

HOPE TO HOME EVALUATION REPORT

**A research project evaluating the effectiveness of a new
model for improving the lives of young people affected by
homelessness**

Peter Gill

Daniel Ooi

Linda Chiodo

Institute for Health and Sport (iHeS)

Victoria University

2018

Hope to Home Evaluation Report

Dr Peter Gill

Institute for Health and Sport (iHeS)

Victoria University

Linda Chiodo

Institute for Health and Sport (iHeS)

Victoria University

Dr Daniel Ooi

Institute for Health and Sport (iHeS)

Victoria University

2018

Victoria University, Melbourne

ISBN: 978-1-86272-786-1

DOI: 10.26196/5b5fbbb2c1300



Funded by



Raine&Horne®



Woodgrove

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank:

Hope Street Youth and Family Services

Donna Bennett

Christine Fagan

Norman Vella

Emma Baxter

Serap Ozdemir

Katie Mochan

Abeer Alzawada

City of Whittlesea

Rebecca Ferris

Kim Stadtmiller

City of Melton

Aaron Tan

Wayne Harrison

Barry Plant Real Estate

Raine and Horne Real Estate Melton

Ray White Real Estate Thomastown

Gandel Philanthropy

The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Victoria University, Institute for Health and sport (iHeS)

Marty Grace

Jenny Sharples

Leila Rahimi

Mary Carolan

Michelle Ball

Romana Morda

Michael McKenna

Amanda Rae

Emma MacIntosh

Victoria Police

Pacific Epping

Nicholas Tseros

Haven Home Safe

Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network

Whittlesea Community Connections

Bunnings Warehouse

Table of Contents

.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	5
Executive Summary.....	9
Housing	9
Employment and Education.....	11
Model Costs	11
The Hope to Home Model: Why was it successful?.....	12
Improving the Hope to Home Model.....	12
Introduction	13
Hope Street Youth and Family Services Limited	13
Background and Aims of Hope to Home.....	13
The need for youth homelessness services in Melton and Whittlesea	14
Project evaluation and team.....	19
Evaluation Steering Group and Advisory Committee	19
Literature Review	20
Youth homelessness in Australia	20
Homelessness services in Australia.....	21
Exiting foyer and foyer-like programs.....	22
The transition to the private rental market.....	23
Methodology.....	24
1. Service Delivery Data	25
2. Online Survey Data.....	25
3. Participant and Stakeholder Interviews.....	26
Ethics.....	27
Findings: Survey and Service User Data	29
Housing	29
Total number of young people housed.....	29
Referral information	32
Length of tenancy	32
Time taken for tenancy	34
Suitability and Affordability of Hope to Home Properties.....	34
Age of the clients	39
Education	39
Number of young people remained/engaged at school.....	39

Employment.....	40
Number of young people remained/secured employment/traineeship.....	40
Model Costs	40
Amount of brokerage to each person/household	40
Findings: Young People’s Experiences	41
Vignettes	42
Emergent themes.....	43
“It is still one of the best things that happened to me to be honest with you”: Positive Aspects of Hope to Home.....	43
“Well I would probably still be couch surfing”: Transitioning to the private rental market.	45
“Anything for my kids we get it...they’ve always been a big help”: Meeting needs beyond housing.....	49
“They have been the best service provided to us”: The uniqueness of Hope to Home.....	51
“Try and give their clients more of an open choice”: Hope to Home Areas of Improvement.	54
“I think the criteria for the project was a bit small”: Recommendations for Hope to Home.....	56
Findings: Case Manager, Partner, and Stakeholder Reflections on Hope to Home	58
“It is simply something that can work, its been shown that it can work”: Support and Positive Regard for Hope to Home.....	60
“I think the results probably speak of themselves”: Positive outcomes of Hope to Home.	62
“It’s such a vital program. There’s not a lot like it...it’s filling a big gap in our services”: Hope to Home as an innovative solution to youth homelessness.	66
“There are still a lot of barriers to young people moving into private rental”: The Internal and External Constraints and Challenges of Hope to Home.....	69
Conclusions	72
Housing	73
Employment and Education.....	74
Model Costs	74
The Hope to Home model: Why was it successful?.....	75
Improving the Hope to Home Model.....	75
References	77
Appendix A Community Integration Officer Profiles	80
Community Integration Facilitator Profiles	80
Melton	80
Whittlesea	81
Appendix B Online Survey.....	83
Appendix C Interview Questions.....	94

Executive Summary

This report details evaluation research findings in relation to the *Hope to Home in Melton* and *Hope to Home in Whittlesea* programs. In each of these pilots, Hope Street Youth and Family Services Limited, with funding from Gandel Philanthropy and the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation, partnered with real estate agents to secure tenancies for young people, who have been affected by homelessness. In addition, Hope Street Youth and Family Services partnered with Melton City Council Housing Services and housing services in the City of Whittlesea, who acted as a referral pathway for young people into the program, and also provided short-term case-management support. The Hope to Home pilot model is holistic in scope; that is, in addition to facilitating housing, it aimed to assist with seeking employment, education, social worker support, flexible brokerage, and workshops that teach living skills.

An evaluation team from Victoria University worked with Hope Street Youth and Family Services to gather comprehensive data regarding the pilot, its implementation, and outcomes. This team consists of Dr Peter Gill, and Dr Daniel Ooi, both of whom are associated with the Institute for Health and Sport (iHeS).

The evaluation research utilised a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data from service delivery, a three-monthly longitudinal survey of program participants administered online via Qualtrics, and semi-structured interviews with the young people participating, as well as case managers and stakeholders. The major findings will be presented under the headings of Housing, Employment and Education, and Model Costs. We will then discuss the successful aspects of Hope to Home, and suggest ways of improving the Hope to Home model.

Housing

It was evident that Hope to Home accomplished its primary goal of assisting homeless young people into the private rental market. By participating in the program, young people also began developing a rental history, as well as gaining valuable knowledge and skills relating to securing and maintaining leases.

The Hope to Home pilot housed 72 people in total, including 45 (from 73 referrals) young people and 27 dependent children. This number is greater than was expected. There were 31 tenancies in total across Melton and Whittlesea, with a range of living arrangements; in particular, there were predominantly one and two children families and single occupancies. The Hope to Home clients were referred from a variety of sources with Melton City Council

Housing Services and services within the City of Whittlesea being the predominant sources. The average age of clients was 20 years, with most clients relying on temporary, unsuitable accommodation with friends and family prior to entering the program. Clients were successfully housed in private rental, on average, within five and a half weeks of commencing the program. There were 21 tenancies of longer than 6 months duration at the time of data analysis for this report.

Clients were surveyed and interviewed regarding the suitability and affordability of their accommodation, and their experiences in the Hope to Home program. More than 75% of clients found their accommodation both affordable and suitable. Overwhelmingly, participants felt the accommodation was suitable for their needs and gave them access to schools, employment, services, family, and friends.

The level of housing support and assistance provided to each client was dependent on their individual need and life context. The range of services provided included assistance including finding the housing, assistance with inspections and the application process, liaising with landlords, securing properties (bond and rent), and setting up the house for occupancy. In addition, many clients benefited from cash brokerage and shopping vouchers, which helped them maintain their tenancies. Some of the key housing findings were:

- **Wrap around service:** Clients were impressed with the broad range of services offered by Hope to Home. The services were offered for the entire duration of their tenancies
- **Support from case managers:** Clients reported the important role of case managers in relieving some of their stress relating to securing housing. Case managers were reported to have gone beyond expectations.
- **Lack of rental history:** Overwhelmingly, clients reported that their lack of rental history was a barrier to renting. Hope to Home services and lease co-signing helped to overcome this.
- **Knowledge and skills:** Clients reported gaining skills and knowledge that could help them secure and maintain leases in the future.
- **Flexibility to address diverse needs:** Clients were diverse in their situations and needs. Hope to Home was able to tailor services to each client.
- **Problematic rental market:** Clients reported a number of difficulties in meeting the demands of this market including supply shortages, affordability, procedural complexity, and prejudice.

Employment and Education

Hope to Home supported clients in pursuing employment and education. These services included finding education and employment opportunities, assistance with applications, and help with costs of education. In addition, the brokerage and vouchers available through Hope to Home helped participants in a number of ways including transport costs in relation to employment and education. Seventy-one percent of Melton clients and 50% of Whittlesea clients were involved in education during their tenancies. In regards to employment, 55% of clients in Melton were employed during their tenancy, and 33% of clients at Whittlesea were employed. The clients' employment was predominantly low paid and casual in nature.

Hope to Home operated as an intermediary and advocate for young people in their relationships with community members and organisations. In doing so, these relationships developed, raising awareness of, and reducing stigma related to, youth homelessness. As such, the 'ripple effects' of Hope to Home have broader social significance.

Model Costs

The total amount of brokerage given by hope to Home was \$38,857 (\$2045 per tenancy) in Melton, and \$33,638 (\$2402 per tenancy) in Whittlesea. The greater brokerage costs in Whittlesea might be explained by the lower employment rates in this cohort. Across the entire model, these numbers equate to approximately \$1600 per client over a 6 month period. These costs were similar to budget estimates, and similar to brokerage costs noted by previous research (Zaretsky & Flatau, 2015).

These brokerage costs also supported 27 dependent children. One of the important findings of Hope to Home was that costs of supporting the young people often included support of their dependent children, potentially have the effect of relieving pressure on family and child services more broadly.

In addition to Brokerage, the Hope to Home model employed the equivalent of 3 part time staff (3 days per week each) across both locations. The cost of staffing for the pilot was above budget estimates, but less than equivalent programs based on past research.

The Hope to Home Model: Why was it successful?

- **Supporting growth corridors in Melbourne:** Hope to Home was unique in targeting the Melton and Whittlesea areas. Providing services in the clients' neighbourhoods improved housing suitability, and employment and education outcomes.
- **Supporting dependent children:** 27 dependent children housed, highlights the need for services for young people with dependent children. Hope to Home may take pressure off other youth and family services.
- **Wrap around service:** Offering a broad range of services enabled individualised service. Lease co-signing was important for securing properties and building rental histories. Services were for the entire duration of the tenancies.
- **Rental education:** Clients learned valuable skills and knowledge related to securing and maintaining rental properties.
- **Ripple effects:** Facilitating relationships between young people, and community and Hope to Home partners increases awareness and reduces stigma. This effect could grow with greater community participation in Hope to Home.
- **Holistic transition model:** By providing a holistic service that integrates financial, housing, education, employment, social, and community supports, there is a greater likelihood of sustained benefits to young people and their communities.

Improving the Hope to Home Model

- **More community partners/ participation:** Will assist in raising community awareness, reducing stigma, and increasing services and accommodation for young people. Will improve the speed and functionality of referral services.
- **Greater case management component:** Clients, Stakeholders, and Case managers all reported the importance of, and need for, more case management to support clients' complex needs
- **Ongoing support:** The ability to support some clients beyond the 6-month period. Important for maintaining accommodation.
- **Broaden the capacity of the program:** Enabling greater flexibility in including more young people. Greater capacity to accommodate young people with complex needs.
- **Increased/ more flexible brokerage:** Some clients needed more cash brokerage for their unique circumstances, and to maintain their leases.
- **More services for families and children:** Some young people suggested offering services such as social outings for families and children. In general, the large number of children housed was unexpected, and needs greater planning and provision in a full model roll out.

Introduction

This report has been prepared for Hope Street Youth and Family Services Limited. It details the findings of the Evaluation Research of the Hope to Home in Melton and Hope to Home in Whittlesea pilots. This report includes details of the rationale, methodological framework, and findings of the research.

Hope Street Youth and Family Services Limited

Hope Street Youth and Family Services Limited ("Hope Street"), based in the northern and western regions of Melbourne, is one of the longest established specialist youth homelessness services in Victoria.

With over 35 years' experience in delivering responsive services to young people in local communities, Hope Street provides both strategically targeted and holistic programs for young people including young families. These programs incorporate the following:

- Supported crisis accommodation
- Outreach support for 16-25 year olds
- Youth reconciliation involving counselling and support for young people and families
- Advocacy, resource and referral services
- Independent family accommodation

Background and Aims of Hope to Home

Hope Street have partnered with Gandel Philanthropy, Raine and Horne, and Melton City Council Housing Services in Melton to implement the Hope to Home Pilot Initiative in Melton. More recently, in January 2017, the pilot was expanded to the City of Whittlesea, with the support of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, with identical aims and rationale.

The Hope to Home aims for the Melton and Whittlesea pilots, as originally stated, are:

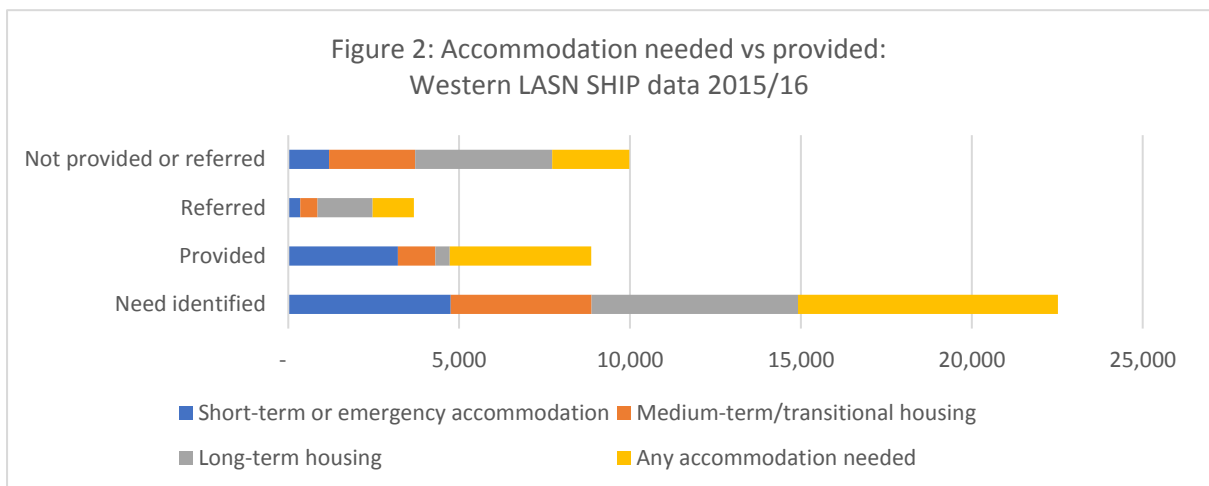
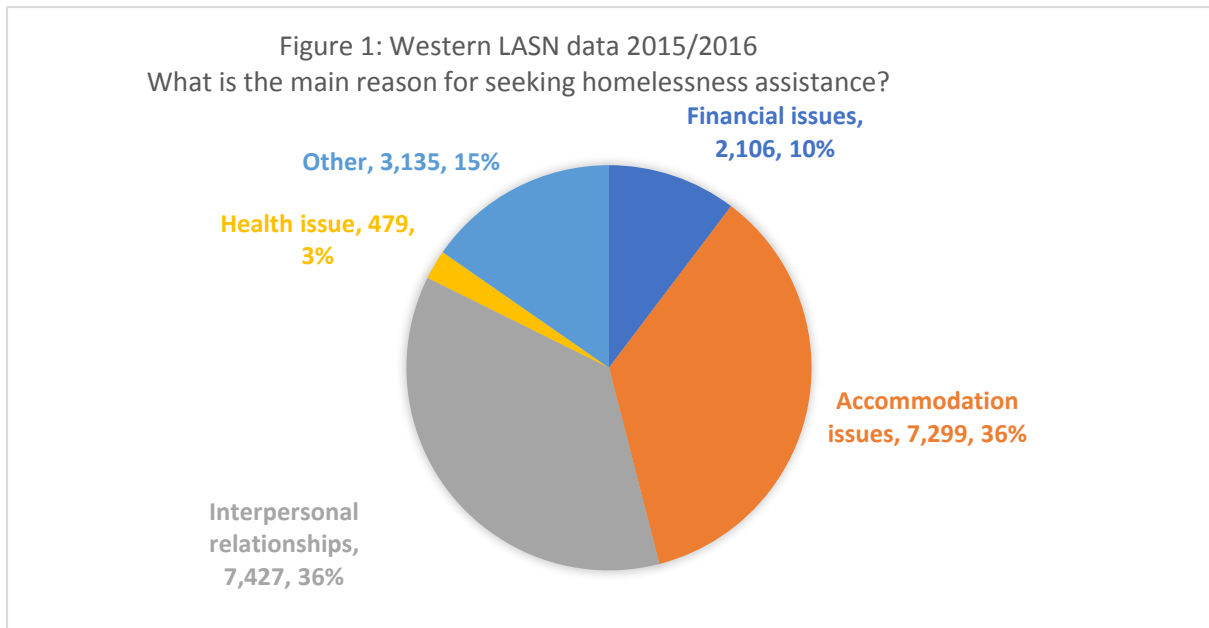
- To reduce the number of young people at risk of homelessness by addressing the barriers contributing to homelessness.
- To secure, with the support of partnering real estate agents in each area, a number of 1 and 2 bedroom units that young people will be able to reside within.
- To facilitate 30 young people and their children to transition from Hope Street in Melton, Melton City Council Housing Services, Hope Street in Whittlesea, and *Haven; Home Safe*, into a place they can call home (private rental properties that are affordable, sustainable and long-term).

- To support young people aged 18-24 years old while in their new home to build on their skills to maintain their tenancy, employment, education and training, and healthy relationships in their local community.
- To provide a range of workshops that will support young people to acquire life skills that will support them to sustain their tenancy, employment and education and connection to family and friends.
- To engage the support of community stakeholders, including local businesses, to address barriers contributing to young people remaining homeless, for more open and inclusive access to existing community life resources such as housing, employment, social and wellbeing.
- To evaluate the model in terms of its effectiveness in achieving its aims and objectives, areas of improvement and application of model in other geographic areas in response to youth homelessness.

The need for youth homelessness services in Melton and Whittlesea

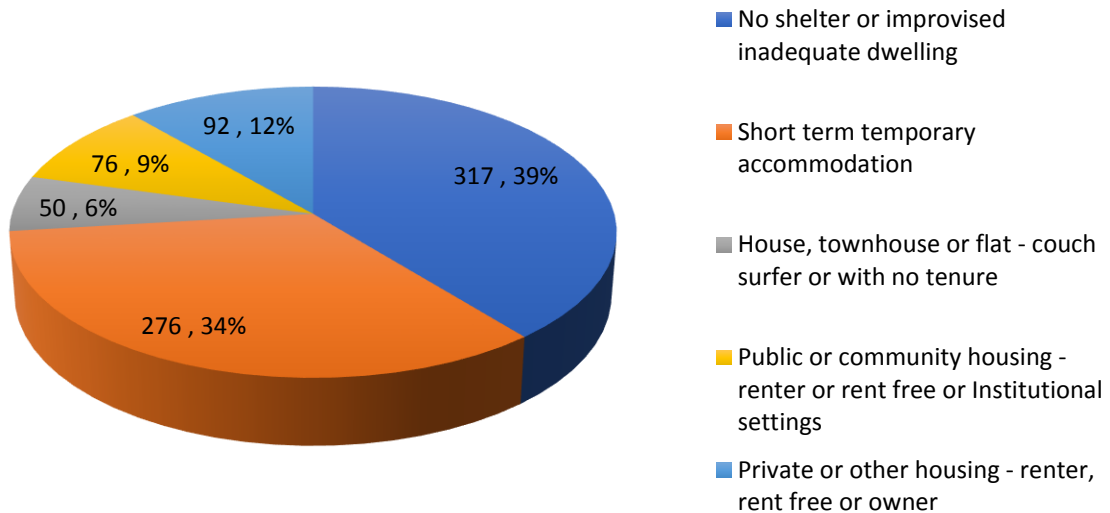
Melton is a rapidly expanding community in the west of Melbourne with a population of more than 155,000. The majority of dwellings in this area are house and townhouses (99%), with most of these being 3 bedrooms or larger. As such there is a lack of smaller, affordable rental properties in this area. In 2016, the median rent per week was \$275, and the median weekly income per person was \$578 (ABS, 2018). This suggests that rental affordability is low in this area, particularly for young people.

In the Western Melbourne region of which Melton is a part, youth homelessness is a significant problem. During the 2015/16 year, homelessness services in Melbourne's West supported 16,260 households through 24,718 support periods. 20% of all clients were under 25 years of age and just over 23% of all support periods were with young people under 25 years of age. 922 clients (12.5% of all clients), presented to the homelessness service system as a result of having no shelter. Over one third of these people still had no shelter at the end of the support period. Of these clients, 3,282 (20.2%) presented with dependent children. The main reasons for seeking homelessness services, and the type of accommodation provided are detailed in Figures 1 and 2 below.



In Figure 3, it can be seen that only 12% of clients presenting to the homelessness service system in the Western region of Melbourne have secured private housing, with a further 9% securing public or community housing. It is clear from this that there is a significant need for longer-term housing for people affected by homelessness in the region.

