



Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy

HOPE STREET YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES SUBMISSION
APRIL 2021



YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

*Our vision is for a society in which all young people
and young families have a safe place to call home*

hopest.org

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1. Why a Hope Street Youth and Family Services Submission?

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. As a leading player with over 40 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:

1. Short term supported emergency accommodation.
2. Short term supported emergency independent family accommodation.
3. Outreach support for 16-25 year olds and their children.
4. Youth reconciliation involving counselling and support for young people and families.
5. Advocacy, resource and referral services.

Hope Street congratulates the Victorian State Government for taking the initiative to develop *Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy* and provides this submission to help inform the Strategy about:

1. The urgent need for Victoria's housing policy to reflect the need for secure and affordable housing, including social housing, for young people living on low incomes and/or exiting the homelessness service system.
2. The **challenges facing young people on lower incomes who attempt to leave homeless services and obtain secure and affordable housing** - only 0.4% of young people who have left Hope Street programs have been able to access social housing and only 9% have successfully moved into private rental accommodation.¹
3. The fact that **recent policy initiatives have increased the challenges for low-income young people** with the Homelessness Emergency Accommodation Response Teams ('HEART') placing clients in temporary hotel accommodation with extremely limited resources and very few youth focused exit options such as supported crisis accommodation; supported short term housing; public and social housing.
4. The need to acknowledge **the role and importance of specialist homelessness service agencies** that are not Registered Housing Agencies (RHAs) and provide innovative responses to the challenges of homelessness, complementing the work of RHAs and working closely with local communities to respond appropriately to the needs of young people. **Hope Street's First Response Youth Service model (operating in Melton)** is a good example of such innovation.
5. The success of the Hope Street First Response Youth Service in supporting young people into secure and affordable private rental accommodation.
6. The pressing need for greater opportunities for young people to access social and affordable housing in the northern (including north eastern) and western growth corridors of Melbourne, particularly in the City of Whittlesea in response to both population growth and recent family challenges related to COVID-19.

¹ This includes clients from all Hope Street services including crisis and transitional housing programs.

7. The strategic benefits to increase the footprint of Hope Street services through development of a First Response Youth Service in the City of Whittlesea and neighbouring growth corridors in the short term and in neighbouring regions longer term overall.
8. The need for **greater clarity about social and affordable housing funding opportunities** to support strategic planning and growth in homelessness services that support young people.

2. People at the Centre

We want your input on what actions we should take to ensure we seek, hear and respond to people who need and use social and affordable housing, so that people are at the centre of a future social and affordable housing system.

Recommendation 1: Young people, particularly those living on low incomes and/or exiting the homelessness service system and unknown to child protection, be identified as a priority group for social and affordable housing in Victoria.

Why prioritise young people?

1. The most recent population census showed that 14.5% of the Victorian population is aged 15 – 25 years, with 857,210 young people living in Victoria (2016).
2. Official State Government projections show that by 2056 this will increase to 18.2% with 2,040,000 young people aged 15 – 29 years living in Victoria.
3. The population forecasts represent **a 48.9% increase in the proportion of young people with 670,000 additional young people living in Victoria between 2018 – 2056** (*Victoria in Future*, planning.vic.gov.au)
4. Young people experience significantly **high levels of unemployment**:
 - a. Youth Unemployment: Victoria 15.2%; Greater Melbourne 15.9%; Australia 14.9%
5. Significant, and worrying, proportions of young people in Victoria aged 15 – 24 years are also **disengaged from either employment or education**: Greater Melbourne 7.5% Victoria 8.2%
6. Levels of disengagement amongst young people are even higher in growth area locations:
 - a. Hume City Council area 12.1% or 3,449 young people; Whittlesea City Council area 9.8% or 2,468 young people; Melton City Council area 10.9% or 1,905 young people.
7. **A need to invest in young people** - Across Australia a range of recent policy initiatives focus on **early intervention** recognising that investing in the development of children and young people contributes to intergenerational equity and reduces longer term costs associated with health care and other social support services.

Hope Street notes that **young people living on Centrelink benefits are the most vulnerable young people experiencing homelessness as they are not obtaining access to social housing** (Table 1, page 7). There is an urgent need to ensure that safe, secure and affordable housing is available for young people living on low incomes. **Youth Allowance currently is:**

- If under 18 years old and living at home \$253.20 per fortnight
- If under 18 years old and living away from home \$462.50 per fortnight
- If over 18 years old and living at home \$304.60 per fortnight
- If over 18 years old and living away from home \$462.60 per fortnight

Hope Street also notes that there is an urgent need to **ensure eligibility to social housing for young people living on Centrelink benefits who are not already known to child protection**, i.e. young people who are outside of the child protection and juvenile justice systems. This cohort reflects the largest Hope Street client group². **Economic benefits of this approach would include reduced longer-term costs**, e.g. allied health, juvenile justice, and out of home care. There is also a need to track by age, income type and level as well as their previous housing/accommodation situation to ensure the Victorian social housing system is housing this youth cohort.

Recommendation 2: Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy reflect the emphasis on early intervention evident in other recent State and Federal Government policy initiatives, i.e. the Universal Access initiative for early years services and specialist intervention and support programs provided through the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

Why a focus on young people and social housing?

1. Official Government data shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of young people aged 19 – 24 years experiencing homelessness in Victoria 2006 – 2016 (Figure 1, page 5)
2. The most recent homelessness census showed that 24,300 people are homeless in Victoria and that 25%, or 6,075 are young people aged 12-24
3. This high incidence of recorded homelessness is compounded by the fact that **much youth homelessness is 'hidden'** with young people experiencing homelessness across Australia staying with relatives and friends (Figure 2, page 5)
4. Young people are also **disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic** with many casually employed in industries that were forced to close, contributing to a rise in youth unemployment during the pandemic
5. Changes in the housing market, particularly a 'tight rental housing market' is one of the most common reasons why young people experience homelessness (Figure 3, page 5)

Source: <https://www.housingdata.gov.au/dashboard>

² Refer to 'Growth' on page 16 for further details.

