

Hope for Whittlesea refuge

Homeless crisis help centre calls for \$4.8 million

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Hayden was living in a refuge until he found accommodation.

Picture: Shannyn Higgins

A South Morang youth refuge that will combat homelessness in the northern suburbs is appealing for funding.

Hope Street Youth and Family Services will build the refuge in Embling St thanks to a 30-year lease with Whittlesea Council.

The \$4.8 million, 12-bed crisis accommodation centre would provide support for youth experiencing homelessness, like another centre being built in Melton.

Having a refuge near support networks is crucial, according to Hayden, 21. He approached Hope Street for accommodation and was given a bed in its Brunswick West youth refuge before he was successful in moving to transitional housing closer to his Melton home. Hayden said he felt lost away from his support network. "If I could have received crisis accommodation in Melton, my friends could have been visiting me, pushing me to get out of the house and do things and fix my life," he said.

Hope Street chief executive Donna Bennett said Whittlesea reported high rates of youth homelessness and "we want young people to be able to access the support and services they need without having to leave their community".

The Victorian Department of Health and Human services confirmed with the *Leader* it was in discussions with Hope Street about funding for the refuge, who are also approaching philanthropic partners for funding.