Figure 3 - Housing situation after support for those who presented to the homelessness service system without access to shelter
Western LASN SHIP data 2015/16



The City of Whittlesea is experiencing rapid population growth and will continue to grow for at least the next two decades (City of Whittlesea). Currently the City of Whittlesea is the third largest and the fourth fastest growing LGA in Victoria. In 2017, the population is estimated to be 209,118 people, and is forecast to grow to 353,910 by 2037 – a 69% increase (City of Whittlesea). According to 2016 CENSUS data, the majority of the dwellings (98%) in Whittlesea are houses and townhouses, and most of these are 3 bedroom or larger. As such there is a lack of affordable housing for young people. The median rent is approximately \$300 per week, and the median income per person is around \$626 per week (ABS, 2018). This suggests that rental affordability is low in this area, particularly for young people.

In the Northern Metro Melbourne region of which Whittlesea is a part, youth homelessness is a significant problem. During the 2015/16 year, homelessness services in Melbourne's Metro North supported 11,493 clients, of which 2,341 (20%) were under 25 years of age (the same proportion as the Western Melbourne region in the previous section. The main reasons for seeking homelessness services, and the accommodation situation upon presentation are detailed in Figures 4 and 5 below. As seen in figure 4 interpersonal relationship and accommodation problems were the most common reasons for seeking assistance.

Figure 4: Northern Metro data 2015/2016
What is the main reason for seeking homelessness assistance?

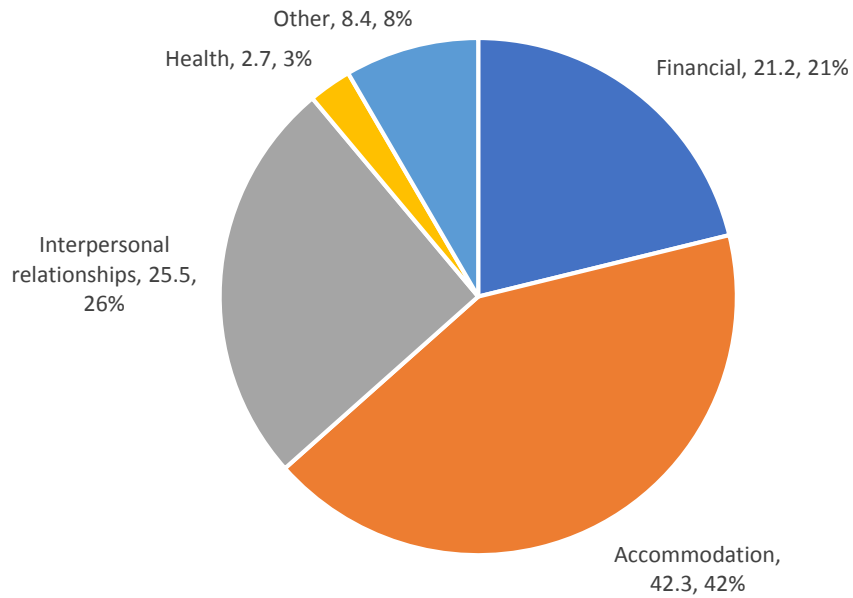


Figure 5: Housing situation upon first presentation:
Northern Metro SHSC data 2015/16

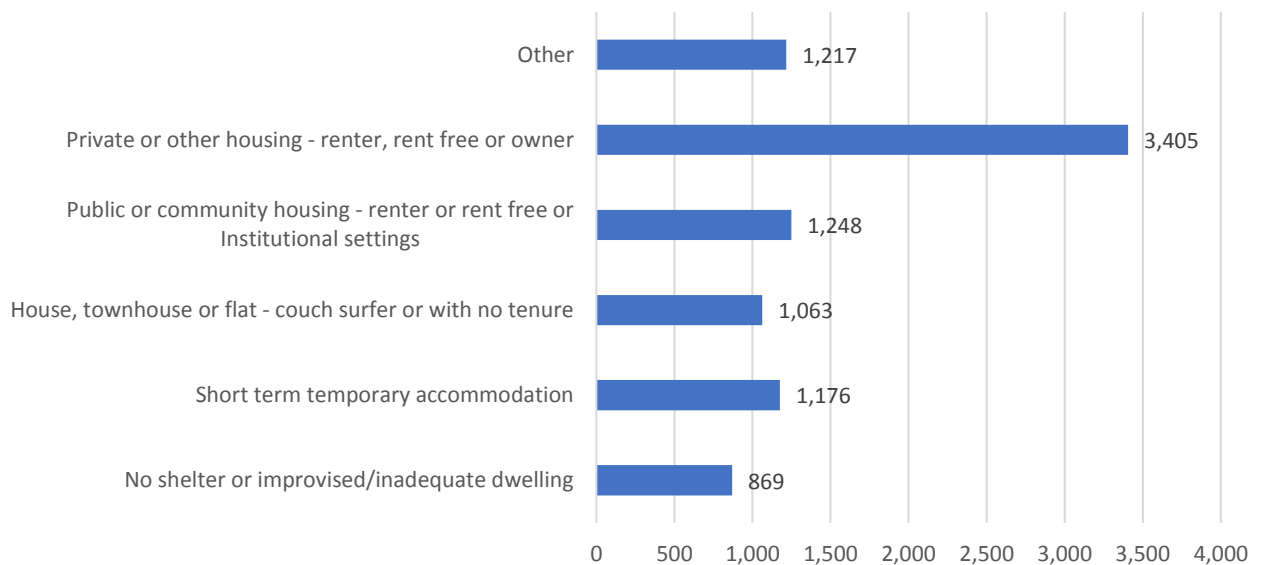
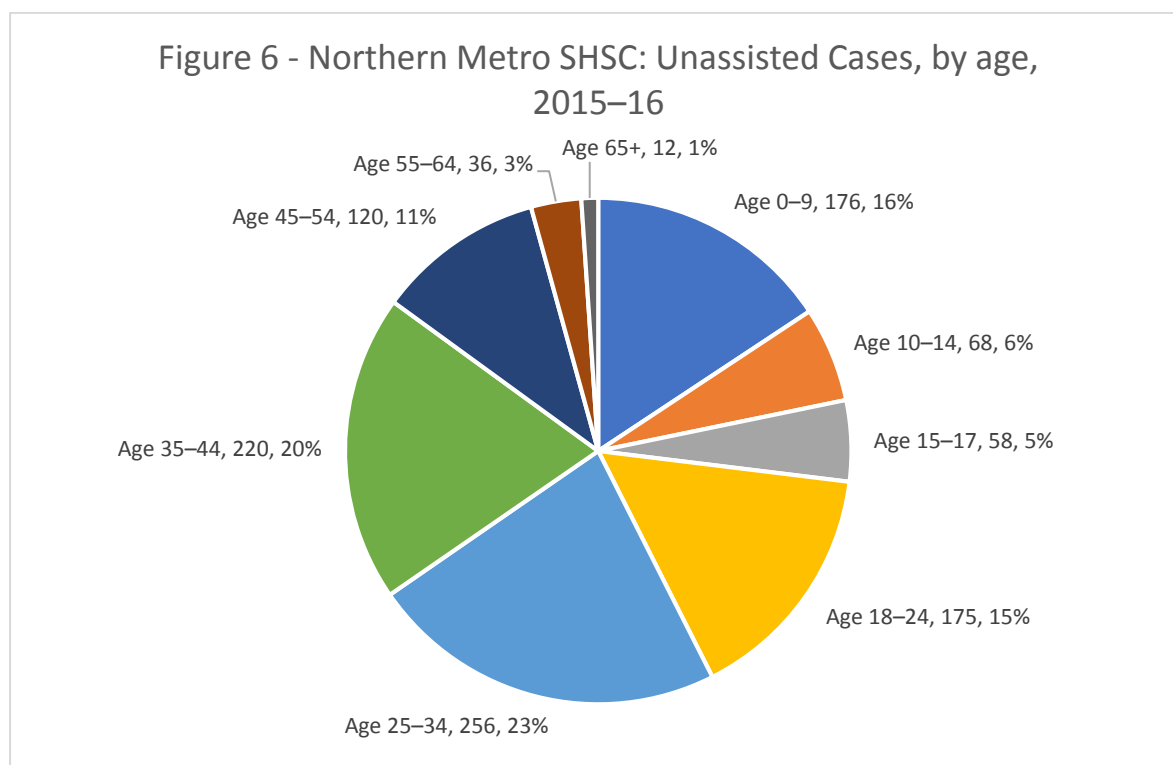


Figure 6 displays the level of unmet need in the Northern Melbourne region, with the 42% (477 cases) of those requesting housing support but unable to be assisted falling into the under-25 category.



The data presented clearly demonstrates a significant need and demand for housing services, particularly among youth, in both the Western and Northern regions of Melbourne. It is also evident that current demands outstrip the affordable housing available in both areas. Along with the supply and affordability issues, there are a number of other barriers to finding accommodation for young people in these areas. Often young people must share accommodation with others in similar positions, creating potential interpersonal problems and failed tenancies. In addition, landlords are likely to prefer to rent to couples and families. Young people are also unlikely to have a rental history and referees to support their applications. Many young people have dependent children and therefore find it particularly difficult to find suitable, affordable accommodation.

Project evaluation and team

The Hope to Home pilot initiative is a new project, aiming to assist young people affected by homelessness to make the transition into private rental housing. There is a need to broaden the evidentiary basis for the implementation of such services, gathering data for the model that is robust, has a structured data gathering methodology, and is accountable. The data on which the evaluation will be based will cover an evaluation of both outcomes (how well the program results in demonstrable outcomes) and processes (how the program has been implemented). To this end, a team from Victoria University evaluated the Hope to Home program. The research questions guiding the evaluation were:

1. Has the Hope to Home project been implemented as planned?
2. How many young people have been assisted by the project?
3. What aspects of the project have been helpful for the young people?
4. What aspects of the project have not worked well?
5. What have been the young people's experiences with the project?
6. What have been stakeholders' experiences of the project?

Overall, the evaluation research will consider:

- How does the program achieve its stipulated targets?
- Are there ways it could do it better or be refined?
- Are there specific conditions for success of the model?
- Could other services be provided (parenting support, translation, Auslan)
- Is the model transferable?

The research team consists of evaluation team leader Dr Peter Gill, and Dr Daniel Ooi. Dr Gill has published a number of journal articles and book chapters on homelessness, and in 2016 won *Australian Social Work* article of the year for their work on the YP⁴ trial. Dr Daniel Ooi has conducted research on urban poor and migrant labourers in Latin America, and has recently worked on advising on social aspects of water and environmental policy at a national level. Peter and Daniel are part of Victoria University's Institute for Health and Sport (HeS).

Evaluation Steering Group and Advisory Committee

A Research Evaluation Advisory Committee was formed in early 2017, meeting quarterly, to provide stakeholder input into the evaluation process and assist the researchers. The Hope to Home committees in Melton and Whittlesea comprise of members from a diverse range of organisations, business and community agencies including Hope Street, City of Whittlesea, City of Melton, Federal and State Members of Parliament, Djerriwarrh Community and

Education Services, Woodgrove Melton, Bunnings Melton, Raine and Horne Real Estate, TabCorp Park Melton, Victoria Police, Bank Vic, Haven Home Safe (Access Point), Whittlesea Community Connections, YMCA, Bunnings, Epping Plaza, Job Network agencies and various other interested community groups.

Literature Review

In order to place the Hope to Home program within its broader social context, we present the following literature review. We will discuss youth homelessness in Australia as well as the current services available.

Youth homelessness in Australia

Youth homelessness is a major concern in Australian society. Young people who experience homelessness move between inappropriate and unsustainable forms of accommodation. In addition, they are often staying at others' homes, in crisis accommodation, in their cars, or on the street. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2018) defines homelessness as people whose current living arrangement is inadequate, has no tenure, and does not allow them access to space for social relations.

According to ABS (2018) estimates, 116,427 (58% male, 41% female) people were homeless on census night 2016, an increase of about 5 percent from the same time in 2011. This is despite a federal government *Road to Home* initiative in 2008, which aimed to halve homelessness by 2020. Clearly, there is a need for new directions and approaches for tackling this problem. The increase in homelessness between 2011 and 2016 was explained by increases in 'severely' crowded dwellings. Homeless youth (aged 12 to 24) made up 32% of total homeless persons living in these 'severely' crowded dwellings (see Table 1). In addition, homeless youth accounted for 23% of persons in supported accommodation, and 16% of persons staying temporarily in other households. Of even greater concern was that 25 percent of all people experiencing homelessness were aged between 20 and 30 years. Nearly 60% of all homeless people were under 35 years of age. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples made up 3% of the Australian population in 2016, but accounted for 20% of all persons who were homeless on Census night in 2016. Of those who were classified as homeless, 70% were living in 'severely' crowded dwellings. It appears that homelessness in young Australians is at a crisis point.

Table 1 Persons by Homeless operational groups, 2006, 2011 and 2016 (ABS)

	2006		2011		2016	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	31531	35	41370	40	51088	44
Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out	7 247	8	6810	7	8200	7
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	17329	19	21258	21	21235	18
Persons staying temporarily with other households	17663	20	17374	17	17725	15
Persons living in boarding houses	15460	17	14944	15	17503	15
Persons in other temporary lodging	500	1	682	1	678	1
All homeless persons	89728	100	102439	100	116427	100

Homelessness services in Australia

While homelessness is a broad social problem, research suggests that improving outcomes for homeless people requires an individualised approach (Grace & Gill, 2014). As each young person has a unique set of circumstances and characteristics, approaches need to be tailored and flexible to achieve success. There are a number of reported risk factors for homelessness including family relationship breakdowns, trauma, substance use, socioeconomic disadvantage, seeking independence, mental health issues, and being a member of a particular population group such as migrants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. In addition, research has identified barriers for young people in seeking out and maintaining homelessness services. These barriers include resource shortages, inflexible eligibility criteria, over complex service systems, lack of service integration, and the devaluing of service clients (Black et al., 2018). In recent times we have seen the development of integrated case management programs that have both the scope and flexibility to service the needs of homeless young people, while offering a single point of contact. Padgett et al. (2006) illustrated

the complexity and difficulty in working with people with multiple disadvantages such as homelessness, unemployment, and mental illness. Ferguson and Xie (2008) argue that currently there is a lack of understanding of how young homeless and unemployed people respond to support programs. This lack of evidence is an obstacle in designing and implementing evidence based programs to support homeless young people.

One of the challenges for services assisting young people affected by homelessness is the shortage of 'exit options' – sustainable, suitable, affordable accommodation for young people when they leave supported accommodation (Grace et al 2013). Despite the recent increase in homelessness, the amount supported accommodation places has stayed stable (21,000 in both 2011 and 2016). Another challenge is the difficulty young people experience in obtaining and sustaining suitable employment (Grace & Gill, 2014; 2015).

Hope to Home is a pilot project that aims to assist young people to move into private rental accommodation that is stable and affordable in the longer term. These rental properties may become long-term homes for the young people, and are intended to provide an opportunity to establish rental histories. The project aims to assist young people in a way that protects them against future homelessness. It aims to assist the young people to obtain suitable employment as well as suitable accommodation. The young people involved in Hope to Home came from two sources, the first being 'foyer-like' housing, education, and employment programs such as Hope Street in Melton and Hope Street in Whittlesea. The remainder come as referrals from housing services in Melton and Whittlesea.

Exiting foyer and foyer-like programs

The starting point for understanding the transition to private rental from 'foyer-like' programs is to understand these source programs themselves. Beer et al (2014: 45) date the first emergence of the foyer concept in Australia to March 2003, with the establishment of the Live 'N' Learn campus in South-western Sydney. A significant evidentiary basis exists for their success in their longer history in the different variants of the model in France, where aspects of community management are more prevalent and the residents recruited to the foyers tend to be young apprentice workers, and the UK, where residents recruited to the foyers, at least initially, tend to be unemployed. Beer et al (2014: 47) argue that critical to this success in new contexts is a sensitivity to the cultural, social, and economic aspects of those contexts.

While still relatively new in the Australian context, there is some evidence for the success of 'Youth Foyer' across a range of circumstances. These include the Step Ahead foyer-type model used by Melbourne City Mission (Grace et al 2013), a cohort of 26 young women exiting

prison in Melbourne (Baxter 2014), and the Education First Youth Foyer model set up by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Launch Housing at Holmesglen TAFE in Melbourne (Borlagdan & Keys 2015). Grace et al (2013) identified that the key aspects of success for the Step Ahead variant of the foyer model were the level of support and safety initially required, the level of emotional and psychological problems (best outcomes for those with mild problems, worse outcomes for those with acute mental illness hindering education and employment), and the degree of emotional connection with others (greater connection beneficial).

In a review of 15 primary studies into the efficacy of examples of foyer and foyer-like models (four of them in Australia), Levin et al (2015) noted the major limitations of existing studies as being; a lack of methodological detail being supplied, lack of comparison group, and a lack of follow-up (longitudinal) data.

Grace et al (2013) noted that upon exiting the Step Ahead program, about one-third of participants moved into community housing, about the same proportion moved in with family and friends, and the remaining one third to other accommodation. They reported that participants sought private rental, but that it was rarely affordable. Roberts (2012), in the West Australian context, noted that young people often do not have an exit plan from the foyer.

Much of the literature on the success of Youth Foyer schemes focuses on immediate employment and educational outcomes while housed in the foyer. However, there is little assessment of the longer-term outcomes, including independent living skills, after the transition from the foyer accommodation into the private housing market.

The transition to the private rental market

The Hope to Home model is a holistic model providing not only accommodation, but assistance with employment, education, living skills, and social services for young people. In terms of schemes with a much narrower focus, a significant body of literature exists on Private Rental Brokerage Programs (PRBPs). These programs are a primary preventative strategy to assist those at risk of homelessness and those transitioning out of homelessness gain access to the rental market with a limited rental history, often in partnerships with Real Estate Agents (Tually 2016). Additionally, there is little literature about the comparative strengths and weaknesses of social enterprise models such as HomeGround Real Estate, which is supported as part of the City of Melbourne Homelessness Strategy (City of Melbourne 2017). While the economic dimensions of homelessness and the contribution made to the problem by a lack of affordable housing is important (as noted by Coleman & Fopp 2014), the above

programs focus solely on the economic dimensions of homelessness. For young people, economic issues are usually not solely responsible, with issues of domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of life skills, and mental illness prevalent.

The Hope to Home pilots differ from other programs in recognising the need for holistic service provision for young people, going beyond securing housing tenure. This includes assistance in acquiring the living skills, social support, employment, and educational assistance necessary to establish a secure and stable home. Another point of difference in the Hope to Home model is that Hope to Home are co-signatories on the young people's tenancies. This is significant in helping young people successfully acquire accommodation, and also in building a rental track record for young people. The Hope to Home pilot is innovative in terms of the services provided to young people, the age profile (youth between the ages of 16 and 25), and being the first project of its kind in the outer-growth corridor of Melbourne. Currently there is very little information on experiences of homelessness in these growth corridors of Melbourne. Additionally, an important part of the Hope to Home model not yet reflected in the literature is the focus on building community partnerships, with housing services, real estate agents, and other stakeholders in the community. At present, there is little information in the literature about the implementation of holistic transition programs such as Hope to Home.

Investigations such as this evaluation research will provide insight into not only how to achieve outcomes in terms of supports necessary, but also what kinds of service provision actually result in better housing, employment, and educational outcomes for young people.

Methodology

In order to assess the success of the Home to Home pilot programs operating in Melton and Whittlesea, the evaluation team utilised a mixed-methods approach (Sarantakos 2013), using quantitative and qualitative data to understand the program. Key measurable outcomes included housing situation, employment, and education impacts. Qualitative aspects that were assessed through self-report included the development of life skills, increased confidence in the young people to be independent in meeting their housing needs, and levels of empowerment and engagement.

Three main sources of data were included in the evaluation. Each of the sources are described in more detail in the paragraphs below. The first was service delivery data of those housed by the program. The second source of data was an online survey (see Appendix B), completed at three-month intervals by all supported participants, from commencement until twelve months. The third source of data was semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C) conducted with both the young people and stakeholders involved in the project.

During the analysis, the researchers integrated the data from all sources in order to document to what extent the project was implemented as planned, how many young people have been assisted, and what has worked well and not so well . We also examined what limitations were encountered, and how the project developed over time.