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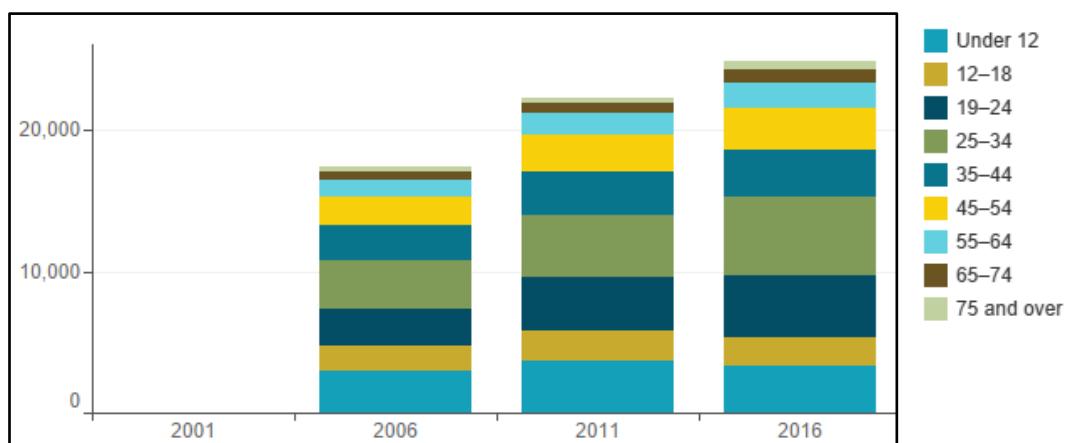


Figure 1: Estimated number of people experiencing homelessness, by selected age group, 2001 – 2016, Victoria

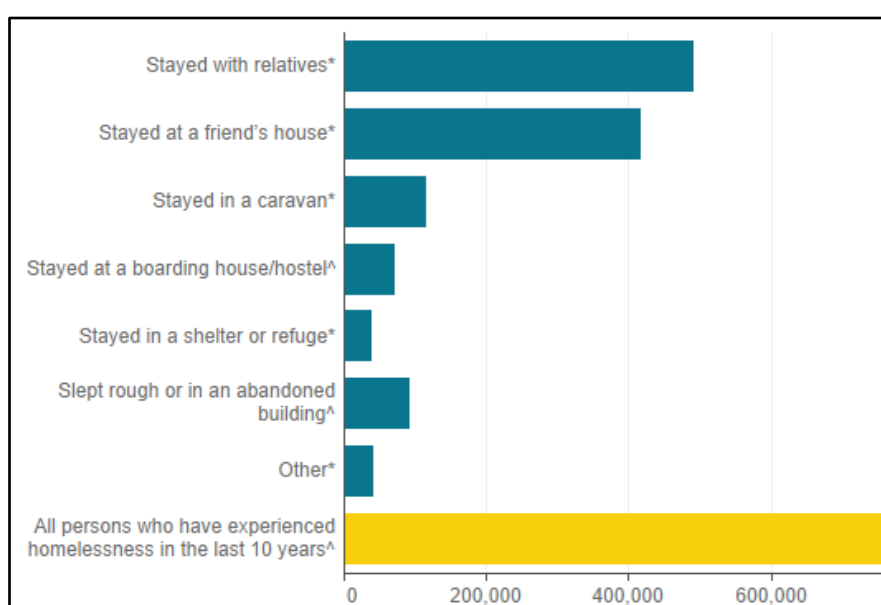


Figure 2: Number of people with experience of homelessness in the last 10 years, by housing situation during experience of homelessness, 15-34 years, 2014, Australia

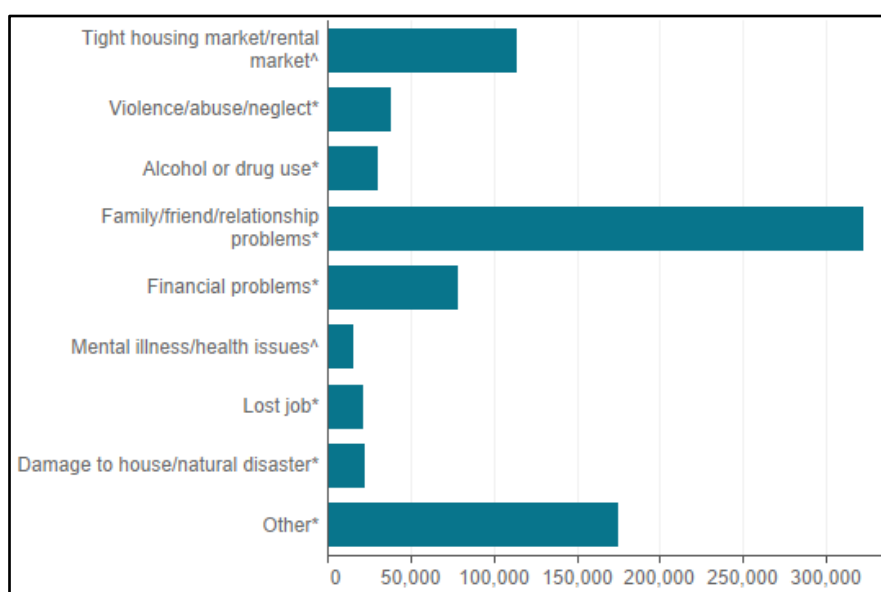


Figure 3: Number of people with experience of homelessness in the last 10 years, by reasons for most recent experience of homelessness, 15-34 years, 2014, Australia, (Source for Fig 1-3: <https://www.housingdata.gov.au/dashboard>)

Despite these statistics, young people are significantly **underrepresented in current social housing tenancies**:

1. Young people aged 20 – 24 years are one of the age groups *least* represented in any form of social housing across Australia, including public housing and community housing (Figure 5, page 8)³
2. Of the current 53,962 public housing tenancies in Victoria, only 0.4%, 206 households, have youth allowance as their main source of income (Table 1, page 7)⁴
3. Only **0.4% of young people who have left Hope Street services**, including transitional housing clients, have been able to access social housing (Table 2, page 10)

Recommendation 3: Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy support planning, and design of future housing for young people and allocate a percentage of housing that correlates to the percentage of young people recorded as homeless by the ABS data to increase the proportion of young people able to access social housing in Victoria. The Victoria Housing Register be monitored to ensure vulnerable young people on Centrelink and low incomes are allocated housing.

