

Youth Homelessness – Youth Supported Accommodation for the South Morang Civic Precinct

Whittlesea Community Futures is seeking State and Federal Government support to help alleviate local youth homelessness by providing funding for local housing and services based on the Foyer model.

What is happening right now?

Specialist Homelessness Services report that they cannot keep up with the demand for housing and support services for young people in the Municipality (City of Whittlesea Human Services Needs Analysis 2013). The Specialist Homelessness Service system provides statewide services to people who are homeless; including youth aged 16 – 24 years.

The full local extent of young people’s homelessness has not been thoroughly determined. However all specialist Homelessness Services report that they cannot keep up with demand for housing and support services for young people in the Municipalityⁱ. Local housing for young people is difficult to obtain in the private rental market due to a lack of affordable housing and high competition for rental properties. Young people who are homeless are usually living below the poverty line on Centrelink benefits, as they do not have families to support them. While the Homelessness Service System does its best to respond to the needs of homeless young people, longer term housing and support models are required to reduce reliance on service systems into adulthood. Significant population growth of young people in the City of Whittlesea is likely to further exacerbate this issue, with an estimated 38,400 young people aged 16 – 24 years expected to be living in the municipally by 2024 an increase of 5,300 people from 2014ⁱⁱ.

What is youth supported accommodation?

Youth supported accommodation is based around the successful Foyer-like model of housing and support for young people with an employment, education and training focus. It comprises of a number of semi-detached units with on-site support for residents from professional staff. The units are located close to transport, schools, shops and community services. This model of social housing has been used widely across France and the UK and is being implemented in Australia with approximately ten housing projects currently operating in Victoria. The model works with young people aged 16 – 24 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to keep them in their local communities. It has a focus on employment, education and training, living skills development, maintaining sustainable tenancies and citizen participation. Young people can stay in the units for up to two years and receive outreach support for a further 12 months if needed.

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Why locate youth supported accommodation in the South Morang Civic Precinct?

The South Morang Civic Precinct development offers an excellent opportunity to locate a youth supported accommodation facility of ten units (seven one-bedroom and three two-bedroom) in the outer area of the City of Whittlesea, centrally located to social support services, education services and recreation opportunities for young people. The new Super Clinic at South Morang (located in close proximity to the Civic Precinct) provides an excellent opportunity to develop coordinated youth mental health responses that align with a housing and employment pathway, so young homeless people in the area can remain connected to their communities.

How much will it cost?

This proposal includes fifteen units (ten one-bedroom for singles and five two-bedroom for young families) at a cost of \$250K each for the singles and \$285K each for the two bedroom properties, a total capital cost of approximately \$4.983M. The facility would also include meeting spaces and an office space to assist in the provision of services for residents. The project would require establishment funds of \$170K and recurrent annual funding of approximately \$888K. Partners in the development would include specialist homelessness services, mental health services and education and employment services.

Project Elements ⁱⁱ	Development	Total
Capital Cost per Unit		
10 x 1BR @ \$250,000 each = \$2,500,000	\$3,925,000	\$3,925,000
5 x 2BR @ \$285,000 each = \$1,425,000		
Establishment (one off cost)	\$170,000	\$170,000
Program (recurrent for three years)		
\$887,730 x 3 years = \$2,663,190	\$887,730	\$2,663,190
Grand Total	\$4,982,730	\$6,758,190

The cost benefit of this project clearly outweighs the expense with the estimated cost of youth homelessness on the health and criminal justice system being \$332,300 per person over a lifetime. Further, the economic cost of educational disadvantage (non-completion of high school) due to becoming homeless is estimated to be around \$64,300 per person over the average working life (40 years).ⁱⁱⁱ Multiply these costs by the first 20 people to use this facility and the savings to the community are around \$7.9M.

How does the community benefit?

Young people participating in the program who were once homeless could become highly functioning members of the local community with the support of the program and housing, through gaining employment, secure housing and help towards achieving their individual longer term goals. This model of youth supported accommodation blends into the constructed and physical landscape of its surroundings. It will help to meet the local housing need for young people with low incomes and reduce longer term reliance on service systems. This will create a housing pathway that is supported by a public-private partnership together with education and employment services as well as access to youth mental health services.

What objectives does this help us achieve?

Federal Government

- National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
- Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) Department of Health

State Government

- Victorian Homelessness Action Plan
- Services Connect: Better Services for Victorians in Need
- Victorian Service System Reform Project

City of Whittlesea

- Whittlesea Community Futures Youth Cluster – Homelessness
- Whittlesea Community Futures Youth Cluster – Mental Health
- Social and Affordable Housing Policy and Strategy 2012-2016
- Housing Diversity Strategy 2013-2033
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013
- Connect – The municipal plan for children and young people and their families in the City of Whittlesea 2013-2018

Key Messages

- Youth supported accommodation is a successful model of housing and support for young people with an employment, education and training focus.
- Meets housing need for low income at-risk young people and reduces longer term reliance on service systems.
- Whittlesea Community Futures Partner Agencies are willing to explore a public-private partnership for a Foyer model in the South Morang Precinct.

ⁱ City of Whittlesea, *Human Services Needs Analysis*, 2013

ⁱⁱ Forecast.id, *City of Whittlesea Population Forecast*, <http://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea>, accessed March 2014

ⁱⁱⁱ Swinburne University, Homelessness Research Collaboration, A. Steen & D. Mackenzie, *Financial Analysis of Foyer and Foyer-like Youth Housing Models*, June 2013.