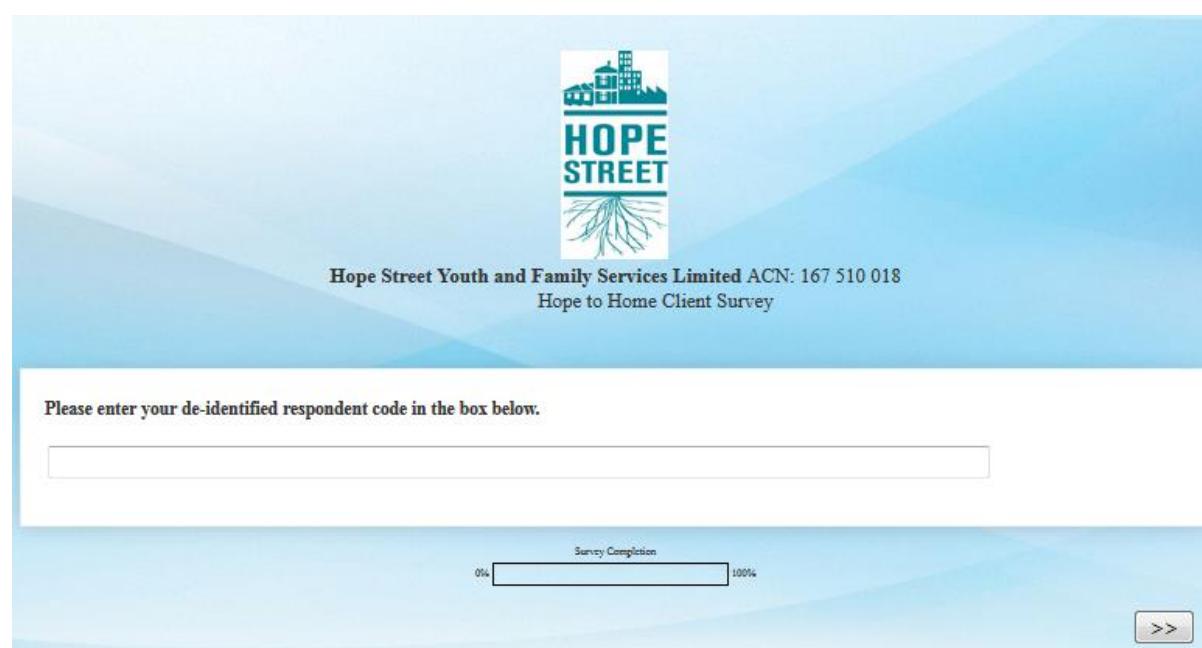
1. Service Delivery Data

The service delivery data was provided by project staff and was analysed to show how many young people have been assisted and what services they have received. It includes relevant information in relation to the number and source of referrals, the number of contacts with workers for each service user, and the nature of services provided to each service user.

2. Online Survey Data

As part of the service delivery, an electronic online survey was completed by each young person engaged with the project every three months, via the online program Qualtrics. This survey could be completed either on a computer, or a mobile phone. Each young person was given a code, and the data was provided to the researchers by code only, not by the name of the young person. The survey includes questions about accommodation, employment, health and wellbeing, social connectedness, and relationships. The online survey data was used to track young people's experiences in relation to these outcomes and generated qualitative and quantitative data. In total, there were 79 online surveys completed by young people. Figures 7 and 8 display screenshots of the survey interface for both computer and mobile screens.

Figure 7: Qualtrics online survey interface example (computer)



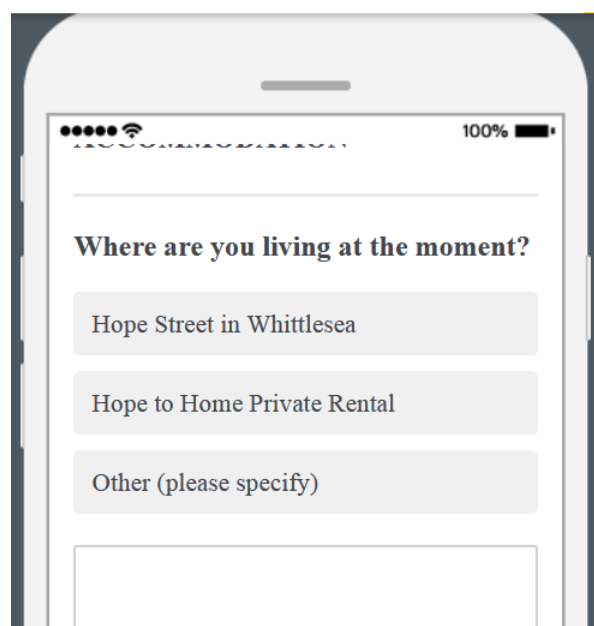
The screenshot shows the Qualtrics online survey interface for the Hope Street Youth and Family Services Limited. The interface has a blue background with a white box for entering a de-identified respondent code. The Hope Street logo is displayed at the top, and a progress bar at the bottom indicates 0% completion.

Hope Street Youth and Family Services Limited ACN: 167 510 018
Hope to Home Client Survey

Please enter your de-identified respondent code in the box below.

Survey Completion: 0% 100%

Figure 8: Qualtrics online survey interface example (mobile)



3. Participant and Stakeholder Interviews

A total of 26 semi-structured interviews were undertaken, 17 in Melton, and 9 in Whittlesea. The interviews asked about the program participants' experiences with Hope to Home (see Appendix C). This includes 16 interviews (11 in Melton, 5 in Whittlesea) with young people on their experiences of the project (conducted no earlier than after three months of involvement), interviews with two case managers (1 in Melton, 1 in Whittlesea), and five stakeholders in Melton and 3 from Whittlesea (conducted no earlier than after six months of involvement). These stakeholders included Gandel Philanthropy, The Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund, Raine and Horne Real Estate, and Melton and Whittlesea Councils. Interviews ranged between 20 minutes and 1 hour in length. The semi-structured interviews have been digitally recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis (Liamputtong 2013) and coding has generated emergent themes. These codes and themes were referenced against existing literature. The themes were defined and linked to the participants' stories, research literature, and research questions. Please note that in this report the participants names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Overall, this final report addresses the following questions:

Has the Hope to Home project been implemented as planned?

How many young people have been assisted by the project?

What aspects of the project have been helpful for the young people?

What aspects of the project have not worked well?

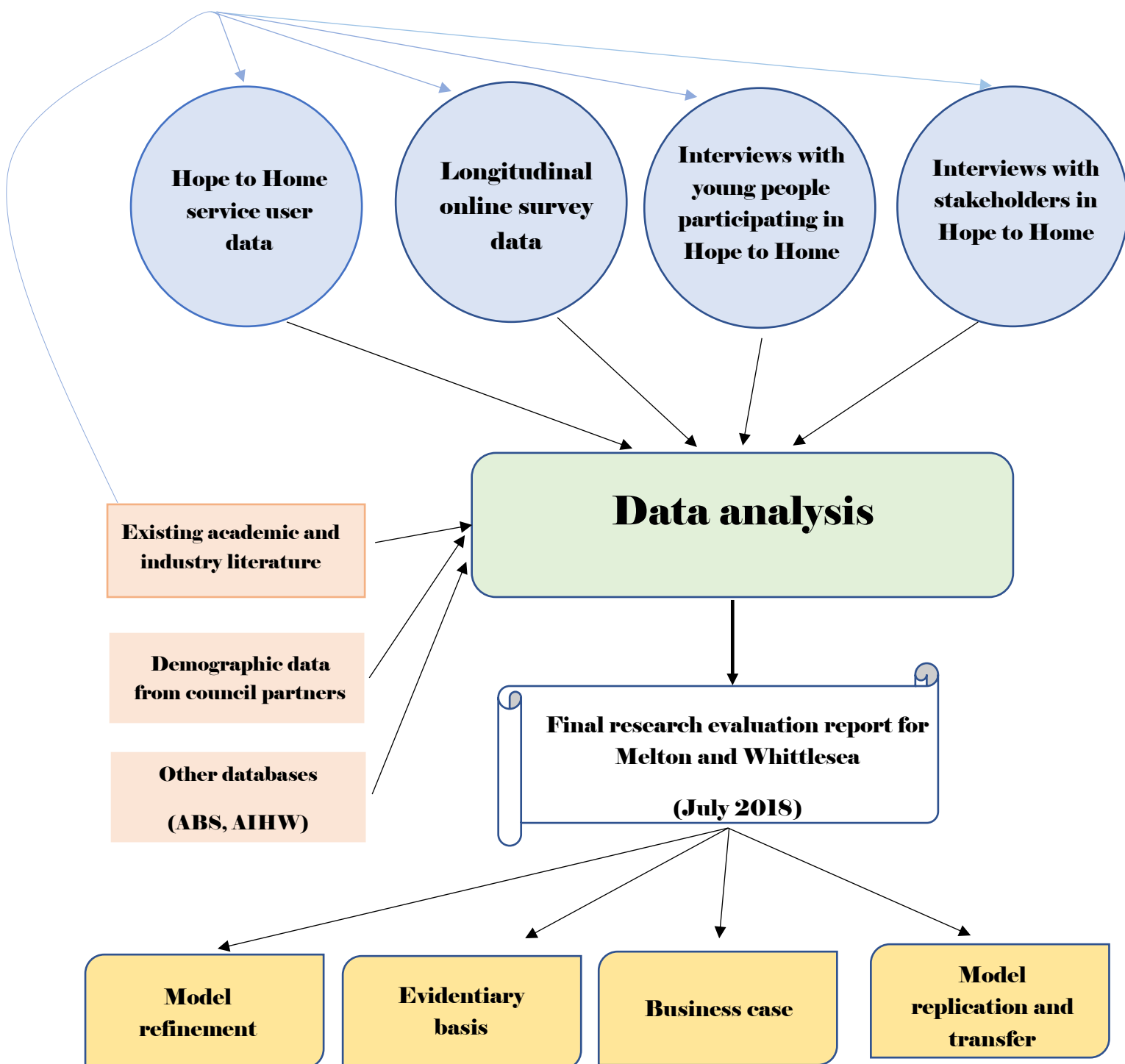
What have been the young people's experiences with the project?

What have been stakeholders' experiences of the project?

Ethics

Ethical approval for the conduct of this research project has been received from the Victoria University Ethics Committee, as a signatory to the guidelines outlined in the National Health and Medical Research Council *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007*. The project has been assigned the project number HREC 16-189.

Illustrated in Figure 9 is a flowchart of how the data gathered informed the final analysis.



Findings: Survey and Service User Data

Housing

Total number of young people housed

Figure 10 displays the total number of young people housed in the Hope to Home projects in Melton and Whittlesea. As can be seen, 31 young people were housed in Melton, along with 22 dependent children. The number of young people housed as well as the total number including children exceeds the programs expected numbers. This suggests that Hope to Home was successful in both facilitating and processing referrals into the program.

Fourteen young people along with five dependent children were housed in Whittlesea. Whilst this number was less than expected, it is a result of the Whittlesea program starting later than Melton and also the July closing date for data relating to this report.

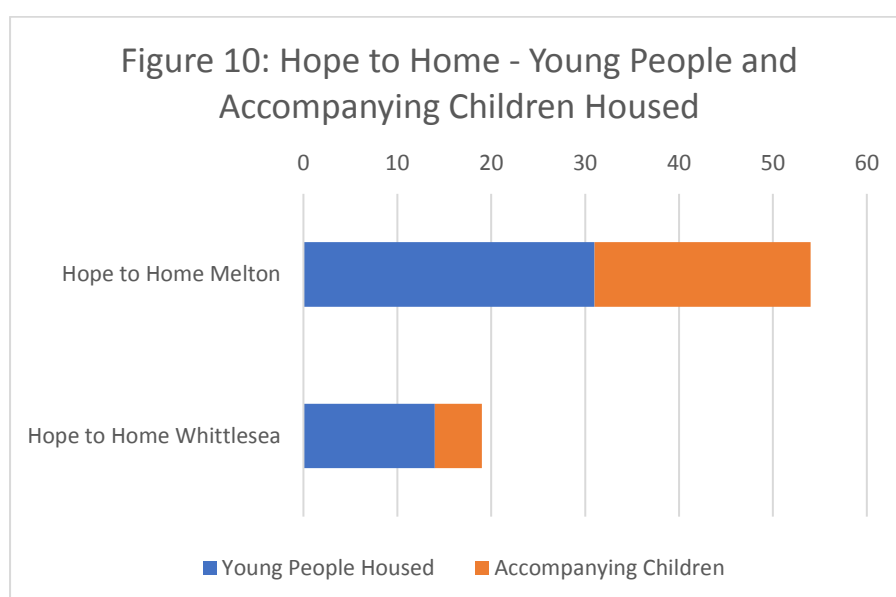


Figure 11 displays the number of tenancies with accompanying children. The majority of tenancies in Melton were one and two child families, while in Whittlesea the majority of tenancies were households without dependent children. The number of dependent children housed in the Hope to Home program was significantly greater than was expected. This finding suggests that future programs need to expect a significant number of dependent children when working with young people aged 16-25. This finding also suggests that in housing these additional children, Hope to Home is providing an additional service, at minimal extra cost, and is taking pressure off other child and family services.

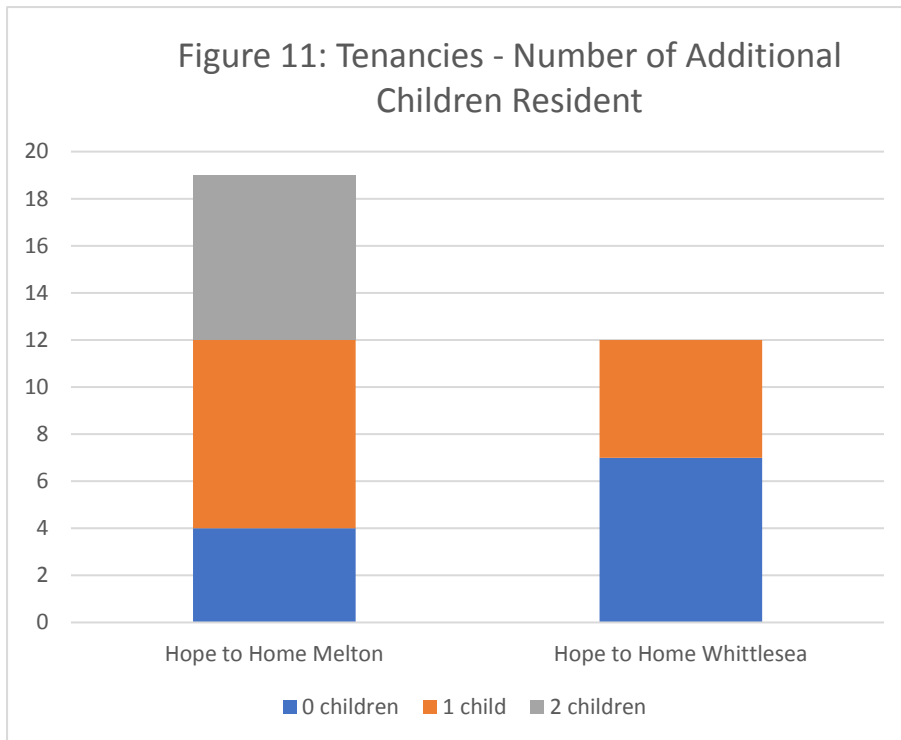


Figure 12 displays the occupancy pattern of the tenancies. There was a wide range of living arrangements, highlighting the diversity of living arrangements of these young people. Of particular interest are the large percentage of one and two child households. In addition, there was a significant proportion of young people in single occupancy. This suggests that programs like Hope to Home need to facilitate a range of different property types to suit diverse living arrangements.

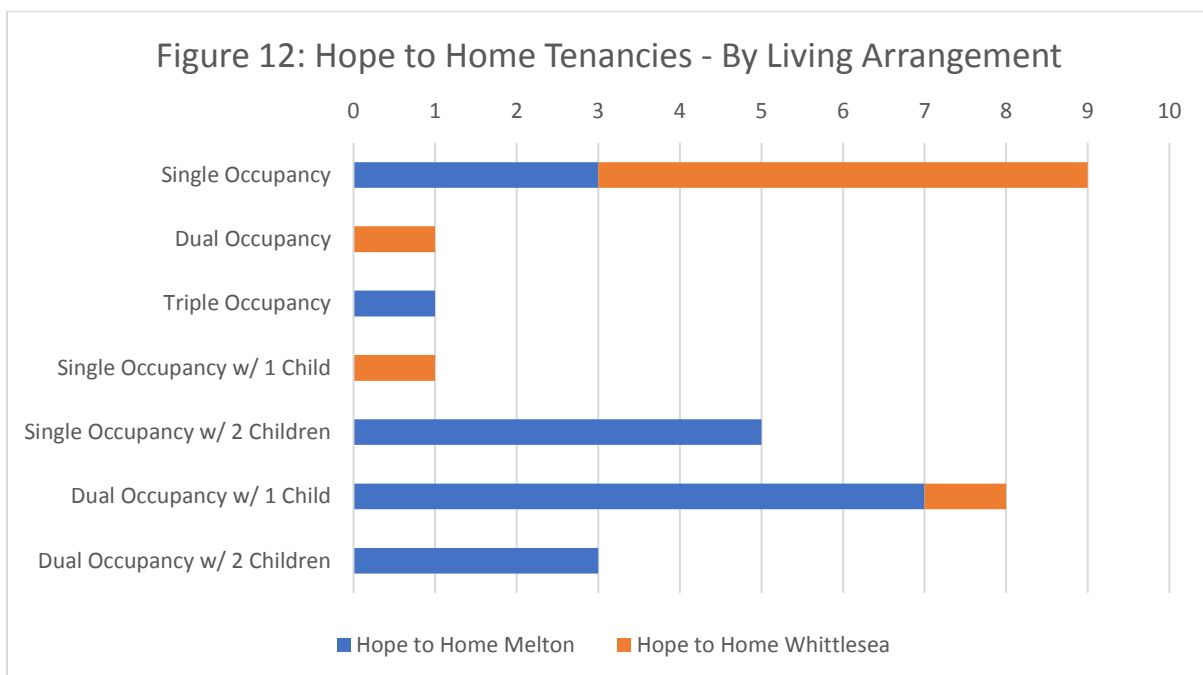


Figure 13 shows the living situation of the young people immediately before entry in to the Hope to Home program. As can be seen below, only a small percentage of participants were in private rental before commencing the Hope to Home program. The majority of young people were relying on friend and familial support for temporary housing. This finding is consistent with current research where young homeless people have been found to be reliant on unsuitable and unstable accommodation with friends, family, and acquaintances. Some of the reported reasons for seeking Hope to Home assistance are reported below:

Disharmonious living situation, with comments such as:

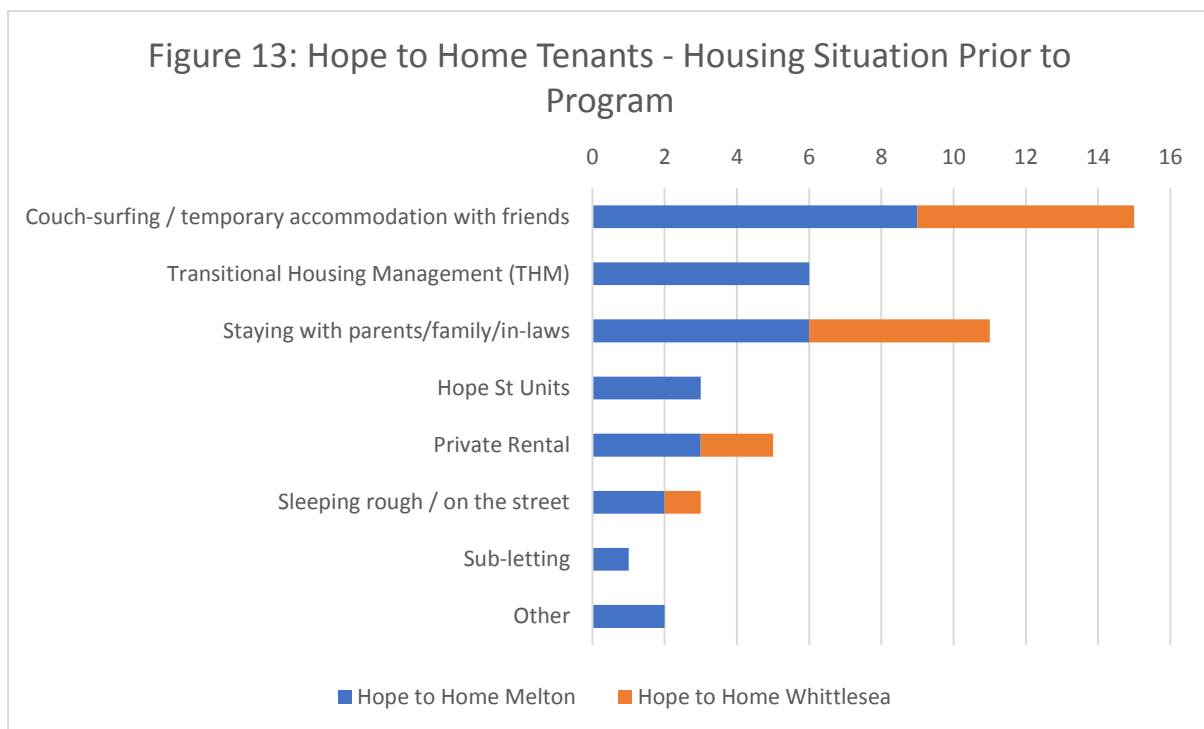
- I couldn't live with the other person living there.
- Don't get along with parents.
- Everyone was on drugs.
- Fighting.
- It was breaking me mentally.
- Kicked out.