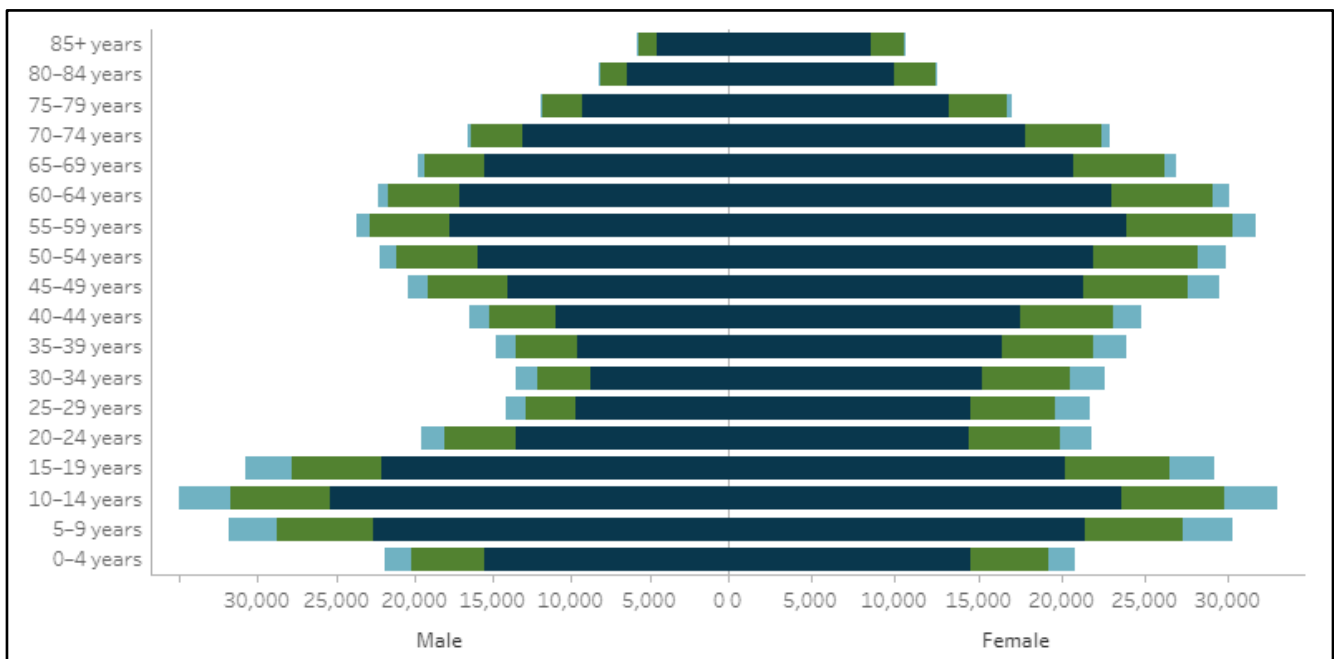


Figure 4: Household members by social housing programs, age and sex, 2018 – 19 Australia,
<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

Public housing
Community housing
SOMIH

³ The State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH) program had a different age profile from the other two social housing programs, with half of occupants (49%) aged under 25 and around a third (32%) of all SOMIH household members aged 0–14. There were 32% of SOMIH occupants aged 25–49 years and 19% aged over 50. Source: <https://www.aihw.gov.au>

⁴ A further 0.3%, 138 households have a main source of income as Austudy/Abstudy.

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Table 1: Public Housing Rebated Tenancies by Main Source of Income at 30 June 2020

Main Income Source	Rental general stock households	Movable units	Total direct tenure (number)	Total direct tenure (%)
Aged Pension	14,939	380	15,319	27.9%
Mature Age/Widows Pension	117	3	120	0.2%
Single Parenting Payment	3,445	0	3,445	6.3%
Disability Support Pension	20,551	486	21,037	38.3%
Service Pension	318	9	327	0.6%
New Start and Partnered Payment	9,510	19	9,529	17.4%
Sickness Allowance	15	0	15	0.0%
Wages/self employed	2,848	2	2,850	5.2%
Austudy/Abstudy payment	138	0	138	0.3%
Youth Allowance	198	8	206	0.4%
Other, including Special Benefits	1,883	8	1,891	3.4%
Total	53,962	915	54,877	100.0%

Source: Department of Health and Human Services Annual Report 2019 – 2020, Additional service delivery data 2019-20

3. Pathways

What actions will enable people to access social housing, sustain their tenancies, and move between different housing options as their needs change?

Recommendation 4: Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy support the integrated role of specialist homelessness support services in providing pathways for young people exiting crisis accommodation and accessing secure and affordable housing options.

- Crisis accommodation/supported accommodation services are one of the most highly used services by young people experiencing homelessness (Figure 4, page 6)

Source: <https://www.housingdata.gov.au/dashboard>

- On any given day almost 3,400 young people and 6,100 accompanying children present to Victorian specialist homelessness service agencies in need of support, with many being turned away ⁵

⁵ Hope Street Youth and Family Services eNewsletter Special Edition 3

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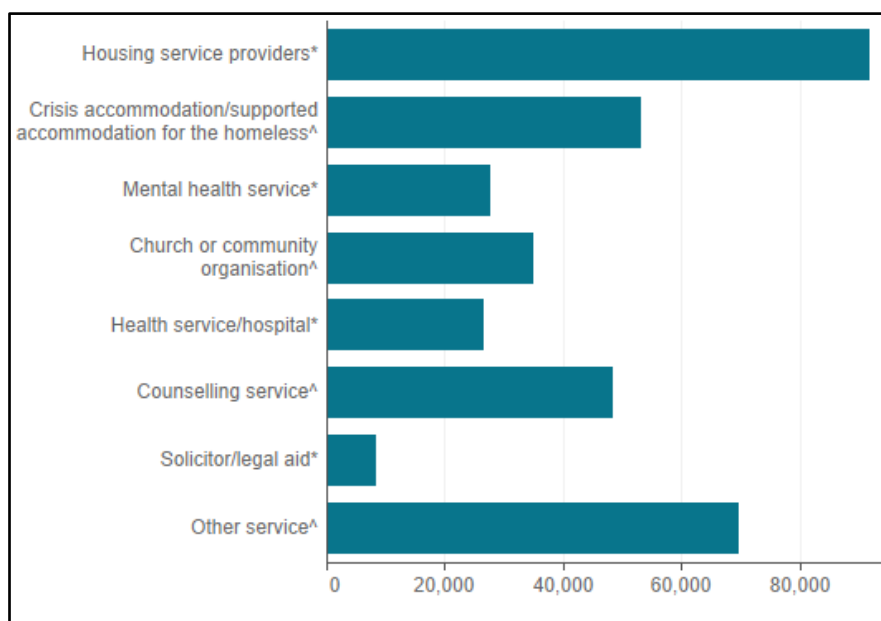


Figure 5: Number of people with experience of homelessness in the last 10 years, by type of service providers used during most recent experience of homelessness, 15-34 years, 2014, Australia

A recent survey of young people across Victoria finds that, for young people, **homelessness contributes significantly to the need for support services**:

1. Being homeless dramatically changes their lives by **significantly impacting their mental health**.
2. The absence of affordable rental properties and the failure to provide social housing and adequate income support **directly prevents young people from accessing alternative accommodation**.
3. In addition to mental ill-health, young peoples' lives are also deeply affected by homelessness with **school disengagement, unemployment, family/relationship violence and unsafe sexual encounters**.

Source: Adapted from <https://www.yacvic.org.au>, *Ending youth homelessness solutions from young people*

As an example of an innovative specialist homelessness support service, **Hope Street Youth and Family Services supported the following numbers of young people in just five months**, between January and May 2020, despite the operational challenges of COVID-19:

1. **BOOST** assertive outreach and crisis support, including after-hours, to 51 young people in Brunswick
2. **Youth residential crisis accommodation** (refuge) for 32 young people in Brunswick
3. **First Response Youth Refuge** crisis accommodation and outreach support for 71 young people in Melton
4. **First Response Youth Mobile Outreach Service** mobile outreach for 65 young people in Melton
5. **Hope Street in Melton** (Youth Foyer-like model) intensive case managed and living skills supported transitional housing to 7 young people
6. **Hope Street in Whittlesea** (Youth Foyer-like model) intensive case managed and living skills supported transitional housing to 8 young people

7. **Hope to Home in Whittlesea** private rental transition support for 7 young people
8. **Youth Reconciliation** counselling for 34 young people
9. **Youth Support Services** intensive client-centred case managed crisis accommodation and outreach support for 17 young people

Hope Street clients continue to face significant challenges accessing secure housing and most clients reconnect with family and friends in rent-free accommodation (Table 2, page 10).

