

## YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE PROGRAM REPORT

The Youth Support Service provides specialist youth-specific case management in collaboration with our Youth Residential Program in Brunswick West to improve outcomes for young people.

### Client Demographics

During 2017-2018, the Youth Support Service provided 53 new support periods and 21 support periods continuing from the previous year. Of the 61 young people receiving case management support, the majority (64%) were 20-24 years old. Eleven children were also supported within their family group.

As with other Hope Street programs, young people originated from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. Australian-born young people accounted for 54% of those supported, 7% identifying themselves as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage. This was followed by young people born in Ethiopia (10%), Somalia (7%), and Sudan, South Sudan and New Zealand (all 3%).

### Trends – Client Housing Outcomes

The program supported 53 young people to achieve a range of housing outcomes. Housing outcomes included living with family and friends, Office of Housing vacancies, private rental, supported accommodation, or vacancies within Hope Street Youth and Family Services itself. Due to the increase in homelessness, and less available affordable options for young people, our figures show that 20 young people were offered a further short-term vacancy within Hope Street refuge.

This year, three young people and their children were referred and accepted into Transitional Housing properties, one young person into student accommodation (Foyer program) and one young person into mental health supported accommodation. Additionally, a total of six young people were offered properties by Office of Housing after their applications had been completed and submitted by the case manager. Further to this, seven young people exited to family and friends, either finding someone in their network to live with, contributing financially to live with partners or friends or reconciling with extended family. While four young people entered the private rental market in the 2017-2018 period, housing affordability issues presented a challenge to case workers in finding housing outcomes for clients. One young person left to another refuge and five young people left to unknown destinations. The other five young people were children of clients.

### Wellbeing and Safety Plan

The Wellbeing and Safety Plan is utilised as a mental health support for young people while they reside at the refuge. Completed during an initial meeting with the case manager, it facilitates the client-worker rapport in a mutually trusting, supportive environment and allows the young person to discuss and identify triggers that may lead to feelings of emotional distress, anxiety or depression behavioural traits, or other mental health symptoms. The case manager supports the young person to then identify positive strategies and hobbies they find useful at these times to reduce symptoms, as well as internal and external supports available to them.

This plan also acts as a supportive guide for residential staff to assist refuge residents in times of emotional distress. In these cases, staff sit with the young person to review strategies, and support them to enact these to positively impact on their emotional health and wellbeing.

The longer-term engagement provided by the Youth Support Service program – both in a refuge-based and outreach capacity – enables case managers to assist young people across all aspects of their lives. This year, case managers supported young people to access a range of services including mental health and Alcohol Other Drugs counselling, family/relationship services, employment and education support, legal services, and specialist asylum seeker and refugee services. The case managers assisted young people through referrals and in navigating these services, and to achieve substantial outcomes for clients.

The Youth Support Program team support young people from a strengths-based approach that helps build resilience, knowledge and confidence in navigating the homelessness and wider service sectors. This is also crucial as young people face increasing challenges when experiencing homelessness and attempting to navigate the homelessness sector; insufficient welfare payments and lack of stable housing makes it difficult for young people to enter the private rental market, while clients viewed as being too low or high needs struggle to access longer-term supported accommodation. Finally, relationship breakdown between young person and care giver is causing many young migrant and refugee young people to enter the homelessness system; they face additional challenges based on cultural misunderstandings and miscommunications, stereotyping/racism, and lack of knowledge to navigate the service sector. The YSS case managers work within a client-focused approach to ensure all clients are empowered and supported to achieve their life-goals.

The case managers support clients during their six week stay at the refuge, which can be extended for a short time based on engagement in achieving case plan goals. Additionally, clients are supported in their moves to new accommodation, with case managers providing support for up to six months following the young person's transition. When a client is accepted into transitional housing often the Program team is requested to act as the primary case manager for the twelve-month duration of their stay. Following this, the case manager supports the young person to transition from the transitional property, often to shared private rental accommodation.



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# 53

YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ASSISTED TO ACHIEVE A RANGE OF HOUSING OUTCOMES



### Program Overview

The Youth Support Service is a case management program located at the Hope Street youth refuge in Brunswick West. Utilising a multi-disciplinary integrated approach, it provides services to young people aged 16-25 years, and their children, who are either accommodated at the refuge or who have moved on whilst they settle into their new accommodation. The client-centred case management support is provided in a framework of empowerment, wellbeing, engagement and participation.

Young people are also assisted to access external funding such as Housing Establishment Funds for tenancy expenses (e.g. rent, rent in advance/arrears), tenancy settlement, or emergency accommodation.

“CASE MANAGEMENT WAS VERY FLEXIBLE AND ACCOMMODATING AND NOT PUSHING ME OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE BUT SENSITIVE TO EVERYTHING.”

### ALMAS' STORY

Almas arrived at Hope Street at the end of January 2018 after experiencing homelessness due to mental health challenges and he was accepted into the BOOST program due to his high vulnerability and lack of supports. Almas engaged well with his case manager and worked collaboratively to develop his case plan. Later he was accepted into our six-week bed program.

Almas identified accessing private rental as a priority and he independently found a place to rent. His case manager helped him apply for a bond loan, explained his legal rights and responsibilities as a privately renting tenant and provided a Residential Tenancy Agreement form for him to complete with his landlord. The case manager successfully applied for Housing Establishment Funds and Private Rental Access Program funding to assist with Almas' rent payments. Almas was also linked in with mental health services to begin tackling his anxiety and depression and he proactively organised his own GP appointment and liaised with his counselling services.

Almas successfully moved into a private rental property in Melbourne's western suburbs in early March 2018. He was given funds to buy household items for his new home and vouchers for his local supermarket to help him transition from crisis accommodation into independent living. He is still engaged with his Hope Street case manager in an outreach capacity and is liaising with an employment and training organisation to build his skills for future employment opportunities.