Inadequate housing, such as:

- Living in garage at mother's house
- Over-crowded, 3 bedroom house had 9 people living in it

End of previous tenancy, for example:

- Contract ended
- Lease term was ending



Referral information

In total there were 73 referrals to the Hope to Home program, 14 in Whittlesea and 59 in Melton. Of these referrals, 51 (70%) were accepted into the program and were successfully housed. There were a variety of reasons for the non-acceptance of 21 (30%) referrals, including the changing circumstances of the young person, and the failure to meet the income eligibility criteria. The reasons for non-acceptance are listed below:

- The young person had already found accommodation
- The young person had moved from the area
- The young person had insufficient income to meet eligibility
- The young person's needs were too complex
- The young person had legal problems

Length of tenancy

In Melton, the current lengths of the tenancies have been (current of July 1st, 2018):

- 3 tenancies (continuing) have lasted less than 6 months so far
- 9 tenancies (continuing) have lasted between 6 – 12 months so far
- 7 tenancies have lasted more than 12 months

In Whittlesea, the current lengths of the tenancies have been (current of July 1st, 2018):

- 5 tenancies (continuing) have lasted more than 6 months so far
- 10 tenancies (continuing) have lasted less than 6 months so far

The findings suggest that Hope to Home has been successful in finding and maintaining suitable accommodation. The number of tenancies of 6 months and longer (21) is significant for this cohort of people. It must be noted that many of the tenancies in the Whittlesea program are less than 6 months in. It has also been noted by case managers that some of the young people have moved out of Hope to Home properties and into other private rental properties. This suggests that some young people were able to utilise their rental history and the knowledge gained from the program to secure private rental on their own.

Figures 14 and 15 display the referring organisation of successful tenants participating in the Hope to Home program. In both programs, housing services in these local government areas have been the predominant referral source for successful tenants. These findings highlight the importance of Council programs in referring to these programs. In addition, it highlights the need for Hope to Home to further expand its relationships with potential referral organisations.

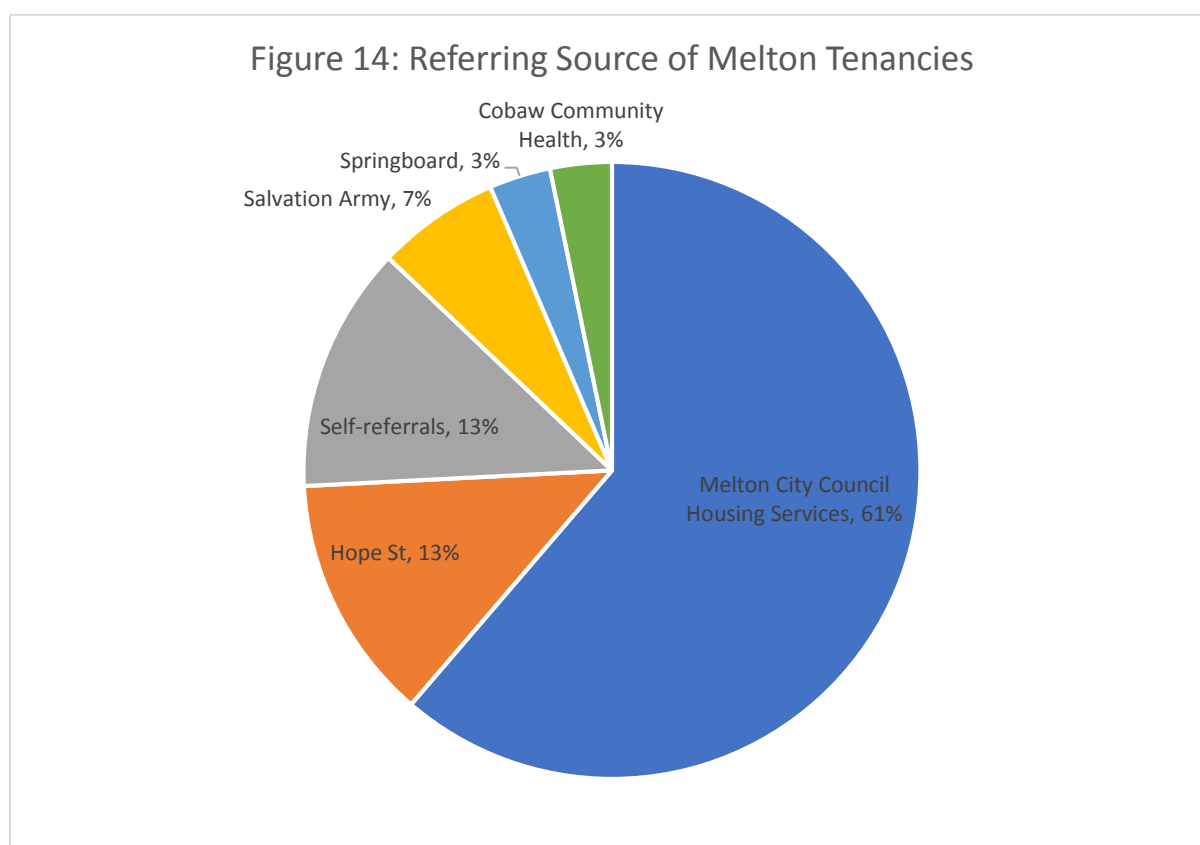
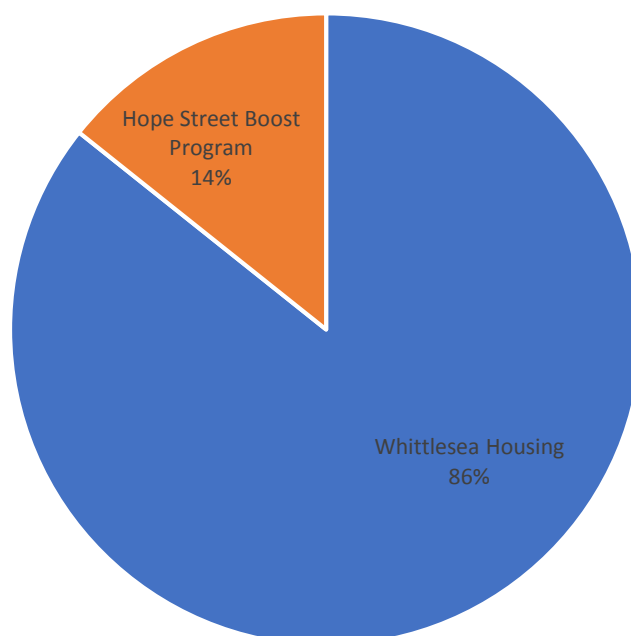


Figure 15: Referring Source of Whittlesea Tenancies

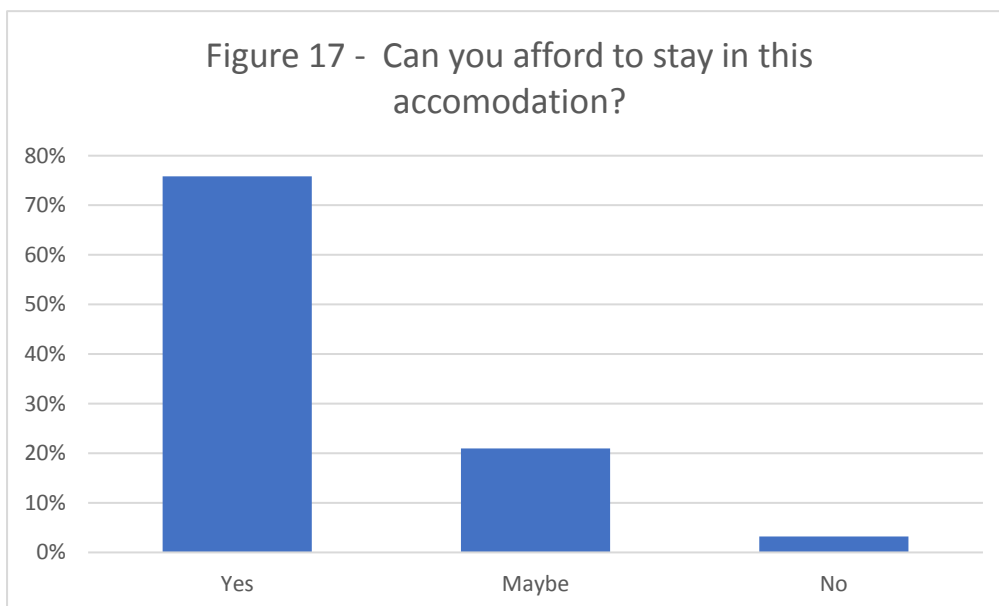
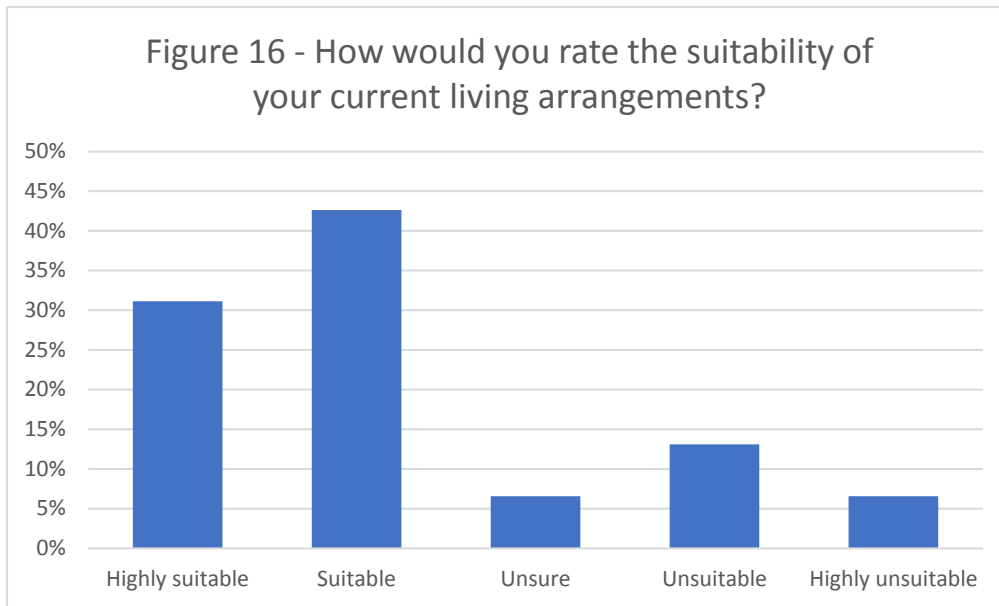


Time taken for tenancy

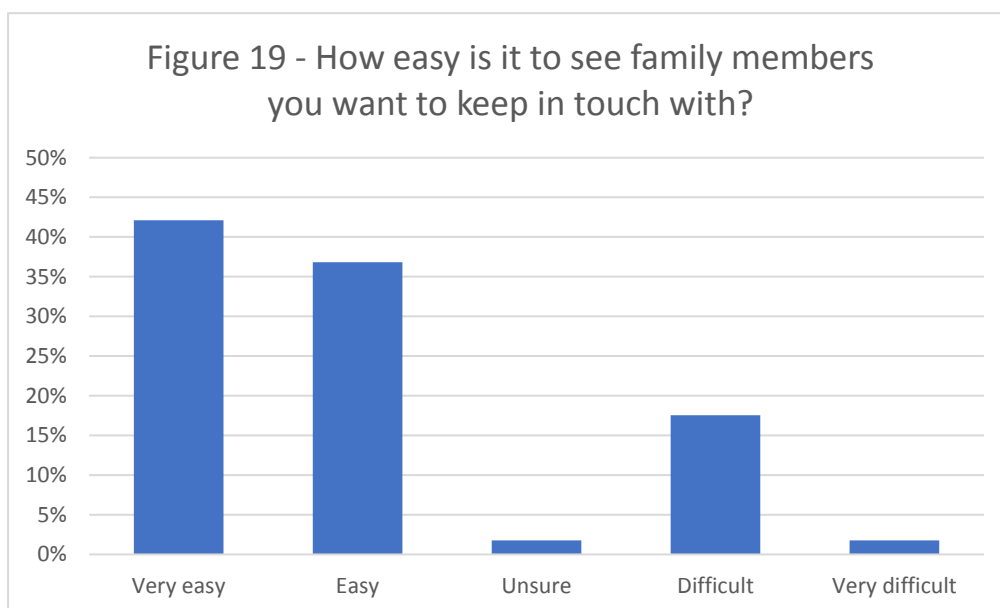
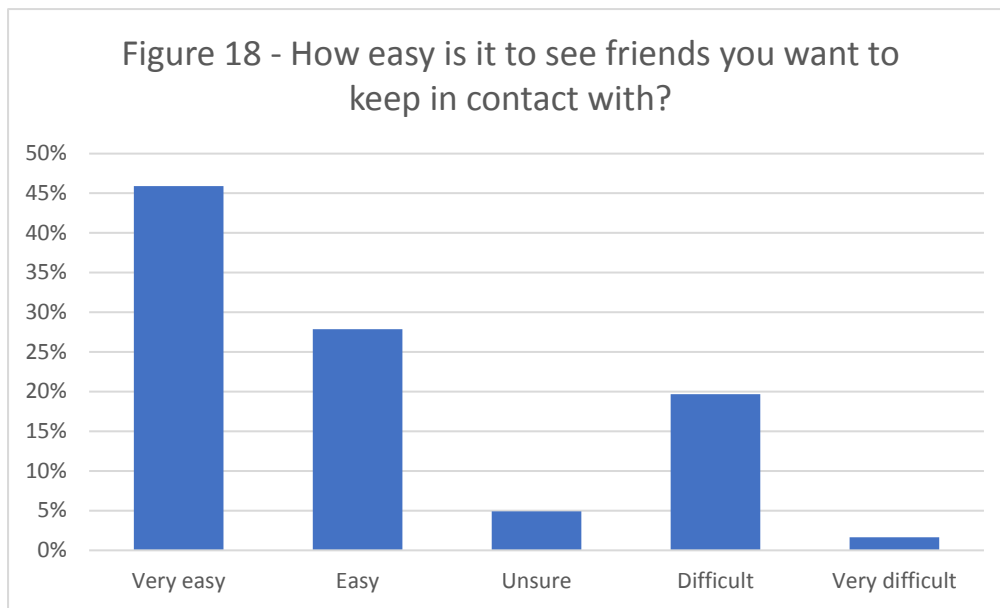
The waiting time for housing was defined as the period between the day of the successful initial assessment and the day of moving in. In Melton, the mean waiting time for program participants was approximate 5.3 weeks (individual waiting times ranged from 1 day to 12 weeks). In Melton, the mean waiting for program participants was approximate 5.5 weeks (individual waiting times ranged from 3 weeks to 9 weeks). This finding suggests that Hope to Home was able to achieve successful tenancies in a timely manner. As most of the participants had been trying to find accommodation for a significant length of time, an average of five and a half weeks can be seen as timely.

Suitability and Affordability of Hope to Home Properties

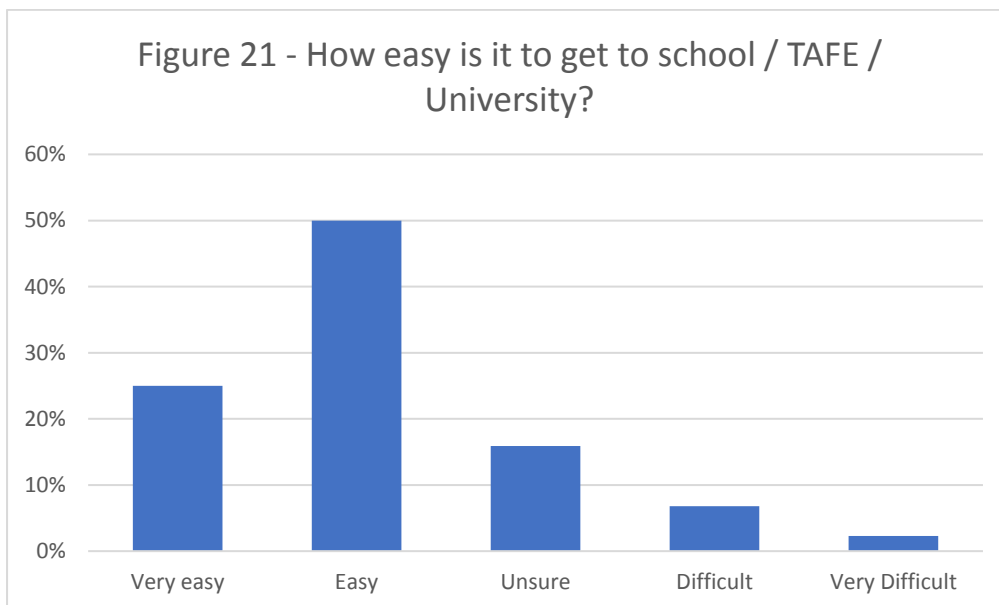
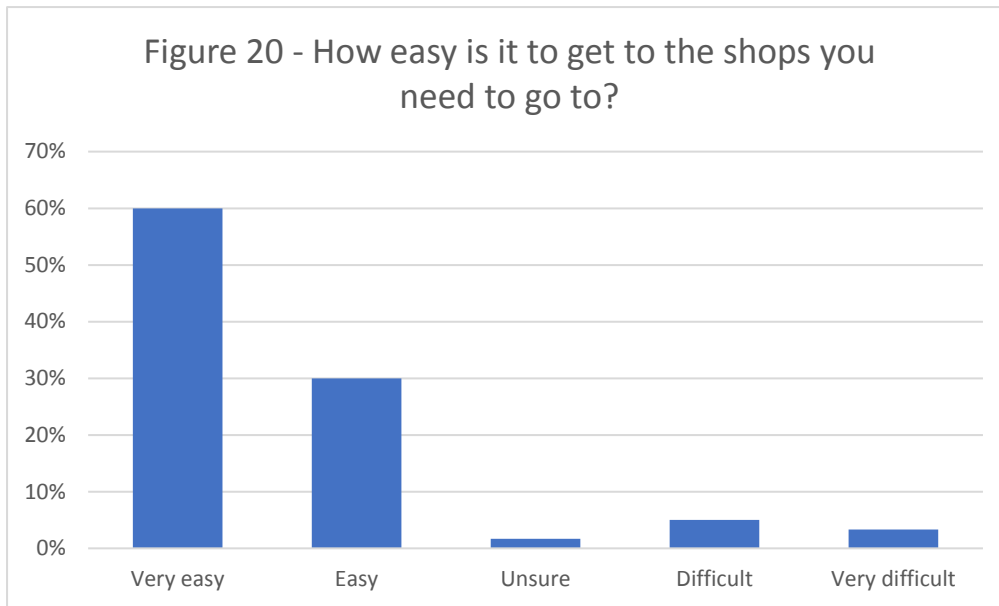
Figures 16 to 24 relate to the suitability and affordability of properties as reported by the young people. As can be seen over 75% of participants reported their accommodation as either suitable or highly suitable (Figure 16). Seventy-six percent of participants said their housing was affordable (Figure 17). These findings suggest that overall, participants were happy with the affordability and suitability of their accommodation.

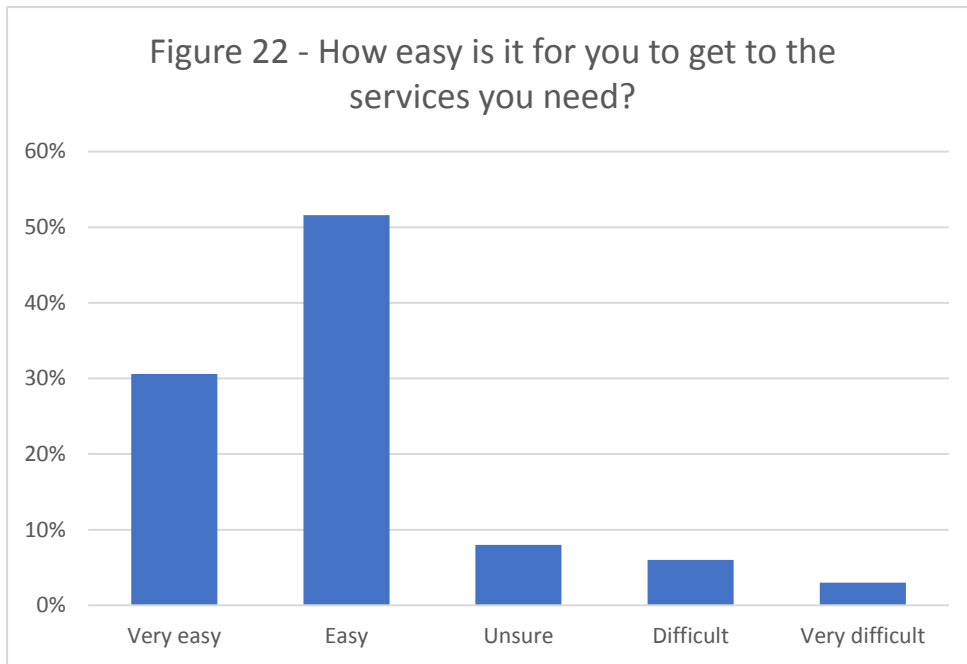


In regards to accommodation suitability as it relates to location, 74% of participants found it easy or very easy to keep in contact with friends and family (Figure 18), and 79% found it easy or very easy to keep in contact with family (Figure 19). This suggests that the properties were located in areas where participants' friends and families lived. This finding endorses programs that support young people within their own communities rather than bringing them in to a central location.