'Hope to Home' programs supporting young people's access to private rental accommodation.

The innovative **Hope to Home in Whittlesea program** provides an example of the important role of specialist homelessness support services in **bridging the gap between crisis and rental accommodation options**. The 'Hope to Home' model includes:

1. Intensive case management with young people accessing the program.
2. 'Wrap around' support services including 12 months follow-up support for young people leaving Hope Street services.
3. Support for young people accessing private rental, with Hope Street acting as referee and co-lessee for the first 6 months to enable the young person to establish a rental history, followed by the young person signing a new lease independent of Hope Street; negotiating with the real estate sector about the needs of Hope Street clients to sustain tenancies.
4. Ongoing support if required including support to access employment and education; brokerage for material support to establish the rental as their home, food vouchers, connection of utilities, etc.

'Hope to Home' is an evidence-based model that has achieved successful outcomes supporting young people to maintain tenancies, improve their lives and become active citizens within local communities. Hope Street's youth-specific private rental transition program supported eight young people aged 18-25 years, and five of their dependent children, to **transition from homelessness into private rental accommodation** between October 2019 and March 2020. An additional six clients who were supported into private rental accommodation in 2019 continue to receive ongoing case management, rental support and tenancy support from Hope Street. Hope Street has worked closely with corporate as well as philanthropic partners providing funding for this program, and local real estate agents who provide support by identifying rental properties suitable for Hope Street clients. An important outcome of this initiative is the fact that **all clients have sustained their tenancies**.

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Table 2: Hope Street Client Housing Outcomes – 2018 – 2020 (%)

Housing Outcome (%)	Youth Refuge (Melton and Brunswick)		Youth Foyer-like Programs (NW & NE)	
	2018 – 2019	2019-2020	2018– 2019	2019 -2020
Secured Private Rental	9	22	21	22
Reconnected with family and friends in rent free accommodation	34	37	54	30
Accessed Transitional Housing	5	3	0	14
Accessed Public Housing	4	0.4	25	22

Source: Hope Street Youth and Family Services March 2021

What do young people need to support them to access secure tenancies?

Hope Street continually receives the following messages from young people about challenges associated with Homelessness Access Points:

- Most Access Points (with one Statewide youth access point) are generic and are not youth specific** – resulting in young people competing in a system where there is tremendous demand and few resources.
- The access point system needs to be youth focused and youth friendly** – instead of expecting young people to remain in a waiting room, a range of innovative and age-specific approaches could be used including mobile phone contact with young people who are waiting for appointments in informal spaces such as cafes; allowing assessments to take place over the phone rather than face-to-face in recognition of the significant challenges faced by many young people, especially those with small children such as lack of transport, navigating the homelessness service system, and navigating unfamiliar geographical areas where access points are located.
- Access points need to be local** and available in places where young people live, rather than in central business or retail areas, there is a specific need for access points in growth corridor locations.
- Access points need to reflect composition of communities** with more of a balance of secular and non-secular services.
- Access points need to develop their youth-focused approaches and practices** to ensure they are inclusive and responsive to the needs of young people - many workers seem to be more comfortable working with adults and often refer young people presenting at their service to the Statewide youth access point.

Recommendation 5: Local place-based youth-specific 'Homelessness Access Points' be developed incorporating assessment practices and staff training that supports the needs of young people experiencing homelessness. These Access Points be available in areas where young people live rather than central activity centre locations.

What are the most important features of affordable housing (e.g. price, location, security of tenure, access to transport or daily amenities, connection to support services)?

Hope Street notes the following **important housing features** that would support homeless young people to access safe, secure and affordable housing:

1. Recognition of the need for stability and **longer-term tenancies for young people**, i.e. 4-5 years to allow young people to move through their age-appropriate developmental stages, recover from trauma, and progress into adulthood with capabilities that allow them to maintain secure tenancies i.e. secure incomes. Current tenancies in Registered Housing Agency properties are 12 months only. All THMs will be moving to 18-month tenancies, at the 16-month point all clients will receive a 60-day notice to vacate the property (18 months in total).
2. Support the development of **1bedroom units/apartments** increasing the affordability for many young people who cannot afford larger dwellings.
3. Also support the provision of **one and two-bedroom dwellings** designed to ensure safety and **promote ongoing connection with families** allowing siblings to stay, shared care arrangements with children, etc.

Recommendation 6: Encourage Section 173 negotiations between local government authorities and private developers to support the provision of studio, 1 and 2-bedroom dwellings designed to ensure young people safety, affordability and connection with family.

Recommendation 7: Review the Residential Tenancies Act and RHA Rental Agreements to enable longer term social housing tenancies for young people escaping homelessness to allow them to develop capabilities to maintain secure housing tenancies in adulthood.

4. Communities

What actions will strengthen social and affordable housing communities?

Hope Street's services and programs reflect the pressing need for, and community benefits of, **adopting a place-based approach** to the planning and development of homelessness support services. The intention of 'place-based' service delivery is to ensure that young people experiencing homelessness have the required **supports to remain in place**.

Hope Street has identified the need for place-based homelessness support services in Melbourne's **growth corridors**. A range of current research shows that the **main contributing factors to youth homelessness in Australia are housing affordability and domestic and family violence**⁶. Current police statistics show **increasing levels of family violence in Melbourne's northern and western growth corridors**.

Table 3: Rate per 100,000 population of family violence specialist service clients by Growth Area LGAs the week before presenting, July 2015 to June 2020

Local Government Area	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	% Change 2015 - 2020
Mitchell	184.2	153.8	307.0	505.6	565.4	206.9
Melton	525.4	552.4	605.5	548.2	542.5	3.3
Casey	281.3	270.5	348.7	553.6	514.8	83.0
Cardinia	277.7	230.5	295.0	486.8	494.1	77.9
Wyndham	402.2	440.1	442.9	416.3	454.7	13.1
Hume	400.9	457.6	393.5	293.4	326.4	-18.6
Whittlesea	397.0	487.7	392.7	296.2	299.6	-24.5

Source: <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data-portal>

There are also **significant levels of housing stress in Melbourne's northern and western growth corridors**:

- Whittlesea 16.1%, **10,689 households in housing stress**
- Melton 12.9%, **5,693 households in housing stress**
- Hume 15.9%, **10,036 households in housing stress** (Source: Profile.id 2016)

These numbers will have **increased significantly since 2016**. Recent research has also illustrated the significant **lack of public transport opportunities** in Melbourne's growth areas.⁷

Hope Street has noted the impact of these trends in family violence, housing stress and limited public transport opportunities creates significant pressure on families living in growth area locations contributing to family stress, breakdown and youth homelessness.

