Lighthouse and Foyer Programs. Six per cent of clients moved into transitional supported properties, six per cent secured private rental or share accommodation and five per cent were successful in gaining public housing. 47% of young people reunified with their family/ friends and returned to rent-free accommodation.

Young people who have obtained and maintained housing outcomes that are stable, affordable and safe are often able to address and achieve some of the other important goals they identified. For

THE MOST COMMON REASON FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES TO SEEK HELP:

**68%**  
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY STRESS

example, of the clients who exited the program, 22% were undertaking further education or training and 14% of the young people had secured employment.

### Community connections

The BOOST team have strong collaborative relationships with a range of homelessness services, networks and allied sector services. Our expansive referral base means that young people can be connected to a range of services matching their needs and situation, as identified via the case management process with the young person. Such services include: Bolton Clarke that assist with a wide range of health related referrals, The Lighthouse Foundation long term accommodation, Mind Australia Sandridge accommodation, Family Violence, North West Mental Health, Orygen Youth Mental Health, Aboriginal Services Margaret Tucker for female clients, William T Onus male, female and families, Bert Williams for male clients, VACCA, VAHS, Northern Community Legal Centre, Drug & Alcohol Services YSAS, ReGen, Youth Projects, Migrant Resource Centre for advice and support for CALD clients, The Drum, minus 18 and FANs for advice and support for LGBTQI+ clients.

The Boost program model has continued to succeed with diverting young people from the Homelessness Service System. Equally important is its success with assisting young people to access specialist youth services in the Homelessness Service System, as some young people require this type of support to work through the complexities of their situation of homelessness and to move forward with their goals. The combination of young peoples' strengths and determination, our partnerships and relationships with other agencies and the specialist support of our Boost team has resulted in positive and lasting outcomes for young people who have reached out to our service.

Sue Watt, Team Leader.



"I HAVE NOT FELT THIS CARED ABOUT IN A LONG TIME".

A BOOST CLIENT