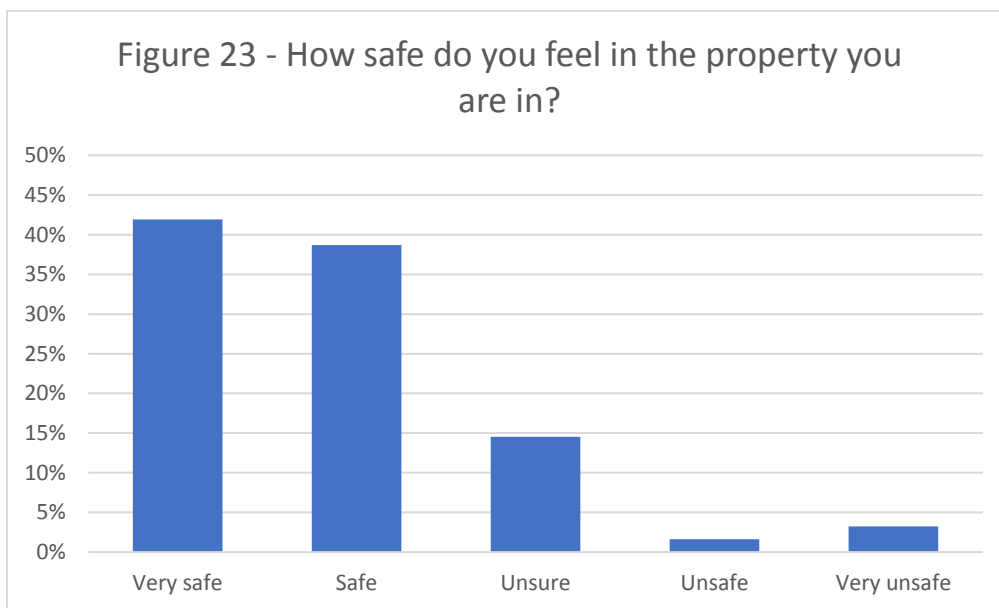


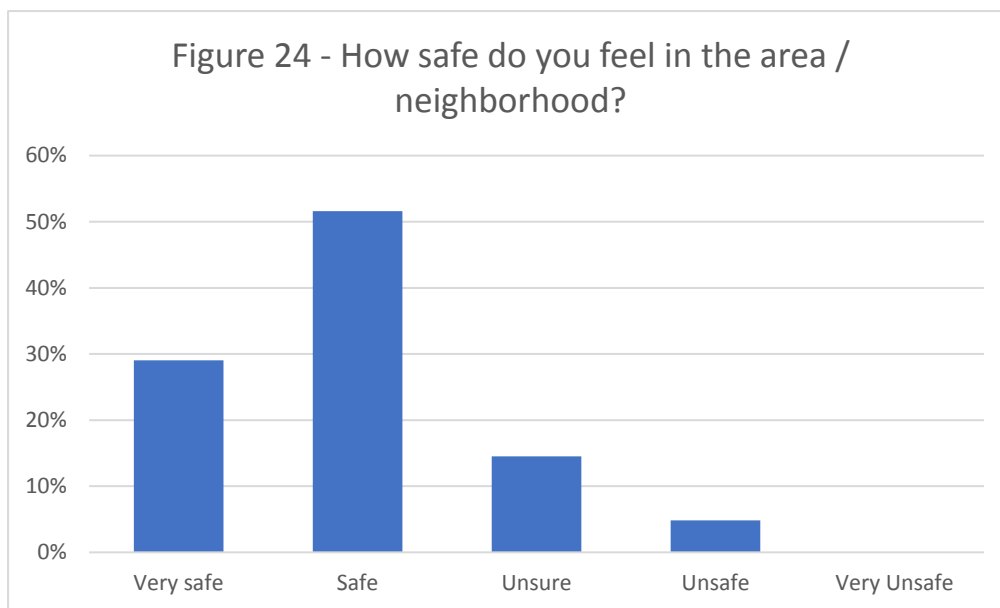
Figures 20, 21 and 22 suggest that participants found their accommodation convenient in terms of accessing shops, education needs, and required services.





As shown in Figure 23, 81% of participants reported feeling safe or very safe in their accommodation, and 80% of young people felt safe or very safe in their neighbourhoods.





Overall, it can be concluded that the majority Hope to Home participants found their accommodation affordable and suitable. This suggests that Hope to Home was successful in supporting young people into sustainable housing that supports their needs.

Age of the clients

The Hope to Home program is open to young people ages 16 to 25.

In Melton, the tenants in the program had a mean age of 20.03, with the youngest being 17 and the oldest being 25. Those in their teenage years (17, 18, or 19) comprised 37% of tenants.

In Whittlesea, the tenants in the program had a mean age of 20.24, with the youngest being 18 and the oldest being 25. Those in their teenage years (18, or 19) comprised 58% of tenants.

Education

Number of young people remained/engaged at school

In Melton, 71% of the young people housed were either involved in education, or about to enrol in education at some time during their tenancy. Thirty-five percent of the young people indicated that their highest level of qualification was Year 12 or a TAFE qualification.

Examples of enrolments during the tenancy period include finishing Year 11 or Year 12, Early Learning and Childcare Certificate III, Massage Therapy, Disability Certificate IV, Diploma in Business, Automotive Airbrushing (TAFE), and Hairdressing (University).

In Whittlesea, 50% of the young people housed were either involved in education, or about to enrol in education (time involved in the program has been short so far, so may be too soon to tell). Examples of this include finishing Year 12, Diploma of Early Childhood Education, Hairdressing qualifications, and computer training.

Five educational workshops were conducted in various locations around Whittlesea. These workshops focused on the topics of living skills, and skills for securing and maintaining tenancies. Each workshop targeted a particular group of young people with particular needs. As such, the workshops were focused on the learning needs of each group. These workshops were well received by the young people and assisted in the rental process.

Employment

Number of young people remained/secured employment/traineeship

In Melton, 55% of the young people housed were employed during the tenancy period. Places of employment included Woolworths, Kmart, butcher shop, car detailing business, hairdresser, childcare and disability childcare, factory work at Don KR, aged care, and a pizza shop.

In Whittlesea, 33% of the young people housed were involved in employment during the tenancy period (note: this period has been much shorter than Melton thus far as the young people have participated in Hope to Home for a much shorter time, thus direct comparison with Melton is not possible). Places of employment included Valley Girl (clothing retail shop), waitressing, and before-and-after school care. The nature of the young people's employment in both programs was largely low paid and casual. As such, one of the challenges of Hope to Home was to find affordable accommodation, and assist young people in maintaining tenancy through budgeting, and offering assistance when needed.

Model Costs

Amount of brokerage to each person/household

In Melton, the total brokerage was \$38,857 (average of \$2045 per tenancy).

- 8 properties received \$1,650 Private Rental Brokerage
- 11 properties received \$2,000 Private Rental Brokerage
- 1 property received \$2,657 Private Rental Brokerage

In Melton, across 31 tenants, the following subsidies were given:

Hope Street Subsidy: \$20,846 (mean of \$672 per young person)

Office of Housing Bond - \$13,881 (mean of \$731 per tenancy)

Moving in Kit - \$4,589 (mean of \$148 per young person)

Vouchers donated by Woodgrove Shopping Centre - \$3,291 (mean of \$106 per young person)

In Whittlesea, the total brokerage was \$33,638, across 14 tenants, the following subsidies were given:

Hope Street Subsidy - \$600 each tenant

Private Rental Brokerage - \$26,440 (mean of \$1,889 per young person)

Office of Housing Bond - \$6,598 (mean of \$471 per young person)

Across the entire model, these numbers equate to a brokerage spend of around \$1600 per young person. The brokerage costs were higher in Whittlesea, than for Melton, which may relate to the lower employment rates in the Whittlesea cohort. The total cost is similar to budget estimates, and similar to figures noted by past research (Zaretsky & Flatau, 2015).

The program also employed, in total, the equivalent of 3 part time staff (3 days per week each) for the duration of the programs. The cost of staffing for the pilot was above budget estimates but less than equivalent programs based on past research.

These moneys also supported 27 dependent children. One of the important findings of Hope to Home was that the cost of supporting the young people included supporting their dependent children. As such, the program may also take pressure off other youth and family services.

Findings: Young People's Experiences

This section will begin with a brief vignette of three participant's experience in the Hope to Home program. We will then present some broad themes that emerged from the young people's testimony.

Vignettes

Matt (22) left home at the age of 14 and was in DHS care after that. His final childhood home was in Melton so he calls Melton home now and has friends there. Matt describes his accommodation over the past 8 years as 'pretty erratic'. The Hope to Home program helped secure Matt his current rental property of 6 months. He was very thankful to his HTH contact person, 'Katie was really diligent. She was just always onto everything'. Hope to Home helped Matt with more than just his accommodation 'some things happened to my car...because of the budget...it made it difficult...but Hope Street offered and were able to cover it'. Also, 'Every little thing like, my girlfriend was pregnant and Katie was just offering everything for that...I didn't expect so much'. Matt is now a proud father and lives with his girlfriend and child. Matt has been working as a subcontractor for 4 years. When asked if there was anything else he wanted to tell us, Matt stated that 'I think if more people knew about Hope Street definitely they would use the service...it should be more available to people'.

Aasma (23) arrived in Melbourne from Perth with a suitcase and \$300 in her pocket after leaving her husband. She was told about the Hope to Home program, and inquired as to her eligibility. When asked about the program Aasma replied 'It is still one of the best things that happened to me to be honest...I was couch-surfing at a friend's house...I was doing casual shifts at Camp Australia...I found a place in Lalor'. Hope to Home helped Aasma with other many aspects of everyday life 'So if you look at what I have requested over a few months, I have done Myki, Kmart, Coles...they are always willing to cater to you as a specific person...sometimes I pay off rent, then there is no food'. Aasma had some suggestions for improving and expanding upon programs like Hope to Home 'Is there nothing for people that want to study but cant afford it, like no company similar like this funding at the moment'. Aasma also suggested that Hope to Home would be ideal for helping some of her friends who are single parents. She also wished there was some more cash brokerage, as some businesses like Halal butchers only accept cash.

Mia and her fiancé and two children (3 years old and 5 months old) had been trying to enter the private rental market for some time prior to her referral to Hope to Home, 'we did and we were just rejected, rejected, rejected'. Although Mia found her current rental accommodation through a friend, it was Hope to Home's signature on the lease and help with securing the bond that enabled the lease to go ahead. After 6 months in the program Mia and her family

are enjoying their accommodation and are building a rental history ‘ yes (the landlord is happy), because we always pay on time’. Mia said she found all of the Hope to Home services useful ‘they’re really flexible, you can just text them if you need them’. In terms of improving the service, Mia suggested that Hope to Home could organise some more activities for families, such as a camping trip.

Emergent themes

Table 2. Emergent themes and illustrative quotes from Hope to Home participants

Theme	Illustrative Quote
Positive Aspects of Hope to Home.	<i>“It is still one of the best things that happened to me to be honest with you”</i>
Transitioning to the private rental market.	<i>“Well I would probably still be couch surfing”</i>
Meeting needs beyond housing.	<i>“Anything for my kids we get it...they’ve always been a big help”</i>
The uniqueness of Hope to Home.	<i>“They have been the best service provided to us”</i>
Hope to Home Areas of Improvement.	<i>“Try and give their clients more of an open choice”</i>
Recommendations for Hope to Home.	<i>“I think the criteria for the project was a bit small”</i>

The fifteen young people interviewed were all participants of the Hope to Home pilot program in Melton and Whittlesea. Interviews focused on their experiences of the Hope to Home initiative, the types of assistance they received, as well as the strengths and limitations of the program. Participants also had an opportunity to provide insights and recommendations to improve Hope to Home or future reiterations of the program. Table 2 is a summary of the emergent themes.

“It is still one of the best things that happened to me to be honest with you”: Positive Aspects of Hope to Home.

In general, the young people interviewed expressed gratitude for the program and the assistance offered. The following three young women from the Whittlesea pilot demonstrate this positive regard for Hope to Home:

I feel like the project benefited people...It is still one of the best things that happened to me to be honest with you. (Aasma, Whittlesea)

It's really good, and yeah, it makes people want to get out of this, like, get out and do something. It kind of encourages people to do something of their own...which is good... it is definitely worth it. (Claire, Whittlesea)

It is great. There are so many people that, I was there and I saw the people that came in and the people that needed help...it is a good opportunity for people to go, I needed help at the time, a lot of help, and I got the help...So, yeah, it was great. (Rana, Whittlesea)

Similarly, these sentiments were echoed by Sarah who is a young mother involved in the Melton pilot:

I have loved Hope to Home. When we first moved they would come weekly and it was frustrating and I didn't understand but then I worked out that we would see a person from Hope Street every week and it was great. We had great communication...I got pregnant, I was very comfortable, we had great communication. Sometimes I would need help and I thought I was stuck and they were very happy to help and now we've got our new home. I still miss them and I miss the staff there and they're lovely. I think it was very good, everything went very smooth. The people there were easy to talk to and they were very clear...we've moved into our new house and I'm very happy. (Sarah, Melton)

Likewise, Aidan and Mia, a young couple with children living in Melton also highlighted the suitability of Hope to Home for their needs:

Aidan: Honestly we're a young couple who find everything useful because we have to be with Hope to Home...so for now everything is useful.

Mia: They're really flexible. You can just text them if you need them...we just text her so it's the right amount of time. They're not in your face all the time.

Aidan: It's not like two weeks or three weeks before you even see them.

“Well I would probably still be couch surfing”: Transitioning to the private rental market.

As anticipated, the primary form of assistance Hope to Home provided all participants was assistance in finding, applying for, and settling into a private rental property. The level of support and assistance the caseworker provided to each young person (or young family) was dependent upon their individual needs. For instance, in some cases the young person had identified a potential house to lease, whilst in other cases Hope to Home workers were involved in finding appropriate housing, assisting with inspections and the application process, securing the property (e.g., providing bond and rent) and helping the young person set up their home. For Aasma, who moved to Melbourne from interstate after her divorce, the practical, as well as, moral support her caseworker and the program offered her during this time was invaluable to her “fresh start”:

I found a place in Lalor. You know, she found it, like, we spoke to the lady, she even had a chat with her. She was nice enough to come with me. I was like I do not know anybody, please, just come with me, you know, some moral support. The lady was happy to say yeah, you know, I will make the rent fit your payment... They helped me furnish my room. Like I told you, I came to Melbourne literally not having anything and my friend who I was couch-surfing at had a bed frame of her daughters, so she gave me the bed frame and then we went to Target, we got a bed and I was like oh, my room, it is nice that I was able to kind of have a fresh start and not go through so much. I had already been through a really tough time... I think it is good because sometimes with private rental for example, you can't talk to the homeowner face-to-face... [The agent] doesn't know my story, [the agent] doesn't know me, she just wants the money and that's it. You know?

Furthermore, the multifaceted nature of this support and assistance is evident in the following participants' reflections on their experience with Hope to Home:

It's been a lot of help and it is not as stressful moving from... Like it's, because you've got like the other supports, they help with half the bond and it hasn't been as stressful with trying to get everything all sorted and, like, on your own... They helped with the bond. I think they helped at times with rent. No, they helped with half the rent, not the bond and gave us \$500 cos me and my partner did it together. It was \$1000 to get, like, help with furniture, so that was good... I got a bed. We had some other stuff. We

had, like, your main stuff, but yeah, we got just little bits and pieces...if you said that they go on the lease with us or they can, like, give us a renter review, like a reference or something to help us get the house. We weren't expecting it, but we got it...It was just the money that they gave to help us and that they're still like doing...Like, it's hard when you first move into a new house where you've got all these things that you have to pay up front, and you can't save up that much in such a little time, so it was really good help. (Claire, Whittlesea)

Like, for me, it took me maybe a little more than a year to find the house...Every time we applied, they'd say you know...you don't have a good employment, you know?...So it's very difficult...and then, like, even if you apply for a very expensive rent and say, okay, let's try...investigating seeing if maybe the lower rent, then they'll accept us...They were all the same. They all said, No...This company isn't helping you, like to settle down...Especially if you have kids, it's much more difficult, which is a good approach for this [program]. (Aisha, Whittlesea)

From the above comments, it is evident that for these young people the normative stress of finding and moving into a new home was in some ways amplified due to their current situations. Therefore, Hope to Home and their assigned caseworkers were pivotal in reducing this stress and difficulty. Interestingly, apart from this support, from the following insights offered by Rana and Lena, it was evident that being involved with Hope to Home has provided them with necessary knowledge and skills required to better advocate for themselves in the private rental market in the future:

It was really good process. It helped me a lot. Some of the people there were trying to help me find rent and assist me with furniture or groceries, things like that. They helped me get the bond as well. It was a long a process. I had to wait about two weeks for the appointment, but I was looking for houses and they offered me transport, stuff like that, so it was very good...The process of trying to find a house was really hard and the help that I gained from that and the confidence and support they gave me was really good...I applied for at least 30 houses at the beginning and I was refused for all of them...I didn't have any past rent history and one the people from Hope to Home called them up and asked them and was like, this person has a situation, because I was alone at the time, my husband was overseas...so it was a very hard process and that was assistance that I really needed...it was a long process again, about another 5-6 houses before someone accepted because it is practically like a market, you know? So many people are trying to find rents and stuff

like that. It always depends on the persons...At the end, they told me to give an up-front payment of rent. Instead of giving one month, try and give two months maybe. They gave me advice on how to apply, for an actual application, maybe things that I was doing wrong...They helped me apply for a bond.” (Rana, Whittlesea)

Well I would probably still be couch surfing...Yes, I would be trying to save for a bond, yes, but also it is more the fact that I don't have any rental history and the fact that I am under 25 which is, when it comes to landlords, they're not too inclined to take people under 25 because they're thinking party stage, all that kind of stuff...When you're under 25 it's hell hard to get a rental...[bond being a problem] would have been at the time. At the time it would have taken me a little bit to get it together...Yeah, so pretty much the rental history is the main thing because I've never had rental history, it had always been couch, sofa, or something. Rental history, it really does help, especially when you have a really good rental history so it has definitely helped...they taught [me] about vying for actual rentals as well so they pretty much are like "ah, okay so this is how you go about it. This is what you do, this is what you need". They say "you need this" but really you only need this...it is really insightful into it so it's good. So that way you're not so confused. (Lena, Melton)

Further to this, what is apparent from the feedback provided by program participants is the crucial role this initiative had in supporting young people who lacked a rental history. That is, despite many of the young people working and to an extent being able to pay for bond and sustain rent, they were not able to secure a rental property due to their lack of rental history and references. For instance, like fellow participants, Rana and Lena, Matt who had a history of unstable housing was able to successfully apply for a private rental for his young family and develop his rental history with the assistance of Hope to Home:

I was in a lot of refugees, share houses, just stuff and whatnot...it was pretty erratic...[help getting a rental] that was the biggest thing. It just seemed like such a leap just going for a place. Since Hope Street I've got six months rental history. I think applying for a place three or four applications and I get accepted. It's quite easy now...[case manager] had a list, had looked into all the inspections, gave us all the inspection times, addresses, where to meet, and she was there for basically every single one doing all the work for us.

Similarly, for young couple Mia and Aidan, Hope to Home effectively advocated on their behalf, making up for their limited rental history:

Mia: As far as getting a house recently, they are helping with finding that...they were actually helpful, they have been helpful a few times...

Aidan: [It] would have been hard because especially when you don't have that history of renting and stuff. Especially when you're...out of work for some time you don't have money to buy food and stuff and it has actually been really helpful...They're a really good help to young people and, indeed, helped young people to stay out of the street and stuff like that.

Mia: We've been waiting to move out of our previous house but, because of our age and the rental history, so it was really difficult. Even though [case worker] tried helping us...We actually found the house because we knew a family friend that was living there but then [case worker] went further behind it and did what she did and helped us out.

Aidan: Yeah the application the age, like I said earlier age wise and rental history so those kind of things were getting too hard for us...With the houses, the rent at times, the houses we applied for were obviously houses that we could pay and we could actually afford so we did because I was working and my fiancé had a part time job too so I'm not sure it was not the main problem of us getting rejecting, it was just like she said age wise and the rental history.

In addition to assisting young people with transitioning into the private rental market, it is essential that Hope to Home are locating homes which effectively meet the needs of their diverse client group. The current cohort of young people across the Whittlesea and Melton programs were made up of single young adults, couples and young families. The vast majority of young people expressed that they were content with the location and standards of the residences Hope to Home located for them. For instance, Sarah who has a young child and Lena who has a dog, both discussed how their Melton rental properties work well for their needs:

It's perfect. Smooth, nothing to worry about...It's close to everything, the schools for [son], I love it. We're very happy. Sometimes we may get a bill and I panic but, no, every now and again something will come up but it's been great...So when we moved to the house that I was living in, I sort of lost it to begin with because it was very hard to work out because Hope Street was obviously a lot cheaper but then once we'd moved and then we worked out the rent difference and then we started to work out the park was so close, the school was close, Woodgrove was close, the doctors,

High Street, shops, agent, and we're in the middle of everything so I'm comfortable and I like it. I'm happy there and I can walk to come and visit. (Sarah, Melton)

The only difficult with some of the places was the pets thing because I do have a dog and I was like, "I'm not leaving him somewhere, he's coming with me"...Yeah, [my dog] is allowed there...He has got a big backyard and when I'm home he's inside and when I'm not he's out. It's pretty good. He's got grass area, there's garden areas, the fence is alright...I think I might just stay where I am at the moment. It's a good house and, if I want to say for example do up the gardens or something like that then I can. I don't actually have to ask the landlord, I do anyway, but the house is a nice house. It has potential...It is kind of conveniently located and, like I said, it's a really cheap house so I think I might use that when I'm going back to school. (Lena, Melton)

In summary, it is evident that Hope to Home has accomplished the primary goal of assisting 'at risk' young people move into the private rental market at least in the short-term. From the insights and reflections offered by the participants, Hope to Home provides young people with varied levels of support inclusive of locating an appropriate property, assisting in the application process, and finally assisting with securing and setting up the rental property. In addition to this practical and extrinsic support, the Hope to Home caseworkers seemingly provided a supportive role for young people who often have limited people to advocate for them. Furthermore, by participating in this program young people develop a rental history and in some cases further knowledge about the application process, both which are essential for them to succeed in the private rental market beyond the Hope to Home program.