⁶ Yates, J. Gabriel, M. (2006) Housing affordability in Australia, AHURI Research Paper No. NRV3-3, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne; Flanagan, K., Blunden, H., Valentine, k. and Henriette, J. (2019) Housing outcomes after domestic and family violence, AHURI Final Report No. 311, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne.

⁷ Interface Council Group Human Services Gap Analysis December 2017

There is a pressing need for specialist homelessness support services to locate in growth corridors to support family reconciliation and reduce the pressure on young people to move out of their local areas. A key principle that should inform this move is the focus on place-based service delivery. There is a need to contribute to the buoyancy and resilience of outer suburban locations by ensuring place-based service delivery that:

1. Contributes to community connections and community development in growth areas
2. Increases young people's access to homelessness services and programs, and
3. Reduces pressure on centralised homelessness services which are not youth-focused nor place-based.

The Hope Street First Response Youth Service in Melton provides a timely and innovative example of place-based service delivery in growth areas. The service operates through a purpose-built facility that enables:

1. Co-location of a range of support services.
2. A focus on the security of clients and staff, both physical and perceived, noting that many clients come from traumatic and unstable backgrounds.
3. Design details that support wellbeing and physical comfort, noting that clients often arrive traumatised.
4. Planning arrangements that provide for a range of settings to support both client privacy but also group activity and support.
5. Program space that supports self-expression and skills development (well-fitted kitchen, workshop space, small group study space, etc.).
6. Access to information technology to support education, reconnection with the community and access to information on employment and skills engagement opportunities.
7. Private access to external specialist practitioners via the separate Integrated Consulting Centre, as a part of the multi-disciplinary wraparound service response to clients with complex needs.

Hope Street's First Response Youth Service in Melton is an example of industry-led best practice and specialist youth-focused practice with a **place-based approach to service delivery providing a seamless local service response to young people who are experiencing homelessness.**

What do outcomes for social and affordable housing communities look like in 10 years' time?

In 10 years, at the end of the implementation of *Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy*, Victoria will have a number of place-based First Response Youth Services, replicating the model established in the City of Melton and shovel ready for the City of Whittlesea, providing young people experiencing homelessness with the immediate support services they need to continue to live in their communities.

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First Response Youth Services will include:

1. **Supported crisis accommodation and intensive assertive mobile outreach support** operating with extended hours (365 days per year, to 11.00pm) 'First Response Youth Service'
2. The 'Hope to Home' **private rental support program** proactively assisting young people's transition into and sustainability of private rental housing.
3. A 'youth foyer-like model' of **supported transitional housing** with tenure of up to 5 years, providing stability enabling young people to remain engaged in education and/or employment/training.
4. **Strong partnerships with local and state governments, community, and business groups and leaders** contributing to the establishment and success of integrated youth specialist centres
5. **High levels of community awareness and support** for the need for specialist homelessness services for young people in local areas.

These outcomes have already been achieved through the innovative place-based approach undertaken to develop **Hope Street's First Response Youth Service in Melton**. Construction of this service and facility has been enabled by **more than 30 businesses who have partnered** with Hope Street to provide building supplies either completely free of charge or heavily discounted. The value of this partnership contributions is approximately \$400,000. It is the generosity of these partner organisations that has, quite literally, got this project off the ground. Testimonials from partnering agencies illustrating the shared community awareness and support for the homelessness support initiative in Melton are provided below.

Partnering Agency	Statement of Support
Where there is light, there is hope. Australian EcoTech Solutions (AES) - provided all of the lighting for the refuge at a significant discount.	<i>"We are very pleased to be involved with the Hope Street project as it has enabled us to provide tangible support (in the form of a complete lighting solution) to a much-needed facility that provides vital support services to our community."</i>
Haymes Paint provided all the paint for the refuge at a hefty discount.	<i>"The challenges surrounding homelessness have immense effects on both individuals and families, especially in the current environment where options for assistance and accommodation are even more scarce. As an Australian family-owned manufacturer, Haymes Paint feels for the plight of those affected and we were keen to assist with paint materials for the Hope Street First Response Youth Refuge project. We encourage all who are in a position to help, please support organisations such as Hope Street as the vulnerable need our help more than ever."</i>
RBA Group provided a significant discount on sanitary fittings and accessories for the refuge.	<i>"RBA Group are honoured to be supporting such a great initiative; bringing hope to many young Australians who are homeless. Hope Street's mission is inspiring, and we are proud to contribute to this project, everyone deserves the feeling of a home."</i>
Bloom Interior Design and Decoration provided pro-bono interior design services for the project, assisting to create a warm and inviting space for the young people staying in the refuge.	<i>"Everyone should be able to have a warm bed, clothing and a shelter where they feel safe. If we can help by supporting Hope Street by making a space for homeless people to stay and feel comfortable, then we have achieved our goal. We're particularly passionate about ensuring women and children have a comfortable inviting place to stay while they get the help they need."</i>
Johnson Tiles donated all the ceramic wall tiles we needed for the refuge.	<i>"Johnson Tiles is privileged to be involved in Hope Street's vision to build a youth refuge in Melton, as it brings us closer to the community and their needs. We strive to build long lasting bridges</i>

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Partnering Agency	Statement of Support
	<i>between organisations such as Hope Street as we too reap the rewards of fulfilling people's desires"</i>
Hand Rail Industries provided sanitary fittings and accessories at a sizeable discount.	<i>"Hand Rail Industries are delighted to be part of an organisation that offers assistance to youth and families that have fallen on hard times. Hope Street Youth and Family Services have a dedicated group of people that share common values with Hand Rail Industries and it is for this reason we proudly support the work they do."</i>
Holcim provided discounted concrete for the project.	<i>"It is a privilege to support Hope Street in any way we can. In times like what we are experiencing, it is fundamental to support the youth of today to keep them safe and provide every opportunity we can."</i>
Big River Instant Turf generously donated the turfed lawn for the grounds.	<i>"We chose to support the First Response Youth Service in Melton as it's an initiative which will provide essential services to individuals and families in need of additional communal support. Big River Instant Turf prides itself on being an active supporter of programs which support people in our communities."</i>
ASC Water Tanks provided water tanks at a significant discount.	<i>"We believe the youth of the Northern and Western suburbs of Melbourne deserve a place to feel safe and that all youth in Australia should have a home. Supporting Hope Street is just a small thing that we could do to contribute and we would like to thank everyone at Hope Street for the amazing work they do every day for our youth and the broader community."</i>
Interface provided carpet tiles at a considerable discount.	<i>"At Interface we believe that as a company we have a responsibility to have a positive impact on people, our community, and on the planet we share. We are proud to partner with Hope Street with Australian-manufactured, modular flooring for the new First Response Youth Refuge. The work Hope Street does is truly inspirational, and we hope our contribution is another step in building a brighter future for the people making use of it."</i>
Polyflor provided discounted Superplank and Quattro vinyl flooring products.	<i>"We pride ourselves on community association and love being involved with local projects to help those who need it most. At Polyflor we create flooring solutions which are both beautiful and functional. Whether it be in the home or in a commercial environment, our products uphold the same level of quality and design standard. Using these products within the Hope Street space gave us confidence that the flooring will be there for years to come. We wish all the residents a safe and secure future."</i>
Stramit provided all the roofing and guttering for the refuge.	<i>"Most of us would have experienced or had close family or friends who have experienced young people running away, often without any warning or understanding about why they have done so. The running away is often a cry for help and they can be gone for a short or longer period, couch surf at people's homes and then very often become homeless. The reasons behind the running away can be mental health issues, substance misuse, family members arguing and finding themselves in the middle. Stopping young people from becoming homeless is an early intervention in preventing them spiralling down into increasing dangerous situations. Stramit, Fletcher Building is excited to have partnered with Hope Street as we are a building materials manufacturer and Hope Street are literally putting a "roof" over the heads of young people at the First Response Youth Refuge being built in Melton."</i>
Woodgrove Shopping Centre supports Hope Street through fundraising events and awareness raising initiatives.	<i>"We have been a proud supporter of Hope Street since 2015."</i>

Source: Hope Street Youth and Family Services eNewsletters 2018 to 2020

Recommendation 8: Adopt a place-based approach to homelessness service provision supporting local service coordination, local public-private partnerships, increased levels of community awareness and support for homelessness services and the ability of young people to remain in their communities.

5. Growth

What do we need to do to enable a well-functioning affordable housing system that provides rental and home ownership opportunities for those that need them?

A need to support young people living in growth area locations who are experiencing homelessness.

Census data shows that **significant numbers of young people live in Melbourne's growth areas** (Table 3, page 12). These numbers are anticipated to increase significantly between 2016 – 2041 with **33,675 young people anticipated to be living in the City of Melton and 22,248 additional young people anticipated in the City of Whittlesea by 2041.**

Young people living in growth area locations also experience **much higher levels of disadvantage** than other areas including:

- **16.4% - 18.3% youth unemployment** compared to 15.9% for Greater Melbourne overall
- 9.8% - 12.1% of young people disengaged from either work or education compared to 7.5% for Greater Melbourne (Table 5, page 16)

Table 4: Number of 15-24 Year Olds – Specific Growth Areas 2016 - 2041

Growth Area	2016		2041		2016 - 2041 Increase
	15 - 24 year olds	% of total pop	15 - 24 year olds	% of total pop	
City of Whittlesea	27,014	13.0	49,262	12.7	22,248
City of Hume	28,585	14.5	48,485	13.0	19,900
City of Melton	18,561	4.7	52,236	13.1	33,675

Source: Profile.id 2016 and Forecast.id

Table 5: Levels of Youth Unemployment and Disengagement – Growth Area LGAs 2016

Growth Area	Youth Unemployment		Youth Disengagement	
	%	No.	%	No.
City of Whittlesea	16.4	2,431	9.8	2,468
City of Hume	18.3	2,890	12.1	3,449
City of Melton	17.5	1,767	10.9	1,905
Greater Melbourne	15.9		7.5	
Victoria	15.2		8.2	

Source: Profile.id 2016

Recent research conducted by a coalition of growth area Councils has identified a **significant inequitable spatial distribution of services in growth area locations that creates a disadvantage for Interface communities** ⁸

The *Human Service Gap Analysis Project* has found that when you compare provision rates across the Interface Councils with the Melbourne Metropolitan average provision rates there is evidence of significant gaps across the following service areas:

1. Alcohol & Other Drug Services
2. Allied Health – Occupational Therapists
3. Allied Health – Psychologists
4. Allied Health – Pharmacists
5. Allied Health – Physiotherapists
6. Disability – Individual and Flexible Support Packages
7. Mental Health Services
8. Family Violence

The Report has estimated that there appears to be **above average expenditure of about \$12.17m across Child Protection Services in the Interface Council areas that might better be invested in early intervention and preventative measures.**

Other observations relevant to understanding the needs of young people experiencing homelessness in growth area locations include:

1. The gap analysis indicates that the Interface Council areas are potentially underserved by an estimated gap of 1,720 Occasions of Service or 11.84% below an average of metropolitan service levels.
2. There appears to be a very significant and inequitable spatial distortion in the work location of Victorian Government employed Allied Health Professionals. This means that where local services are difficult to access, there are **potentially significant waiting times** or people are forced to travel long distances for appointments or access.
3. An issue that might require additional follow-up are the **much higher rates of Child Protection Reports, Investigations and Substantiations** in Casey, Cardinia and Melton that do not translate into Protection Applications.
4. The Mental Health gap analysis indicates that the **Interface Council areas are potentially underserved** by an estimated gap of 91,340 Occasions of Service or 22.32% below an average of metropolitan service levels.
5. **The Family Violence Case data indicates that there are significantly lower levels of service provision** in the Interface Council areas compared with the Metropolitan average. Note that the data relates to location of services and not surviving-victim address.

⁸ Interface Council Group *Human Services Gap Analysis* December 2017

6. **An estimated \$27.14m funding gap in Family Violence services** when compared with Metropolitan Melbourne (Interface Council Group *Human Services Gap Analysis* December 2017, pp. 10 – 12)

The key themes identified in the research and relevant to *Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy* include:

1. An imperative for **new funding and service commissioning models that are flexible and tailored** to meet local needs;
2. A need for **seamless integrated planning** and 'follow through' to ensure appropriate infrastructure, services and community strengthening programs are implemented; and
3. There needs to be a **'whole of government' commitment to working in partnership** to finally resolve the integration and resourcing issues that have been identified for many years but not successfully addressed Interface Council Group *Human Services Gap Analysis* December 2017, p. 16)

Hope Street's First Response Youth Service model provides an innovative response to both the needs of young people experiencing homelessness and the evident gaps in human services in growth area locations. The service provides an example of flexible and tailored youth support models designed to meet local needs while strengthening community partnerships.

Hope Street has developed detailed documentation of the need for a **First Response Youth Service in Whittlesea**, similar to the service recently opened in the City of Melton. The proposed operational team for the Whittlesea Service reflects an **integrated specialist youth-focused service delivery approach** and includes:

1. Team Leader
2. 2 Crisis Support Case Managers
3. 1 Specialist Young Families Case Manager
4. 4 EFT Youth Residential Support Workers
5. 4 EFT Outreach Case Managers (7 days a week – 9.00am – midnight)
6. 1 EFT Private Rental Support Worker

Rapid Rehousing

An essential feature of the Hope Street First Response Youth Service is rapid rehousing. This will be achieved through intensive one-to-one individualised case managed support that focuses on **connecting the young person and young family to accommodation/housing options**. This will be further strengthened with a dedicated **Private Rental Support Worker** assisting young people and young families to access and sustain private rental. Hope Street has demonstrated a strong track record of working with young people to secure long-term housing outcomes. Since the First Response Youth Service (interim model) launched in 2018, 79% of clients secured longer-term stable housing.