"Anything for my kids we get it...they've always been a big help":

Meeting needs beyond housing.

In addition to aiding participants to transition into the private rental market, Hope to Home offered a number of wrap around services and forms of assistance to young people throughout their tenancy, giving them improved opportunities to succeed in their new living arrangements. Imperative to this aspect of the program is the diverse ways this assistance can be utilised to meet the needs of participants. For example, the following young people were able to draw on the supports offered in ways to best meet their diverse and immediate needs:

Us being able to choose what we want. So, if you look at what I have requested over a few months, I have done Myki, Kmart, Coles, whatever I want for that month or for the week or, you know, however much I have requested...It has always been approved. Like I said, always willing to cater for you as a specific person, which is really good. I usually, sometimes, pay off rent and then I will be, like I need food, there is no food here. So it is good that it is not like you can only get this or you can only choose that you know? It is a wide range. (Aasma, Whittlesea)

Everything. Like, with the food vouchers, like, if they don't help out with the bills or the rent, they give you food voucher instead, so they usually put that money towards bills and rent. (Claire, Whittlesea)

They did also help, some things happened to my car and, because of the budget and whatnot made it a bit difficult but Hope Street offered, because I have that fund, they were able to cover some of that if I needed to. It would have been really helpful as well if it came to that and it almost came to that. (Matt, Melton)

Mostly medication...that helps a lot. Financial part is, of course, helping me as well. I am, you know, I've got money to start my family, like, the house. It was for me as, like, my husband is partly working...it did help me...Yeah, renting the place as well. (Aisha, Whittlesea)

This additional assistance and vouchers were particularly useful for those young people who had young families:

It helped me because I first thought, like, to buying some small furniture for my house, and you know, the regular things I get monthly is also a help. Like, the kid's a 2-year-old...Centrelink does not always, like, provide much, so it does, like, help me...when I go out and buy extra things that I need for my daughter...It's been good. It's been a very great experience. (Aisha, Whittlesea)

The constant support, like, even yesterday I got a Coles voucher because we're struggling a bit. I only get \$500 a fortnight off Centrelink and that's our rent. So, at the

minute [case worker] is really looking after us and helping. She took me shopping the day before yesterday to Kmart and got a whole bunch of baby stuff and necessities for the house...she has been really supportive. She came over after I had bubs and bought flowers out of her own money, she's just a...she's a lovely lady.” (Rebecca, Melton)

Anything for my kids we get it [case worker] always “if you want anything for the kids I will get it”...they've always been a big help. There have been times, like when I paid the rent...and she'll just come with a jar and stuff, it really helped and helped me to go places...helped me...to get my car back on the road because I haven't been working because of that, has been making me stay home because my license has been suspended...help take you places, make you meet new people to help you out. (Mia, Melton)

Importantly, the Hope to Home program also supports participants in their efforts to engage in employment and education. In regards to the current cohort, many of the young people come to the program already engaged in employment and education activities. However, Aasma and Paul both took advantage of this aspect of the program:

So, through the program...I know a Diploma course...She took me there and I applied for the Diploma. I feel like, if I did not know...if she wasn't there to help me, I would be like a headless chicken, I would go everywhere. So in the long run it is going to help me because I am already half-way through my Diploma now so I feel like I am getting somewhere. (Aasma, Whittlesea)

She managed to have my Forklift licence paid for...I suppose the forklift licence would be considered an advantage to an extent...it was a two-day course...[case worker] paid for that as well. I organized the course but I had no idea that the licence was actually as expensive as it is now...\$390 it cost us. (Paul, Melton)

“They have been the best service provided to us”: The uniqueness of Hope to Home.

Many of the young people interviewed have had various levels of interaction with other housing and social services. However, many of the participants commented on how Hope to Home offered them something other programs and agencies have not. For instance,

Aasma felt that this program was well suited to young people, while Claire pointed out unique elements of the initiative:

I think Hope to Home was like a stepping-stone, or a hand that kind of helps anybody that is in need of aid, information. You know? Because at a young age you go through struggles and no one really understands them. Everyone is busy with their own lives and no one actually goes oh, this and this and this. If you ask them, everyone is willing to help. (Aasma, Whittlesea)

It's been great...Probably the startup fee, which was like the best thing, because it's not something that other places...nowhere, like, they don't have these there...And like, it's good, because if you are, like, starting really fresh with nothing, you can then buy your fridge, your lounge, like buy your main stuff with that startup fee, um, the startup kit that they give you...it's a great program and I wish it had it in New South Wales, but, yeah, it's good cos, not something you see everywhere, so it would be a good thing to have, especially with all the homeless...out there. It's mainly because no one can get a place to rent, whereas if you've got that backing behind you, and the help to find work if you need it, you've got more of a chance. (Claire, Whittlesea)

Similarly, for young Melton couple Paul and Rebecca, Hope to Home has filled a gap in assistance left by other government agencies:

Paul: It has been good...It has been a lot more supportive than any government services for housing and...Personal contact is good and yeah, it should be funded, it really should.

Rebecca: I was just about to say that. It's been better than any government agency...I really don't think we can say a bad thing against it...They have been the best service provided to us. We have been on public housing listing for, he's been on it since...

Paul: I have been on the Housing Commission list since I was 15...I got kicked out at 15 and I've basically hopped house to house, couches, sheds, all that sort of stuff since I was 15.

Rebecca: But since then, oh you can go to this government funding thing and they will try and do something for you. Hope to Home is the only one that has actually...

Paul: Yeah, what I used to get told by Centrelink, because I was considered a single male, didn't have any dependents, I am more than capable of working so there is no housing or anything they can actually offer help wise.

Rebecca: And he was told that physically.

Paul: Like when I first got on Centrelink I was lucky to get \$300 a fortnight.

Rebecca: And I was getting \$75 a fortnight. \$75 a fortnight. And they still classed me as being overpaid...They want you to have a rental history but they don't want to rent to young couple because it looks bad so you can't get a rental history and you can't get a house without a history when no one will give you a house to give you a history.

Further to this, it was evident from the interviews with the young people that they had confidence in the program and more so in the reliability of their caseworkers and their ability to follow through with their requests. This was a commonality across both the Whittlesea and Melton pilots. It is clear in the following reflections participants often expressed that the caseworkers went "above and beyond" (Aasma, Whittlesea):

[Caseworker] does go above and beyond with us all...She is always there...I need help, she is there, she comes, yeah, she is really nice. (Aasma, Whittlesea)

I would also say probably the support as well that you get from your workers. They're amazing. [Caseworkers] has been great. She is, she's so good. Even if you have just a little bit of an issue or something like that you can call her and she will tell you. She'll be like "alright, this is how you go about it. This is what you do" and stuff like that. They really are there. They're there for you to ask questions and everything like that. They do give heaps of support with it. (Lena, Melton)

I had a lot of health problems. She helped me...when she says I can bring in anything, tell them, but she's always, she's very close to my house as well and she's, you know, just ask me anything and I will help you with it. It's very confident to hear that, so yeah. (Aisha, Whittlesea)

Hope for Home would have relieved a lot of stress on both of us...And there is support. It's just, you know, more or less, if something goes wrong, you know that there is something you can do about it, whereas in the past we have had plenty of

stuff, like our last private rental it came to the stage of our landlord came and kicked the front door and then took the support and then had us kicked out after that. (Paul, Melton)

This dependable and consistent support was also fundamental for the young parents involved in the program:

[Caseworker] was really diligent. She was just always onto everything...Every little thing, like my girlfriend was pregnant and [caseworker] was just offering everything for that and I didn't expect so much...Everything I needed I got above, more than beyond what I had expected. (Matt, Melton)

She has been great, even the program, she does go out of own way and if we need something there and then, regardless, she does drop and come and meet me, "I'll come to you". She personally is one of the best people in the program...She does, she goes above and beyond. She has represented this program so well that I really can't state anything wrong with it and all the things that she has offered to help with, she has always come through...Just that we are really rapt with [caseworker's] services and the Hope to Home service but [caseworker] has gone above and beyond through that program to help her clients. She is even going back to St Kilda next week because I have a few baby things that I need to get. She was like, instead of spending the money that you have, save it, you've got the program down there, I'll go grab you what you need. (Rebecca, Melton)

“Try and give their clients more of an open choice”: Hope to Home Areas of Improvement.

Despite, the overwhelming positive sentiments shared by the young people interviewed regarding their participation in Hope to Home, there were some notable limitations identified. As explained by Aasma and Rana, they both at times felt restricted by the voucher system and what the monetary assistance could be used for:

I think if someone would want to request cash, for example, for a fine or for something...only specific vouchers so we have a record of everything. And I said no I understand, but sometimes you need, for example, I eat Halal food and there are specific butchers who take cash only and you could not get, but I understand it is part of the system, part of the project, but sometimes it would have been helpful if they

said you can take out of your monthly payment, \$20 cash, \$50 cash you know, so a certain amount can be taken as cash and the rest is vouchers. I think that would be good because sometimes you need cash on you. As a person who had sometimes no cash at all on them, it is a bit, I am not going to say unsafe, but like, people don't always accept EFTPOS machines here in Melbourne. Especially here in Lalor, half of the people are, like no, cash please, you know, which I understand, but it still is good to have cash. (Aasma, Whittlesea)

Like you said, every month I get a voucher. They're Coles or Woolworths vouchers, but if I want to go somewhere and buy clothes for my son or for myself or things, I have to call them up and one of the people from there will come and pay for me. I would have preferred it was bills and things like that, but it takes a long process and it is only 40% of the bills so it would be great for them to have, for us to choose what that amount of money goes to, rent or bills, things like that...I can choose to go to them for the bills, but it takes about two or three weeks maybe and then it is only 40% of the bill. So if I got \$300 for electricity it won't be all paid. Yeah, that would be a really good improvement of that...I think that is the main thing. Vouchers are helpful. I can buy petrol with it if it Coles or Woolworths, and groceries, nappies for my son, but it would have been great if there was something for the bills or something for the rent, if it was less of a process. If I want to buy clothes I have to call the institute for them to come and pay for me there...I think it is just to try and give their clients more of an open choice of what the money they can receive goes to, but everything else is great. (Rana, Whittlesea)

Thus, Aasma and Rana recommend clients be given greater flexibility and self-determination regarding how the financial support they receive is used.

Further to this, there were some issues highlighted around communication between clients and caseworkers. For instance, Claire experienced some frustration when her caseworker was away and she was not able to communicate with other Hope to Home workers:

Probably when [caseworker] went on like a month holiday, so there was, like, no communication between any of us. That was, yeah...it would have been just after Christmas, like, mid-January till now sort of thing. I tried speaking with another worker, but I couldn't speak to them over the phone like I do with [caseworker] about what we need. I had to go in for a full meeting and I can't do that when I'm working all

the time. So, that would have been probably the hardest part of it...I couldn't, like, communicate with anyone else over the phone for the whole, like, month or whatever that she was away. So, it would have been better and easier if I could speak with someone else over the phone. (Claire, Whittlesea)

Sarah's experience highlights some limitations in the program's ability to meet the communication needs of people with disabilities or special requirements:

Just having an interpreter. Sometimes we wouldn't have an interpreter and so when we were doing cooking and stuff and we didn't have an interpreter but we had them do gestures and things like that and we got through it, but definitely an interpreter...Before we moved, if there wasn't an interpreter we would have to type things out on the computer which was quite hard to read and then, once we got a new case manager and we got [caseworker who] it was fantastic. She would get interpreters all the time and communication was so much easier. (Sarah, Melton)

"I think the criteria for the project was a bit small": Recommendations for Hope to Home.

In addition to highlighting the limitations in the program, particularly at times with the limitations of the voucher system, a couple of the participants recommended the client to caseworker ratio be improved to reduce waiting times:

Less clients per individual...So more workers, because it's hard to get [caseworker]...Yeah, because [caseworker] seems stretched pretty thin. (Paul, Melton)

There are so many people who do need help and maybe if they don't have the time, they take a longer time because there are so many people who come and ask for help...some people don't get help straight away. I waited three weeks or two weeks. Maybe there was someone more important to deal with at the time...Yeah. It took two weeks and then I came back another week after that and I met with someone else from Hope To Home and that is when the process of trying to find a house began. (Rana, Whittlesea)

Other recommendations centered on how the workers could better meet the needs of young people. For instance, Paul made a practical suggestion concerning the cars the workers drive:

Yeah and like the other thing I'll kind of push the point for [caseworker], bigger cars for the representatives. So they just bought the new Corolla, but for example if she has clients and a car loaded full of stuff, a hatchback is no good for that. (Paul, Melton)

While, Rana highlighted the importance of caseworkers strengthening their contacts and relationships with rental agencies:

It would have been great if they had [a] more closer relationships with some of the rent agents and things like that so...the house would be given easily. (Rana, Whittlesea)

For, young Melton couple Mia and Aidan, their recommendation focused on Hope to Home building social connections between young people and families like themselves:

Aidan: Last week we got all together and went shopping which is really good. For you it would be more to improve things and get us together sometimes like they did last week. Get us together with the others so we can go places...just have that fun just to meet each other and feel like you've got people around...More activities, that's it.

Mia: Especially getting the kids involved.

Finally, many participants made comments and recommendations regarding the ways in which the program could be expanded or promoted. For example, Aasma identified the potential in Hope to Home to reach a broad group of people:

I think the criteria for the project was a bit small...There are a lot of people out there that are also struggling. As a young adult, I am by myself. The money that you guys gave me and the money that I earn, and I have time to work I don't have children, I don't have anything, I can come home late, I can leave in the morning at 5 o'clock, I can be as flexible as possible...you know, single parents, because there are a lot of people that are struggling, not just, you know, youth like me who are coming off the street, but that is just my opinion. (Aasma, Whittlesea)

Whilst the following participants put forward recommendations regarding the promotion of the services and Hope to Home initiative:

I think if more people knew about Hope Street definitely they would use the service...Like when someone will ask about it and then I'll explain to them basically what happens and they'll just like okay, that's what you think of when you hear housing service kind of thing you know, but it's just so hard to find...It should be more available to people. (Matt, Melton)

Maybe a suggestion for it is, it might be worth getting a few schools involved...Yeah, more or less promoting it within schools so there is more knowledge of these services compared to...like, everyone knows there is Centrelink or what not, but it generally never helps. It makes things harder. (Paul, Melton)

I think probably what could improve the program would be a little bit more advertising. I know so many people that they're looking for places but they wouldn't be able to get one because they've got no rental history or anything like that and I tell them "go straight to Hope Street". So it's not really something that's advertised and I think it is something that needs to be advertised and I think that would improve it to so that way they can get more people in and word gets out even further. (Lena, Melton)

These recommendations regarding widening the program's reach and promoting the program is indicative of the young peoples' satisfaction regarding Hope to Home. Thus, for these young people to be in many ways championing this pilot demonstrates that Hope to Home seems to be filling a gap in the current make-up of housing and social service programs and effectively meeting the unique needs of these young adults as they transition into the private (and hopefully more stable) rental market.

Findings: Case Manager, Partner, and Stakeholder Reflections on Hope to Home

The two case managers (one from each of Melton and Whittlesea) who were responsible for the day to day running of the program, and who had most contact with participants were interviewed. They were asked about the aspects of the program worked well and also about areas of improvement. The findings from these interviews are summarised below in Table 2.

Table 2. Emergent themes and illustrative quotes from Hope to Home case managers

Theme	Illustrative Quote
Uniqueness of Hope to Home	“The fact that Hope Street can go on the lease for the first six months offers landlords piece of mind, and the funding available from the Hope to Home project has proved invaluable for most of the clients who have secured long term accommodation”
Partnerships with Businesses and Real Estate Agents.	“lots of hard work...promoting the program...increasing awareness...has led to more that 10 different realestate agents giving Hope to Home clients a chance to prove themselves”
Housing unaffordability in Melton and Whittlesea.	“we have seen a rise of \$70-\$80 a week in rental prices...leaving little room for emergencies...or anything other than essentials”
More in-depth case management needed	“more case management will help them navigate employment and training options, reduce debts and help with legal issues...the part-time nature of our roles makes it hard to offer extra provisions for those with clients with limited support networks”

As part of the evaluation process partners and stakeholders of the Hope to Home program were interviewed. As the program partners (e.g. real estate agents and partner organisations) and stakeholders (e.g. funding bodies and local council) were a fundamental part of the program, for the purposes of this evaluation it was imperative to seek their

insights and reflections regarding the program's progress and the areas of potential improvement (see Table 3).

Table 3. Emergent themes and illustrative quotes from Hope to Home partners and stakeholders

Theme	Illustrative Quote
Support and Positive Regard for Hope to Home.	"It is simply something that can work, its been shown that it can work"
Positive outcomes of Hope to Home.	"I think the results probably speak of themselves"
Hope to Home as an innovative solution to youth homelessness.	"It's such a vital program. There's not a lot like it...it's filling a big gap in our services"
The Internal and External Constraints and Challenges of Hope to Home.	"There are still a lot of barriers to young people moving into private rental"

"It is simply something that can work, its been shown that it can work": Support and Positive Regard for Hope to Home.

In general, the partners and stakeholders expressed positive regard for the Hope to Home pilot program and its primary intention to address the issue of youth homelessness. For instance, for Real Estate representative Colin's involvement in Hope to Home was a way to make a positive contribution towards addressing this systemic issue of youth homelessness:

I have the links to the real estate side of it to be able to get involved and actually offer something of value really...I believe that no one should be sleeping on a street or in a car or anything like that. Everyone has the right at least some shelter. So, that is basically what got me to get involved...it was more of a conscious decision to say yes...I am lucky enough that I grew up with two loving parents, food on the table, a roof over my head all my life. So, I look at it and go, well, my kids will grow up in the same way so I have an obligation to give back to those who can't, but the hard part in society is finding those organisations to be able to work with and in this case Hope Street picked the phone up to me and it was a good match.

Likewise, for Michelle who represents one of Hope to Home's key funders outlines how they were drawn to the program's potential to break youth homelessness:

This program was discussed with us as an opportunity to support breaking the cycle of young people who were homeless but to provide an alternate pathway out of homelessness. So, a lot of the work they (Hope Street) do focuses on short-term refugee and crisis accommodation. They are working longer term accommodation but for some of the clients that they work with and young people that they work with, particularly I think those with families, who are pathwaying out of homelessness, this was a really interesting opportunity for us to back an alternative pathway.

Furthermore, together with this interest in addressing youth homelessness within the areas of Melton and Whittlesea (and more broadly), partners and stakeholders were supportive of the Hope to Home initiative and the housing and support model it operates within. This is evidenced by the following participant comments:

Love it. I think it's very much needed, and the fact that they have really targeted the area to pilot it is fantastic, and you know, it's something, I think the model itself could be rolled out...it could be rolled out anywhere. (Sue, Funding Body)

Look, it is simply something that can work, and it's been shown that it can work...Obviously, everybody I think would like to see the program's funding continue. At the moment, we're unable to refer to Hope Street because of funding and not knowing whether funding is being extended or otherwise. But with regard to the evaluation of the program, it's one of those things really, whereby some things in life are hard to evaluate...so some things in life you can put all your money and effort towards, but you won't necessarily see the outcome until later, you know what I mean? So, with regard to, like, these programs, I'm hoping that, for some of them, and for some of our young people, Hope to Home is actually breaking a cycle of not only homelessness, but, you know, cycles of maybe Centrelink dependence, cycles of moving into offset housing accommodation, and then staying there forever...But you won't necessarily see those things now, but hopefully we'll be able to see them in the future. (Patrick, Partner Organisation)

The numbers so far speak for themselves so far don't they? In terms of how young people have been able to sustain, what other opportunities have come from being

supported in the way that they are. So it is very exciting, to see it get further funding and to grow would be incredible for young people in our area...I think, realistically we know that governments probably aren't going to invest lots and lots of money in the creation of new public or social housing stock. So, I think this, for the right young people, is an incredible opportunity to transition into the private rental sector and having the safety net, because that is a real protective factor, particularly for young people that might not have that safety net somewhere else with friends and family. It can be the difference between thriving or not, which I think is definitely one of the strongest wins from this particular program. I certainly would want to see it continue. I know that from council's perspective, we would want to see it continue, and fingers crossed that our state and federal government counterparts agree. (Marianne, Local Stakeholder Whittlesea)

More specifically, from interviews with Hope to Home partners and key stakeholders it was evident that their positive regard was not only based on their interest in youth homelessness and the idea of transitioning at risk youth into the private rental market. Rather, this positivity and support for Hope to Home was based on the affirmative outcomes Hope to Home had achieved during the pilot phase and also the gap this program filled in current housing services.