Clients of the **Hope Street First Response Youth Service in Whittlesea** would receive a **holistic, integrated response** comprised of the following four core components:



Table 6: Proposed Hope Street First response Youth Service in Whittlesea – Holistic and Integrated Service Model

Integrated Emergency Response	Supported Crisis Accommodation
1. Outreach emergency response 7 days a week 9.00am - midnight including public holidays 2. Telephone crisis line 3. Seamless integration of services 4. A First (crisis) Response risk assessment and plan 5. Food /material aid 6. Connections to health, mental health, dual diagnosis services 7. Safe temporary accommodation 8. Police assistance if safety concerns 9. Transport to safe accommodation 10. Rapid rehousing 11. Total of 120 outreach emergency response clients per annum.	1. 24/7 intake 2. Enhanced rostering 3. Purpose built 4. Eight young people with no accompanying children for a period of 6-8 weeks. 5. Two family units (each with capacity for 2 young people and up to 3 children) for a period of 8-12 weeks. 6. One emergency bed for stays of up to one week. 7. All bedrooms have ensuite bathrooms. 8. Total of 100 clients per annum.
Prevention & Life-long Diversion From Homelessness	Wrap Around Specialist Case Management
1. Rapid rehousing 2. Longer term housing options 3. Facilitating employment/training opportunities with local businesses 4. Supports to remain engaged/re-engage with school/training/ tertiary education 5. Skill development workshops 6. Youth/family reconciliation 7. Counselling 8. Diversion from Youth Justice System	1. Complex needs assessment 2. Individual client focus 3. Early intervention and diversion from the Homelessness Service System 4. Intensive case management 5. Rapid rehousing 6. Seamless service integration 7. Additional youth specialist supports 8. Therapeutic trauma informed practices 9. Youth-centred culturally sensitive practice

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- | | |
|--|--|
| 9. Diversion from allied service systems including mental health | 10. Strengths-based and solutions-focused approaches to practice |
| 10. Diversion from long-term homelessness | |
-

Source: Hope Street Youth and Family Services March 2021

Recommendation 9: In order to support the needs of young people experiencing homelessness in growth area locations ensure funding is available for the development and operation of the Hope Street First Response Service - Whittlesea and similar initiatives in other growth areas including the City of Hume.

What actions will enable and deliver growth in social housing?

In order to support the strategic growth intentions of organisations in the homelessness services sector, clear and transparent processes are urgently needed for State Government funding opportunities for new homelessness service initiatives and infrastructure that do not traditionally sit within social housing category.

Hope Street has recently applied for State Government funding, through Victoria's *Social Housing Maintenance Stimulus Package*, to commence the **Hope Street First Response Youth Service in Whittlesea**. This application was unsuccessful despite including:

1. 'Shovel ready' design concepts.
2. Land provided at a peppercorn rent by the City of Whittlesea.
3. Detailed capital and operational plans.
4. Specific support from all levels of government, non-government, community sector and local business organisations.

The **Hope Street First Response Youth Service in Whittlesea** funding proposal is evidence-based, and highly supported by local community and Local Government and 'ready to go'.

The failure to successfully obtain State Government capital and operational funding **puts at risk the Local Government commitment to the project**, and potentially undermines the significant work completed by Hope Street, the broader homelessness services sector and community members to develop this service proposal.

There is a need for State Government funding opportunities to be clearly staged with clearly defined roll out stages and greater transparency and communication about the degree to which proposed deliverables are aligned with government priorities.

Recommendation 10: Ensure greater transparency, clearer timelines and coordination between State Government funding opportunities for capital and operational funds for homelessness support service initiatives.

6. Partnerships

How do we strengthen our partnership approach to build a stronger and more effective social and affordable housing system?

Hope Street Youth and Family Services actively promotes partnerships that maximise local community support and increase community awareness of the need for innovative homelessness service provision in local areas. This emphasis on partnerships is an important principle underlining Hope Street's commitment to supporting young people within their own communities (see 'Communities' on page 12).

Hope Street has successfully fostered local partnerships to:

1. Identify specific local service needs.
2. Advocate for project support.
3. Secure funding for project development.
4. Ensure professional legal representation.
5. Engage innovative and effective design.
6. Engage quantity surveyor skills.

Key features of **successful Hope Street partnerships** include:

1. **Local Members of Parliament** (MP) providing critical support for project development.
2. **Local Government support** through the provision of Council-owned land and improved local planning approval processes (City of Melton and City of Whittlesea).
3. **Corporate support** for building materials (e.g. 100% of the roofing and guttering of the First Response Youth Service – Melton facility was provided by Stramit).
4. **'Pathways for Employment' program** engaging local partner businesses to provide young people with opportunities to enter the local workforce through apprenticeships and internships etc.

Local partnerships have generated a **range of successful outcomes** including:

1. **Improved community awareness** of, and attitudes towards, the needs of young people experiencing homelessness (e.g. private builders have been raising awareness and gaining community support through local shopping centre campaigns to keep young people in the area; Sofitel has hosted events to raise funds and awareness, etc.
2. **Building local and ongoing relationships** that have lasting benefit e.g. Melton project partners continue to be involved in the program: running community awareness campaigns, building additional infrastructure such as sheds on site, providing ongoing supplies e.g. vegetable garden products, etc.
3. Responding to the need and interest for **private sector organisations to meet their triple bottom line commitment**, including contributing to local social sustainability and equity.

A full list of partners engaged to support the development of the First Response Youth Service Melton is provided on the next page.

The following testimonials from key partners highlight the reciprocal benefits of Hope Street's strong partnership approach:

Mr Steve McGhie, Local MP, Melton, Victorian State Government

This is an exciting moment for the Melton community. For the first time ever, young people who are experiencing homelessness in our local area will now have a purpose-built youth refuge to turn to for crisis accommodation, support and care. Hats off to Hope Street, who have advocated and mobilised support for this project, determined to provide young people with the services they need within growth corridors such as Melton.

Cr Lara Carli, Mayor, City of Melton

We're proud to have partnered with Hope Street on this outstanding project which we know will help ensure the best possible outcomes for our residents who need it most. To have safe and supported local accommodation for people to turn to when they're in need is so important to our Council. This new facility will make a meaningful difference to vulnerable young people in our community who are experiencing homelessness and hardship.

Dr Alberto Furlan, Senior Program Manager, The Ian Potter Foundation

The Ian Potter Foundation is pleased that the construction works of Hope Street's First Response Youth Service centre in Melton are complete. The Foundation is proud to support the Hope Street Youth Mobile Outreach Service, an innovative service that fills an important gap in homelessness services in outer Melbourne. The service will now operate from the newly completed centre, allowing for full integration of support and holistic care of young people in Melton.

Recommendation 11: Support innovative homelessness service initiatives that foster local partnerships to: contribute to project costs; raise community awareness of the need for local homelessness and affordable housing services; and lead to ongoing local outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness e.g. employment and education options and pathways.

Hope Street First Response Youth Refuge Melton – Partners

Austral Bricks [Australian Communities Foundation](#) Australian EcoTech Solutions [Austral Masonry](#) ASC Water Tanks [Ballandry Fund \(ACF\)](#) Big River Instant Turf [Bloom Design](#) Brand Architects [Bunnings Melton](#) Caroma [Capral](#) City of Melton [Criterion](#) Ecodynamics [Edward Wilson Trust](#) Everlast Services [GWA Group](#) HandRail Industries [Hardings](#) [Hardware](#) Harvey Norman Commercial Project Division [Haymes Paint](#) Hilary Faye Photography [Holcim](#) Hutchinson Glass [Interface](#) Johnson Tiles [Marian & E.H. Flack Trust](#) Melton Home Timber and Hardware [Plyco](#) Polyflor [Public Relations Exchange](#) RBA Group [Rockcote](#) Rondo [Sign and Fitouts](#) Sofitel Melbourne on Collins [Soilworx](#) Steven Taylor [Stramit](#) Streamline Products [Superior Landscapes](#) TabCorp Park Melton [Technika](#) The Ian Potter Foundation [The Melton community](#) Upfront Events [Victorian State Government](#) Woodgrove Shopping Centre

7. Engagement

How can we engage with you as we develop new initiatives over the course of the strategy?

Effective methods of engagement utilised or participated by Hope Street include:

- Youth-focused client surveys
- Client focus groups
- Semi-structured interviews with clients
- Focus group with the CEO and Board members
- Communication with CEO
- Focus group with our program leadership and support teams
- More broadly focus group with support agencies (staff) only – separate to focus groups with Access Point/Housing Provider agencies and Housing Associations
- Advisory Committee with a balance of representation from smaller not for profit support services as opposed to dominant representation of the large charities (secular and non-secular)
- Focus groups with community stakeholders and partners including local government, corporate and philanthropic, non-Specialist Homelessness Sector community agencies who refer to or support the Specialist Homelessness Sector (e.g. health services, schools and universities, material aid centres, Centrelink social workers)
- Regular eNewsletters providing updates
- Bi-annual metropolitan and regional 'Road Show' style updates of key indicators achieved, targeted areas for the next stage of the Strategy and the opportunities that are available to the sector.

8. Hope Street Recommendations

Hope Street Youth and Family Services draw on their significant experience and documented success in supporting young people to access secure and affordable housing options to provide the following recommendations to *Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy*:

Recommendation 1: Young people, particularly those living on low incomes and/or exiting the homelessness service system and unknown to child protection, be identified as a priority group for social and affordable housing in Victoria.

Rationale: Homeless young people living on Centrelink benefits and who are outside of the child protection and juvenile justice systems are on the lowest Centrelink income with minimal or no 'systems', family or other supports and at high risk of long-term homelessness.

Recommendation 2: Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy reflect the emphasis on early intervention evident in other recent State and Federal Government policy initiatives, i.e. the Universal Access initiative for early years services and specialist intervention and support programs provided through the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

Rationale: early intervention in programs that support young people to access safe, secure and affordable housing will reduce ongoing costs associated with juvenile justice and out of home care, hospital admissions, etc.

Recommendation 3: Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy support planning, and design of future housing for young people and allocate a percentage of housing that correlates to the percentage of young people recorded as homeless by the ABS data to increase the proportion of young people able to access social housing in Victoria. The Victoria Housing Register be monitored to ensure vulnerable young people on Centrelink and low incomes are allocated housing.

Rationale: Of the current 53,962 public housing tenancies in Victoria, only 0.4%, 206 households, have youth allowance as their main source of income.

Recommendation 4: Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy support the integrated role of specialist homelessness support services in providing pathways for young people exiting crisis accommodation and accessing secure and affordable housing options.

Rationale: The innovative 'Hope to Home' program in Whittlesea is an evidence-based model that has achieved successful outcomes supporting young people to maintain tenancies, improve their lives and become active citizens within local communities.

Recommendation 5: Local place-based youth-specific 'Homelessness Access Points' be developed incorporating assessment practices and staff training that supports the needs of young people experiencing homelessness. These Access Points be available in areas where young people live rather than central activity centre locations.

Rationale: Hope Street continually receives this message from young people facing challenges accessing existing Homelessness Access Points.

Recommendation 6: Encourage Section 173 negotiations between local government authorities and private developers to support the provision of studio, 1 and 2-bedroom dwellings designed to ensure young people safety, affordability and connection with family.

Rationale: recent Amendments to the Planning and Environment Act allow LGAs to negotiate with private developers about the inclusion of social housing. There is a need to ensure these negotiations consider the needs of young people living in the area.

Recommendation 7: Review the Residential Tenancies Act and RHA Rental Agreements to enable longer term social housing tenancies for young people escaping homelessness to allow them to develop capabilities to maintain secure housing tenancies in adulthood.

Rationale: Current short-term social housing tenancies do not reflect the needs of young people who require stable housing as they move through their developmental stages and into adulthood.

Recommendation 8: Adopt a place-based approach to homelessness service provision supporting local service coordination, local public-private partnerships, increased levels of community awareness and support for homelessness services and the ability of young people to remain in their communities.

Rationale: While most mainstream homelessness support services have traditionally focused on the central business district, Hope Street has developed a focus on Melbourne's growth corridors. Data on the number of young people living in these growth corridors provides evidence of the urgent need to move homelessness support resources out of inner-city locations and into growth area communities.

Recommendation 9: In order to support the needs of young people experiencing homelessness in growth area locations ensure funding is available for the development and operation of the Hope Street First Response Service - Whittlesea and similar initiatives in other growth areas including the City of Hume.

Rationale: Significant growth is forecast in the number of young people living in Melbourne's growth area and there is clear evidence of a gap in the provision of appropriate human services in these areas. Hope Street has demonstrated a strong track record of working with young people to secure long-term housing outcomes in growth areas. Since the First Response Youth Service (interim model) launched in 2018, 79% of clients secured longer-term stable housing.

Recommendation 10: Ensure greater transparency, clearer timelines and coordination between State Government funding opportunities for capital and operational funds for homelessness support service initiatives.

Rationale: The Hope Street First Response Youth Service in Whittlesea funding application was 'shovel ready', evidence based, and highly supported by local community and Local Government. The failure to successfully obtain State Government capital and operational funding puts at risk the Local Government commitment of land to the project, and potentially undermines the significant work completed by Hope Street, the broader homelessness services sector and community members to develop this highly-needed service proposal.

Recommendation 11: Support innovative homelessness service initiatives that foster local partnerships to: contribute to project costs; raise community awareness of the need for local homelessness and affordable housing services; and lead to ongoing local outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness e.g. employment and education options and pathways.

Rationale: Hope Street has demonstrated the strengths and benefits of local partnerships through the development of the First Response Youth Service in Melton where local partner organisations have: provided materials and funding; raised community awareness and support; provided employment and education pathways for young people; and supported young people into secure private rental tenancies.

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