“I think the results probably speak of themselves”: Positive outcomes of Hope to Home.

In general, among the Hope to Home partners, funders and stakeholders, it was recognised that Hope to Home was achieving a number of positive outcomes for the individuals they work with and the broader local communities of Melton and Whittlesea. From the perspective of Real Estate agent Colin, Hope to Home has made it possible for these young people to get “that first foot in the door”:

A lot of these young people would, on their own merits, they would probably not get a property. They are far less of a chance of getting a property. This will definitely help them get in there and a big thing with private rental is, once you have a rental history, life becomes a hell of a lot easier. The hard part is getting that first foot in the door. So, what this does is, it gets them the foot in the door, gets them the reference they need to then be easier to go and get stuff. The rental market for everybody is difficult, but it actually puts them on an even playing field which they wouldn't be able to get any other way. It would be extremely difficult for them to get that even playing field

without this program...In my opinion, this made a difference, we have just got to keep doing and doing and doing.

Thus, the ability for Hope to Home to assist young people to begin to establish a rental history is considered to have both short as well as potentially long-term impacts of their capacity to secure housing. The success of Hope to Home to not only transition young people into the private rental market but to address fundamental limitations such as their lack of rental history was noted by other program partners:

I think the results probably speak for themselves but again, the collaboration, the linking of businesses and service organisation, and the young people. Probably, I mean I know it is a massive issue, particularly for young people, the issue with...being unable to get a rental property because they haven't had a history or purely because they are young, and people in the real estate industry I think...they are worried about that, they are scared about that. So to be able to bridge that gap, it's huge. (Sue, Funding Body)

As far as applications go, a lot of young people don't have a private rental history, etcetera, so they struggle with that. They struggle to find references or referees, etcetera. So I think what they are doing is really, is very, very important. They're certainly bridging a gap that does exist with regard to young people, and are certainly in the Melton area, as I said earlier, with very limited housing options available to young people. (Patrick, Partner Organisation)

In addition to acknowledging the positive outcomes Hope to Home has had in building young people's rental history and attractiveness for future housing applications, Michelle also highlights that Hope to Home has achieved positive outcomes because it provides essential wrap around services and supports for this young cohort:

The Hope to Home program is a transition that provides not just access to stable accommodation and support it, it also provides young people with the wrap around support to help them build their skills to then transition into independent private rental markets...For all young people who have faced homelessness we think that transition...it is a really positive stepping stone to independent living and where that is possible I think organisations like Hope to Home have a vital role in making sure they are working to support young people through some of the challenges and barriers that have brought them into homelessness so that they do not cycle back

into homelessness so that journey or that pathway or that transition into independent living, which would include private rental or home ownership in the future, needs to be seen as a stepping stone on that journey and not take a young person who has experienced a crisis and is facing homelessness put them into private accommodation and forget about them. We know from research that model does not work and that those people will most often cycle back into homelessness...I think one of the other strengths of the program is that it does connect with the local community and local business and make them a part of the solution and people's attitudes changes when that happens - when people are drawn in and they are actually a part of the solution, I think attitudes and some of those attitudes are what creates barriers for young people. (Michelle, Funding Body)

Therefore, as indicated above, apart from the direct impacts Hope to Home has on young people, Michelle also highlights the positive impact the program has in engaging the local community and stakeholders to play a role in addressing youth homelessness and thus, achieve additional funding:

The other thing that has worked really well is when you bring a group of supporters, whether that is funders like us, and the council and the state government and business and the community. When you bring that group together there is a ripple effect. I know that Hope Street has also been able to leverage additional funding and additional support from other philanthropic organisations and I think the way that Hope Street has done that has been to their great benefit. Leveraging this opportunity and saying this is a model that we can replicate in other areas and that has enabled them to grow the program, which I think is great. (Michelle, Funding Body)

Furthermore, apart from winning additional funding being evidenced of Hope to Home's success and potential for continued positive outcomes; it was evident throughout discussions with the various partners and stakeholders that Hope to Home has developed a highly regarded reputation among these parties. This reputation speaks to not only to the extensive efforts of the caseworkers but is reflective of the success of the program participants. For example, to date none of the Hope to Home tenants have defaulted on their rental payments:

We haven't had any tenants default. So, in that regard, we have had good tenants. So, being able to then on sell this as a program to other landlords is working really well because we can say, well, look we've done four of them already, none of them have turned out bad, so don't be too alarmed. They tend to all work out well, so that part is working really well...As I say, the biggest win for us so far is not to have a

tenant who has defaulted. That was always the biggest risk of this whole program, that we would put a tenant in there that stopped paying rent and Hope Street would be liable and it would make the program look terrible and be very hard to recommend to landlords, but to date, touch wood, we have had success with that and haven't had tenants who have defaulted which means they are being managed well from the Hope Street end and we are picking properties that are suitable for them. That has been the real success for me...(Colin, Real Estate agent)

Similarly, partner organisations have noted the success of the Hope to Home program and the abilities of the caseworkers to advocate for and successfully work with clients:

I provide private rental brokerage so case managers like the staff up at Hope to Home, they apply to me for money to help for when their clients get private rental, to help them set up...I do, I get a lot of applications...[from] workers to support their clients...they're definitely...get the most properties...I get applications from so many different organisations and out of all of them, Hope Street are definitely the most that actually get properties for their clients...from my perspective with my involvement with the workers, they're very, very dedicated and very motivated to supporting their clients to get private rental...they do that really, really well. They have good relationships with real estates [agents] in the area, they're very professional, they are very professional with me as well, they're very reliable. If I say, I need something from them, they can do it, in order for me to help them...They've just got it right with their advocating skills for their clients and for being professional, and working with other services to access as many services as they need to get support their clients...they do that really, really well over there. (Sia, Partner Organisation)

The feedback that I get from the clients is that they're very happy with working with [the caseworker]. They find her very easy to speak to, quite approachable. She comes across as somebody who is found to be able to help them with what they are looking to achieve, and assists them greatly, especially in relation to paperwork and etcetera...I found her finding and visiting properties...I think from a working perspective, or a ground level perspective, it is working quite well. (Patrick, Partner Organisation)

“It’s such a vital program. There’s not a lot like it...it’s filling a big gap in our services”: Hope to Home as an innovative solution to youth homelessness.

Throughout discussions with the various stakeholders, funders and project partners the most consistent reflection shared was that Hope to Home offered something different – a different solution and a way of working within the context of youth homelessness. This notion of Hope to Home being a “new” and “unique” program was attractive to the program’s funders and local stakeholders alike:

The reason that we all liked it was because it was a new, what we look for at the foundation, particularly in that grant type is new, I guess new approaches to existing problems, and this project is very much that. And also the collaboration...the partnerships was a very different element between the local businesses and the real estate agencies...so that is something that really stood [out] about this project. (Sue, Funding Body).

I think, from our perspective is that this project is particularly unique in the way and with the consistency of support that is provided to young people, beyond just getting a house, that we do not see in programs elsewhere. So, that is particularly interesting because we know that strengthens outcomes as well. So, there is quite a lot of interest in that element of the program as well...as a key local stakeholder, I would say that what is unique about this particular program is that support is ongoing and consistent. That there is services that provide brokerage for access to a private rental, but what lacks in those other programs or services that might be available out there is the level and consistency of support that is provided after they get a private rental house. I am fortunate enough to have worked in the homelessness service sector, so having a bit of insight into how other programs, that people might reference as being similar, being able to distinctively see that element of support and that it is beyond just getting a property. That seems to have been key... I think the uniqueness of this particular program is the investment in support that other places don't necessarily have. (Marianne, Local Stakeholder Whittlesea)

Hence, in comparison to other housing and social services there are a number of elements, which are unique to the Hope to Home program. As pointed out by Sue (Funding Body), Hope to Home builds partnerships and relationships between various community

stakeholders. Thus, along with adding to the success of the program, the ripple effect of Hope to Home makes it particularly unique:

I think people working in the businesses can undergo an education and attitude transformation through their involvement in the program. So, where they might come to a program with very fixed ideas about what a young person experiencing homelessness might be like or might have experienced, they might have prejudices, unconscious biases, and sometimes downright discriminatory practices which a program like this can shift and change over time. The involvement of the business community, it is not just a government responsibility, it is not just Hope Street's responsibility, it is not just our responsibility as a philanthropic organisation that is committed to supporting young people, it is the whole community's responsibility to change the way our community is so that young people do not experience prejudice that can provide employment and other engagement barriers and that is an attitude shift that this program can actually achieve in the community, I think. (Michelle, Funding Body)

Perhaps most significantly what has been found to be the most distinctive aspect of Hope to Home; and thus, most fundamental to its success to date is the consistency of the support provided to these young people. That is, with this group of young people it is not just the transition to private rental, which is pivotal it is the capacity building of these individuals to ensure that they can sustain this transition, which is most imperative. According to program partner Patrick, this is the “gap” in the current system that Hope to Home fills:

It is a great initiative. It is certainly bridging the gap that really needs to be filled. The work that [the caseworker] and they have done from the initial setup has been wonderful...we've got young people who've been in properties now for quite a long period of time and they've been able to maintain it...And then, hopefully, fingers crossed...the whole idea in here is not to see these people ever again...because I would hope that after all that assistance that is given to them, that they're able to find their feet and then maintain that program, and then move on after from us...there's a lack of services that are doing this type of work in this area, so it's very pivotal...to young people finding private rental as an outcome.

It is important to note, that young people interviewed who participated in Hope to Home also echoed these sentiments regarding the uniqueness of this initiative and the services provided. Likewise, project partners and stakeholders continued to champion the distinct ability for Hope to Home to meet the ongoing needs of at risk young people to achieve short and long term gains:

I think the idea is fantastic and I think that historically there has been some programs that, I think, attempted to try and provide what Hope To Home has...what seems to have happened is that those programs only give a short amount of support once the young person is in their private rental and then, you know, anything can happen after that two or three month period. The absolute strength of this program is that it is not just supporting a young person into a property with money, or brokerage, but that ongoing support to adapt to that environment, to get the skills needed to be able to transition into paying your whole rent. That process and that support is just incredible in terms of young people being able to sustain it long term and there is no other program that does that in the same way. There is no other program that I am certainly aware of in Victoria that provides that in depth, and length of support once the accommodation is found. I think the figures are speaking for themselves and I imagine will continue to speak for themselves. (Marianne, Local Stakeholder Whittlesea)

There is not a lot of support that is available for people once they move into the properties...for a lot of people, this is their first time living independently... unfortunately, services have to stop working with people once they get a property, once they are technically not homeless anymore...The public housing, the whole public housing system, there's not enough and it's not supportive enough for a lot of people with specific needs, and I think there are so many people who come into the system with the skills for private rental. They've just been disadvantaged at one stage of their life... I wish every housing service had their own Hope to Home, because it's just, it's so, it's such a cool program...it's filled a huge gap and everyone that's speaks about it loves it. (Sia, Partner Organisation)

Similarly, it was recognised that Hope to Home filled housing gaps within specific local communities like Melton:

I think the opportunity to support the work of Hope to Home in Melton was important...one of the gaps that Hope Street have identified, is that particularly in the growth regions and the growth suburbs of Melbourne, there are very few opportunities for young people who face homelessness to be supported in their own community so that they can stay connected with friends and other social support networks...Hope to Home presented us with some really good evidence based around how important it is to make sure that young people, particularly young families, are housed safely in areas that they know and have a connection to...The

opportunity to work with Hope Street alongside all of the other initiatives that they were driving and leading in the Melton and growth corridors at the outskirts of Melbourne was an important opportunity for us to try something new and to experiment and test partnerships with the private sector, so working with real estate agents and working with businesses who can actually come on board and provide that wrap-around support. The local council was already very supportive. Hope Street is supported with state government funding, the homelessness services, but this added that other layer of having philanthropy but also business and the private rental sector engaged in how we, as a whole community, can support young people who find themselves facing homelessness. (Michelle, Funding Body)

We were happy to get involved with the pilot...because we, you know, assist a lot of young people who otherwise struggle to get into other forms of housing, but at the moment, there is no crisis accommodation in Melton, there is no young people's refuges, etcetera, so their housing options in Melton are very limited. So anyone that can come to us with a proposal for an idea, more than happy to have a chat to and then support them with that concept and idea. (Patrick, Partner Organisation)

“There are still a lot of barriers to young people moving into private rental”: The Internal and External Constraints and Challenges of Hope to Home.

Despite the encouraging outcomes Hope to Home has achieved during the pilot phase in both the local areas of Melton and Whittlesea, there are a number of challenges and constraints of the Hope to Home program which have been identified. These limitations are considered to be both internal and external to the program. For example, one of the internal constraints that have been identified is the capacity of Hope to Home caseworkers. Patrick (Partner Organisation) highlighted this as a primary concern:

I think the main thing that is working not well, there's two parts there. I think the first one is that [caseworker's] position is only part-time and that makes things somewhat, sometimes slower or problematic. It's just not that constant dialogue back and forth with a full-time worker...And obviously, if [caseworker] has leave, for argument's sake, there's not necessarily a lot of back fill for her role, because it's on a pilot's specialist role type of thing. So, a lot of it does fall on [caseworker] and I think, because of those hours that she's working, and there's a lot to the role, and there's a

lot requested of the role, and obviously there's pressures imposed on for a lot of our clients, you know, who are couch surfing or SACHS have obtained order of possessions on clients, and things like that, so sometimes they're very tight timeframes. And because the position's only part-time, it impacts sometimes on the service delivery, as it's set right back from the fact that [caseworker] does a fantastic job, but it is that constant service delivery. Remember, we're dealing with young people, and the young people sometimes don't necessarily have a concept of time...And when they ring they want somebody to speak to or, you know, if there's a delay in processes, they'll always ring back and go, hey, what's going on?

Patrick's comments and observations are reflective of the concerns the young people had about the program. That is, the young people's criticisms also centred on issues around communication and caseworkers being difficult to contact due to the number of clients.

Furthermore, another challenge identified for Hope to Home is working with and across the private sector and within the local communities. That is, although this is fundamental to the program's success and a distinguishable benefit of Hope to Home in comparison to other services, it can still pose some challenges:

I think one of the challenges of the program is to work with the private sector and the community more broadly as a part of that long-term education piece around supporting the community to better understand youth homelessness and supporting the community to understand how they can play a positive role in breaking that cycle. The referrals have been a little bit slower than, I think, Hope Street would have liked but I think that is just a part of that whole community education piece that wraps around a program like this. (Michelle, Funding Body)

In addition, budget limitations of both the program and the young people was nominated as a significant hurdle Hope to Home and their Real Estate partners have had to negotiate:

The hard part is, with Hope Street, unfortunately we have certain budgets and budget constraints where tenants can afford. When we set out on this journey, three to three and half years ago, the rental market was down around \$220 for some rentals. Unfortunately, the market over the last 18 months has now taken that \$220 rental up to about \$260-280 rental. So, that has presented some challenges in going, well, how do we get people with the same income to be able to support a higher rental. So that has been challenging, but with taking into consideration Centrelink payments and the

way we have been able to manage it we have gotten through it. (Colin, Real Estate agent)

Importantly, Colin's comment points to one of the most significant external constraints – the lack of affordable rental properties and the competitive rental market. A number of program stakeholders and partners concur that this is a substantial barrier to Hope to Home success:

I think the one thing that it has highlighted is the ongoing challenge of affordable housing so all young people, whether they have experienced homelessness or not, are finding it really difficult in the current housing market whether they are looking to rent or to buy it is increasingly less affordable to be able to find a safe and stable housing option in your community and where you want to live and where you might be working. I think the ongoing challenge for the program is to continue to advocate for high levels of community and business education around some of the issues that young people face in terms of seeking safe and stable housing but also to continue to advocate to government around the need for increased social housing particularly in those growth suburbs, Melton, Werribee, and the Wyndham - that whole growth corridor. Really there is a lack of affordable housing and that has a massive impact, and that can cycle people into homelessness but addressing that problem can also mean that people can be supported out of homelessness as well. (Michelle, Funding Body)

The feedback I've had from the Hope to Home workers is that there's not a lot of affordable housing. A lot of their clients that they work with are on Centrelink allowances and benefits, whether that's disability support or due to mental health, or you know, if they are single parents for example, if it's a single mother, she's on a parenting payment, their income is not enough for private rental, so, whilst brokerage programs like myself is really helpful to get people set up, the ability for them to maintain a property isn't there, because they don't have the income. Let's look at everything else you pay for and, if it's not going to be affordable, then they encourage them to look for other options, but the downfall is that there's not a lot of options. Yeah, so even where they do, they do a killer job getting...they get a lot of properties...but it's, like it's becoming a lot more difficult because there is not a lot of affordable options...So that's a huge barrier. (Sia, Partner Organisation)

In addition, to the lack of affordable options the competitiveness of the rental market also poses limitations for Hope to Home participants:

There are still a lot of barriers to young people moving into private rental. Obviously, age is a factor. I mean, there is meant to be no discrimination with regard to anybody who applies for a property, you know, but if you're a landlord or if you're an owner of a property and, you know, you've got two young people who are 18 and 19, and they're both on a Youth Allowance or disability pension, or a single mum, etcetera, as opposed to a couple who might both be working...It doesn't necessarily mean that the couple are going to maintain the rent any better than the young people, or look after the property better than the young people who present, but from a, you know, a landlord's perspective, you know. (Patrick, Partner Organisation)

The challenge we have, as I say, is finding that property in the right price bracket is hard enough and then unfortunately in that price bracket you tend to get a hell of a lot of competition from other prospective tenants. So, that is the hard part...Every person that we have come across to put into a home we have managed to put them into a home, but as I say, it does propose its own challenges when a landlord does have a plethora of choice...Some properties you will get one tenant that you don't really get a choice, unfortunately in that price bracket you get 10, 15, 20 tenants to choose from...That is the hardest challenge and because it is private, it is ultimately always going to be their decision. We can give them the best advice we can, but at the same time we have to be careful not to sell the Hope Street program too vigorously because we can look bias. (Colin, Real Estate Agent)

Overall, the lack of affordable housing options and the competitive rental market has become a common part of public discourse and debate. However, for Hope to Home the implications are twofold. The complex and unaffordable housing (and rental) market represents the context in which the program operates within, thus while being a significant and real external barrier it also provides the fundamental reason why Hope to Home needs to exist. That is, young people vulnerable to homelessness will continue to be further disadvantaged without Hope to Home acting as an intermediary and advocate between them and the housing market.

Conclusions

This report is an evaluation of the Hope to Home pilot programs at both Melton and Whittlesea. The major conclusions will be presented under the headings of Housing, Employment and Education, and Model Costs. We will then discuss the successful aspects of Hope to Home and suggest ways of improving the Hope to Home model.

Housing

It was evident that Hope to Home accomplished its primary goal of assisting homeless young people into the private rental market. By participating in the program, young people also began developing a rental history, as well as gaining valuable knowledge and skills relating to securing and maintaining leases.

The Hope to Home pilot housed 72 people in total, including 45 young people and 27 dependent children. This number is greater than was expected. There were 31 tenancies in total across Melton and Whittlesea, with a range of living arrangements; in particular, there were predominantly one and two children families and single occupancies. The Hope to Home clients were referred from a variety of sources with council housing and services within the local government areas being the predominant sources. The average age of clients was 20 years, with most clients relying on temporary, unsuitable accommodation with friends and family prior to entering the program. Clients were successfully housed in private rental, on average, within five and a half weeks of commencing the program. There were 21 tenancies of longer than 6 months duration at the time of data analysis for this report.

Clients were surveyed and interviewed regarding the suitability and affordability of their accommodation, and their experiences in the Hope to Home program. More than 75% of clients found their accommodation both affordable and suitable. Overwhelmingly, participants felt the accommodation was suitable for their needs and gave them access to schools, employment, services, family, and friends.

The level of housing support and assistance provided to each client was dependent on their individual need and life context. The range of services provided included assistance including finding the housing, assistance with inspections and the application process, liaising with landlords, securing properties (bond and rent), and setting up the house for occupancy. In addition, many clients benefited from cash brokerage and shopping vouchers, which helped them maintain their tenancies. Some of the key housing findings were:

- **Wrap around service:** Clients were impressed with the broad range of services offered by Hope to Home.
- **Support from case managers:** Clients reported the important role of case managers in relieving some of their stress relating to securing housing. Case managers were reported to have gone beyond expectations.

- **Lack of rental history:** Overwhelmingly, clients reported that their lack of rental history was a barrier to renting. Hope to Home services and lease co-signing helped to overcome this.
- **Knowledge and skills:** Clients reported gaining skills and knowledge that could help them secure and maintain leases in the future.
- **Flexibility to address diverse needs:** Clients were diverse in their situations and needs. Hope to Home was able to tailor services to each client.
- **Problematic rental market:** Clients reported a number of difficulties in meeting the demands of this market including supply shortages, affordability, procedural complexity, and prejudice.

Employment and Education

Hope to Home supported clients in pursuing employment and education. These services included finding education and employment opportunities, assistance with applications, and help with costs of education. In addition, the brokerage and vouchers available through Hope to Home helped participants in number of ways including transport costs in relation to employment and education. Seventy-one percent of Melton clients and 50% of Whittlesea clients were involved in education during their tenancies. In regards to employment, 55% of clients in Melton were employed during their tenancy, and 33% of clients at Whittlesea were employed. The clients' employment was predominantly low paid and casual in nature.

Hope to Home operated as an intermediary and advocate for young people in their relationships with community members and organisations. In doing so, these relationships developed, raising awareness of, and reducing stigma related to, youth homelessness. As such, the 'ripple effects' of Hope to Home have broader social significance.

Model Costs

The total amount of brokerage given by hope to Home was \$38,857 (\$2045 per tenancy) in Melton, and \$33,638 (\$2402 per tenancy) in Whittlesea. The greater brokerage costs in Whittlesea might be explained by the lower employment rates in this cohort.

Across the entire model, these numbers equate to approximately \$1600 per client over a 6 month period. These brokerage costs also supported 27 dependent children. One of the important findings of Hope to Home was that costs of supporting the young people often included support of their dependent children. This could potentially have the effect of relieving pressure on family and child services more broadly.

The Hope to Home model: Why was it successful?

- **Supporting growth corridors in Melbourne:** Hope to Home was unique in that it targeted the Melton and Whittlesea areas. Providing services in the clients' own neighbourhoods, improved housing suitability, and employment and education opportunities.
- **Supporting dependent children:** 27 dependent children housed, highlights the need for services for young people with dependent children. Hope to Home may take pressure off other youth and family services.
- **Wrap around service:** Offering a broad range of services enabled individualised service. Lease co-signing was important for securing properties and building rental histories.
- **Rental education:** Clients learned valuable skills and knowledge related to securing and maintaining rental properties.
- **Ripple effects:** Facilitating relationships between young people, and community and Hope to Home partners increases awareness and reduces stigma. This effect could grow with greater community participation in Hope to Home.
- **Holistic transition model:** By providing a holistic service that integrates financial, housing, education, employment, social, and community supports, there is a greater likelihood of sustained benefits to young people and their communities.

Improving the Hope to Home Model

- **More community partners/ participation:** Will assist in raising community awareness, reducing stigma, and increasing services and accommodation for young people. Will improve the speed and functionality of referral services.
- **Greater case management component:** Clients, Stakeholders, and Case managers all reported the importance of, and need for, more case management to support clients' complex needs.

- **Ongoing support:** The ability to support some clients beyond the 6-month period. Important for maintaining accommodation.
- **Broaden the capacity of the program:** Enabling greater flexibility in including more young people. Greater capacity to accommodate young people with complex needs.
- **Increased/ more flexible brokerage:** Some clients needed more cash brokerage for their unique circumstances, and to maintain their leases.
- **Services for Families and Children:** Some young people suggested offering services such as social outings for families and children. In general, the large number of children housed was unexpected, and needs greater planning and provision in a full model roll out.

References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018). Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016, 2049.0, ABS, Canberra.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018). 2016 quickstats, UCL211004, ABS, Canberra.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018). 2016 community profile, SSC22761, ABS, Canberra.
- Baxter, M 2014, 'Women on the outside: a foyer-like approach', *Parity*, 27(2),27-28.
- Beer, A, Delfabbro, PH, Oakley, SA, Verity, F, Natalier, K, Packer, J & Bass, A. (2005). Developing models of good practice in meeting the needs of homeless young people in rural areas, *AHURI Final Report*, 83:1-60.
- Black, E. B., Fedyszyn, I. E., Mildred, H., Perkin, R., Lough, R., Brann, P., & Ritter, C. (2018). Homeless youth: Barriers and facilitators for service referrals. *Evaluation & Program Planning*, 687-12.
doi:10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.02.009
- Borlagdan, J & Keys, D. (2015). *Throwing out the rulebook: collaborative innovation for the unfolding Education First Youth Foyer model*, Brotherhood of St Laurence & Launch Housing, Melbourne.
- Broadbent, R. (2008). 'The real cost of linking homeless young people to employment, education and training', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 30-38.
- City of Melbourne (2014). *Pathways: homelessness strategy 2014-17*, City of Melbourne, viewed 20 October 2017,
- City of Melbourne (2017). *Our role and approach to homelessness*, City of Melbourne, viewed 20 October 2017,

www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community/health-support-services/social-support/Pages/homelessness-role-approach.aspx

Coleman, A & Fopp, R. (2014). 'Homelessness Policy: Benign neglect or regulation and control?', in C. Chamberlain, G. Johnson & C. Robinson (eds) *Homelessness in Australia: an introduction*, UNSW Press, Sydney, New South Wales, pp. 11-29.

Council to Homeless Persons (2017). *International homelessness reveals how Finland ended homelessness, and why Australia is failing*, Council to Homeless Persons, viewed 20 October 2017, www.chp.org.au/internationalhomelessness-reveals-finland-ended-homelessness-australia-failing/

Ferguson, K. & Xie, B. (2008). Feasibility study of the social enterprise intervention with homeless youth. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 18(1), 5-19.

Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of age: reimagining the response to youth homelessness in Canada*, The Homelessness Research Network Press, Toronto.

Grace, M., & Gill, P. R. (2014). Improving outcomes for unemployed and homeless young people: findings of the YP4 clinical controlled trial of joined up case management. *Australian Social Work*; 67(3): 419-437.

Grace, M., & Gill, P. R. (2015). Client-centered Case Management: How Much Makes a Difference to Outcomes for Homeless Jobseekers? *Australian Social Work*, 69(1):1-16.doi:10.1080/0312407X.2015.1016445

Grace, M, Keys, D, Hart, A & Malone J. (2013). 'Precarious pathways: experiences of homeless university students', *Parity* Vol. 25, Iss. 3. 24-24.

Grace, M, Keys, D, Hart, A, and Keys, B (2013). *Step ahead: young people's stories of overcoming homelessness*, Vulgar Press, Melbourne.

- Grace, M, Gill, P and Coventry, L (2016). 'Case management, research evidence, and homelessness services' in Elizabeth Moore (Editor), *Case management for community practice*, 2nd edn, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, pp. 479-498.
- Launch Housing (2016). *Declining Rental Affordability in Melbourne*, Launch Housing, viewed 18th September 2017, www.launchhousing.org.au/declining-rental-affordability-melbourne.
- Levin, I, Borlagdan, J, Mallett, S & Ben, J (2015). A critical examination of the youth foyer model for alleviating homelessness: strengthening a promising evidence base, *Evidence Base*, 4. 1-23
- Mallett, S, Rosenthal, D, Keys, D & Averill, R (2010). *Moving Out, Moving On: Young people's pathways in and through homelessness*, Routledge, London.
- Padgett, D., Gulcur, L. & Tsemberis, S. (2006). Housing first services for people who are homeless with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 16(1), 74-83.
- Roberts, C 2012, Reflections on the response to youth housing and homelessness in Western Australia, *Parity*, 25 (9). 79-80.
- Tually, S, Slatter, M, Faulkner, D & Oakley, S (2016). The role of private rental brokerage in housing outcomes for vulnerable Australians, *Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute*, AHURI Final Report No. 263.
- Zaretsky, K., & Flatau, P. (2015). The cost effectiveness of Australian tenancy support programs for formerly homeless people. *Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute: Melbourne, Australia*.

Appendix A Community Integration Officer Profiles

Community Integration Facilitator Profiles

The following profiles written by the Hope to Home Community Integration Facilitators are aimed at illustrating what day-to-day life is like for the social workers involved.

Melton (by Katie Mochan, Hope to Home Melton Community Integration Facilitator)

I immigrated to Melbourne from Scotland in December of 2015, and took up the position as Community Integration Facilitator in August of 2016. I have an Honours Degree in Public Health and Nutrition and my previous role as a Health Development Officer in Scotland helped me gain invaluable skills in working with children and young adults on a variety of health and relationship issues.

My main role is to help homeless, or at risk of homelessness, young adults in the Melton LGA, find and maintain a permanent and secure private rental. This encompasses a wide range of support; from helping with existing debt to increasing employment opportunities and from negotiating tenancies to sourcing furniture.

With such a varied job, there are no typical days as a Community Integration Facilitator, however, Monday mornings often involve checking emails and catching up with paperwork. This is an opportunity to find out if any of the clients inspected properties they liked over the weekend, and what help they need to submit applications for these properties. It is also a chance to find out if any issues arose with the clients who are in tenancies.

This Monday, I phoned the Hardship Department of an energy company to find ways to help a client pay an extremely high electricity bill. The conversation resulted in a payment plan for this bill with the possibility of getting a Utilities Relief grant, ways to reduce future bills and having someone come out to property to find out why the bills are so high.

I also received a call from a Property Manager at Raine and Horne Melton to inform me that one of my clients was successful with their tenancy application and has been accepted for a house. This great news means liaising between the client, the Property Manager and the Private Rental Brokerage Co-ordinator to ensure that all the funds are ready for the lease-signing date. Once this is in place, dates are set to do the Condition Report and Moving Out, Moving In Starter Kit shop to buy all the items required for setting a new home, including linen, towels, crockery and kitchen utensils as well as a food shop.

Following on from that, this week I had a round trip to St Kilda Mums to collect baby items for three of the families I support. This not only saves the clients a lot of money and stress but it also gives me the opportunity to visit with each one and ensure that

everything is running smoothly with their tenancy without the formality of an appointment.

My last appointment of the day was with clients who currently reside with each other but have decided that they would like to get separate tenancies. Time was spent explaining the process of moving one client out and another in; working on an exit date and how to manage the money owed for rent and bills by each party.

***Whittlesea* (by Abeer Alzawada, Hope to Home Whittlesea Community Integration Facilitator)**

My name is Abeer Alzawada. I have spent most of my life in New Zealand as a social worker for the Red Cross and spent my first 2 years in Australia working with AMES Australia as a housing worker. What I enjoy most about my job is the interactive work I do with the youth, seeing them becoming independent always makes my hard work pay off.

No day is the same as a Community Integration Facilitator, everyday my job is different. I start work on Tuesday. I often begin my day with catching up with most of my clients to see how they are going, I go through their paper work and check what is missing from their folders and start my phone calls and emails with them to follow up about what is missing and seeing how they are progressing. I also help them through their paper work if they don't understand anything I try my best to explain to them what is required.

On the weekend, my client had gone to a house inspection, so I had to catch up with them to see what they thought of the house and fill in the application required if they were happy. We met at Thomastown library and they let me know that they were very pleased with the house so we filled out the application for the house together. I took the needed paper work from them including IDs and references and went back to the office and emailed the agent the application that we filled out together.

After finishing of the application, I left the office again and I went to buy vouchers for another client's moving out/ moving in Starter Kit. She specifically wanted vouchers from Target and Woolworths. A lot of these clients are always so happy about the starter kit because it gives them a fresh start in their new homes. After I brought the vouchers I met the client at Target and handed the vouchers to her, she asked if I could help her pick out some room items. As we went through Target, she spoke to me about health issues related to her kidney, as she only has one kidney. She needs a lot of medicine to keep going. This news upset me a lot and made me think further about how we can help our youth and their health issues and what we could add to the project.

After spending time with my client, I came back to the office and went straight to checking my emails, while checking my emails I received a phone call from another client requesting help from me to do a condition report and tenancy training. After

finishing my emails I met them at their property and we completed the condition report. We spoke about tenancy training this included the budgeting and the responsibility they have towards the home. We went through the training together and I explained further if they need any help they could always ring me and I am always happy to see them.

I ended my day back at the office, and made phone calls with Epping Community to speak to them about our workshops and which specific days the youth come to the centre so we could target those days and prepare the workshops then. I ended the day updating the case note and uploading the receipts in the shared Drive to both the client's folder and the register.

Appendix B Online Survey

THE FIRST QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT YOUR ACCOMMODATION

1. Where are you living at the moment?			
	Hope Street in Melton		Melton Transitional Housing (Melton Housing Service)
	Hope to Home Private Rental		Other (please specify)

If other, please specify

2. How long have you been there (in days, or date the when you moved in)?

3. How long do you expect to be able to stay where you are (in weeks or months, or your lease agreement end date)?

4. Can you afford to stay in this accommodation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Any comments on accommodation affordability?

5. Where were you living immediately before this?			
	Crisis Accommodation / Refuge		Caravan Park
	Parents		Sleeping rough (Street/Squat/Park/Train/Bus Stop)
	Siblings		Transitional housing/Supported Accom.
	Extended Family		Drug Treatment Service
	Private Rental		Hospital
	Hostel		Friend's Place
	Private Hotel		Car
	Public Housing		Other
	Prison		
	Rooming House		

6. How long had you been living there (in days, or the date when you moved in)?

7. What was the reason you left there?

8. How many moves have you made in the past 12 months?

9. Have you stayed in any of the following types of accommodation in the past 12 months?(select as many options as appropriate)			
☐	Crisis Accommodation / Refuge	☐	Caravan Park
☐	Parents	☐	Sleeping rough (Street/Squat/Park/Train/Bus Stop)
☐	Siblings	☐	Transitional housing/Supported Accom.
☐	Extended Family	☐	Drug Treatment Service
☐	Private Rental	☐	Hospital
☐	Hostel	☐	Friend's Place
☐	Private Hotel	☐	Car
☐	Public Housing	☐	Other
☐	Prison	☐	
☐	Rooming House	☐	

THE NEXT FEW QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT WHERE YOU ARE LIVING NOW...

10. How would you rate the suitability of your present living arrangements?					
Highly suitable	Suitable	Unsure	Unsuitable	Extremely unsuitable	N/A

11. How easy is it for you to see friends you want to keep in contact with?					
Very easy	Easy	Unsure	Difficult	Very difficult	N/A

12. How easy is it for you to see family members you want to keep in contact with?					
Very easy	Easy	Unsure	Difficult	Very difficult	N/A

13. How easy is it to get to the shops you need to go to?					
Very easy	Easy	Unsure	Difficult	Very difficult	N/A

14. How easy is it for you to get to the services you need?					
Very easy	Easy	Unsure	Difficult	Very difficult	N/A

15. How safe do you feel in the property you are in?					
Very safe	Safe	Unsure	Unsafe	Very unsafe	N/A

16. How safe do you feel in the area/neighbourhood?					
Very safe	Safe	Unsure	Unsafe	Very unsafe	N/A
17. How easy is it to get to school/TAFE/Uni?					
Very easy	Easy	Unsure	Difficult	Very difficult	N/A

18. In the past year, have you received any financial support to maintain your housing (such as one-off payments for your rent, bond assistance, assistance with payment of gas, electricity or phone bills, food, petrol/travel, or gifts from family or friends)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

a. If yes, please describe the kind of financial support

b. Have you had to repay any of this? (For example, did someone loan you money that you have had to pay back)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please elaborate if necessary

19. How much do you spend on your accommodation each fortnight?

Does this cover?

Food	☐ Yes	☐ No
Bills	☐ Yes	☐ No

20. Thinking about what you would really like, what would be the ideal accommodation for you?

THE NEXT FEW QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

What is/are your current source/s of income?			
Centrelink	(selecting in Qualtrics opens up) →	Newstart Allowance	Selecting any of these options opens up a response box as follows...
		Supporting Parent's Benefit	
		Disability Payments	
		Other Centrelink Payment (please specify)	
Employment	(selecting in Qualtrics opens up) →	Full-time	Fortnightly income from this source?
		Part-time	
		Casual	
Other	(selecting in Qualtrics opens up) →	Please specify 	

What type of employment, if any, have you had in the past? (For example, shop assistant, fruit picking?)

What type of employment, if any, are you seeking at the moment?

Is anything preventing or making it difficult for you to get employment?

Is the location of your current accommodation a barrier to you finding employment?

Yes

No

What is the highest level of education you have completed?			
	Primary school or less		Trade or TAFE qualification
	Year 7		TAFE – Diploma
	Year 8		University degree
	Year 9		Other (please specify below)
	Year 10		
	Year 11		
	Year 12		

Other (please specify)

21. Are you considering any education or training at the moment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please describe here

☐

22. In the past 12 months have you done any of the following to increase your employability? (select as many as possible)

☐	Prepared a resume	☐	Literacy and numeracy training
☐	Gone back to school	☐	Used services that provide or link in with employment opportunities
☐	Volunteer work	☐	Vocational skills training
☐	Work experience	☐	Changes your personal presentation (e.g. got different clothes or a different haircut)
☐	Apprenticeship	☐	Other (please specify below)
☐	Traineeship	☐	

Please specify if other

23. If you could have any job or self-employment you wanted, what would that be?

THE NEXT FEW QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

What services are you using now, or in the past year? Both options, 'now' and 'past year' options may be selected.

Now	Past year	
☐	☐	Centrelink
☐	☐	Counselling service
☐	☐	Housing service
☐	☐	Employment service
☐	☐	Generalist counselling
☐	☐	Financial counselling
☐	☐	Parenting support service
☐	☐	Childcare
☐	☐	Lifeline or other telephone service
☐	☐	Neighbourhood house/community centre

		Youth specific service
		Gambling support service
		Consumer or tenancy service
		Personal development supports
		G.P.
		Community health service
		Drug treatment services
		Mental health services
		Public hospital
		Gender specific service
		Ethno-specific service
		Disability service
		Other (please indicate in box below)

How many case workers do you have at the moment?

In the past year, have you had to wait for any services you needed?

Yes

No

If yes, how long did you have to wait?

24. Have you had difficulty accessing services, for example, because of a long waiting period, lack of access by public transport, or difficulty in getting an appointment?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please comment

--

25. To what extent have the services met your needs?

Very well	OK	Unsure	Not well	Very badly
-----------	----	--------	----------	------------

26. Do the services appear to be working together to assist you?

Yes	To some extent	No	Don't Know
-----	----------------	----	------------

THE NEXT FEW QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

27. How would you rate your overall health at the moment?

Very good	Good	Average	Not good	Poor
-----------	------	---------	----------	------

28. Over the past year, has your health improved or become worse?

Improved	No change	Become worse
----------	-----------	--------------

29. Have any of the following happened to you in the past 12 months?

☐	Illness	☐	Accessed the emergency department at a hospital
☐	Injury	☐	Not taking medication
☐	Sleeping rough	☐	Stressful relationships
☐	Eating junk food	☐	Stress associated with unstable accommodation
☐	Untreated health problems	☐	Money problems
☐	Hospitalisation	☐	Other (please specify below)

Please specify if other

--

30. Have you done any of the following in the past 12 months?

☐	Exercised regularly
☐	Been eating healthily
☐	Had healthcare/treatment

	Consulted a doctor of specialist
	Been sleeping better
	Other (please specify below)

Please specify if other

31. How would you rate your wellbeing at the moment? By wellbeing, we mean your mental and emotional health?

Very good	Good	Average	Not Good	Poor Health
-----------	------	---------	----------	-------------

32. Can you tell us about the things that have affected your wellbeing over the past year?

THE NEXT FEW QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT FEELING PART OF A COMMUNITY

33. Do you feel connected to a community (either a local community or a network of people with similar interests?)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ No

Please elaborate

34. If you were worried about something, do you have someone outside your family that you could talk to (other than a worker at an agency)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

35. How many of these people do you have?

36. If you needed some practical assistance, do you have someone you could ask for help? For example, with lifting something heavy if you were moving house, assistance with using the oven or other household item, or what to do if a window or shower breaks?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Please comment if necessary

37. Do you participate in community activities such as sports, clubs, religious or organised groups?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please specify

38. Do you use community facilities such as parks, public libraries and swimming pools?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ No

If yes, please specify

OTHER QUESTIONS

39. Have there been any changes, in the past three months, in your life skills, for example: cooking, cleaning, budgeting and paying bills, scheduling appointments or getting to work/school on time, or relationships with housemates?

40. Is there anything else that could be relevant to our study that we haven't asked you about?

Thank you.

Additional interviewer comments.

Appendix C Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SERVICE USERS

1. To start with could you please tell me, from your own perspective, what has being involved with Hope to Home been like for you?
2. For you, what is memorable about Hope to Home?
3. In general, in your view, what about the program has been helpful to you?
4. What has really not been so helpful?
5. What suggestions would you make for this program to improve?
6. What do you think of the idea behind Hope to Home-bridging young people into private rental?
7. Has the program assisted you with employment opportunities?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CASE MANAGERS

1. What has it been like for you in working in the Hope to Home program?
2. From your perspective what is distinctive about this program?
3. How is it going so far?
4. What do you see as the major challenges for the young people?
5. Is there anything that this program should be doing for young people that it isn't?
6. How well are the accommodation arrangements working?
7. How is the project going in relation to employment, training and education?
8. Do you have any suggestions for improvements to the program?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PROGRAM PARTNERS

1. What is your involvement with Hope to Home?
2. What made you get involved with Hope to Home?
3. From your perspective what is working well with the program?
4. What is working not so well?
5. Do you have any suggestions for improving the program?
6. What do you think of the idea behind Hope to Home, bridging young people into private rental?