

WODONGA EDUCATION FIRST YOUTH FOYER PROPOSAL

Wodonga Education First Youth Foyer (Youth Foyer) proposal represents a partnership between seven (7) key organisations for the provision of accommodation, support services, community engagement and education opportunities for the region's most vulnerable young people.

The proposal requires the construction and operation of an accommodation facility, housing 40 studio bedrooms for youth, experiencing or at risk of, homelessness. Participants will have access to affordable housing, government funded training and educational support, along with ongoing improvements to their personal and mental health.

Wodonga TAFE is seeking \$15m of Government and/or philanthropic funding contributors for the construction of the Youth Foyer and \$2m per annum for ongoing operational and youth support services.

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WHO IS INVOLVED?

There are seven (7) key stakeholders in the initiation of the Youth Foyer development who all have a shared interest and passion for the program's success.

- Wodonga TAFE, in line with its strategic directions, aims to support young people through education pathways to employment. Wodonga TAFE will contribute suitable land on which to build the accommodation within its McKoy Street campus, nearby La Trobe University, and will provide education and counselling services to the clients of Youth Foyer.
- Brotherhood of St Laurence has developed the Education First Youth Foyer model and, with their expertise in supporting people experiencing disadvantage, are assisting to confirm the expected outcomes, as well as the building and operational requirements needed to support a Youth Foyer in Wodonga.
- City of Wodonga Council, in keeping with its Safety, Inclusion and Equity Strategy, its Growth and Youth Strategies is working with organisations to build awareness, increase affordable housing and reduce social barriers restricting access to affordable housing for its residents.
- BeyondHousing brings an asset and tenancy management expertise, resources and leadership to the project especially in relation to social housing asset development, government negotiations and financial analysis
- Junction Support Services is the primary Youth support service in Wodonga and will contribute expertise, resources and leadership in the development of the service model, understanding of youth focussed need and support services
- Yes Unlimited is a Specialist Homelessness Service and the primary Youth Service provider in Albury, holding a strong interest in supporting the development of a Youth Foyer for young people in the Border Community.
- Albury City Council are facilitators of a thriving, resilient and liveable city full of opportunities, and are strongly invested in supporting the region's young people, who will benefit greatly from the development of a Youth Foyer.

Together the consortium represents a formidable team of expert knowledge and understanding in the key areas of education and housing as well as the educational, mental and physical challenges youth are facing.

WHAT ISSUES ARE OUR YOUTH FACING?

Albury-Wodonga is a regional twin-city situated on the Victorian and New South Wales border. The population currently sits at 91,923 with an expected increase to 122,277 by 2036. Approximately 10% of the overall population are 18-24 year old's.

Local statistics show that:

- There were 423 homeless in the Albury-Wodonga region the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated in 2016. (Classified as those living on the streets (7%), or sharing overcrowded accommodation, living in refuge hostels or improvised housing and couch 'surfing').

Paired with the national statistics:

- Youth homelessness is on the rise with the number of clients (15 -24 years) swelling to 43,000 people in 2019.
- The youth unemployment rate in Australia is at 15.6%, double that of the overall unemployment rate of 7.4%.
- Since January 2020 and the COVID-19 Pandemic rise, youth unemployment rate has increased by 4% (ABS, June 2020)
- Youth unemployment and calls for assistance to homelessness service providers in Albury-Wodonga has spiked significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic (Source: BeyondHousing, Junction Support Services and YES Services).

The need for accommodation and education solutions for disadvantaged young people has never been greater. The implementation of a dedicated Youth Foyer will tackle the issue directly by providing young people with the services they need for ongoing prosperity.

The proposed site will be located on Wodonga Institute of TAFE land at McKoy Street in West Wodonga, with both vocational and higher education in close proximity. Latrobe University is just a few minutes' walk away, and local public transport readily available.

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HOW WILL THIS PROGRAM SUCCEED?

The Youth Foyer aims to break the cycle of youth homelessness and displacement, as well as disengagement from education, employment and the community by providing our most vulnerable youth with affordable accommodation on site, during the term of their studies. This will be coupled with 24/7 onsite support through Junction Support Services and education and career counselling provided during normal business hours by Wodonga TAFE Skills and Jobs Centre.



3D concept design of Wodonga EFYF

Primary aim of the Youth Foyer is to:

- Reduce the number of young people cycling through the housing and homelessness system
- Increase the number of young people completing education qualifications
- Increase the number of young people productively employed
- Building confidence, sense of self-worth and mental strength to thrive in life
- Learning, and feeling confident in utilising, tools and resources on offer to assist them in building a secure future

To be eligible for a place at Youth Foyer, young people must be aged between 16-24, unable to live at home, and have the willingness to commit to education and training for the contracted duration.

The key to the model lies in the provision of stable and affordable accommodation for up to two years. Providing the opportunity to build pathways, become self-sufficient and enter the workforce with the skills, knowledge and experience needed in order to succeed. There will also be government funded training and ongoing personal and educational support provided by dedicated mentors, with participants also learning life skills by budgeting and meeting their own food and living expenses.

Prospective residents are interviewed and invited to group activities to ensure that they are the right fit for the program. Support services, such as career guidance, employment assistance, mentoring, mental and physical health support, development of life skills and assistance to be involved in volunteer and community activities are made available to the residents.

Residents must sign an agreement which covers all aspects of Youth Foyer life. The agreement upholds the rights and responsibilities of both the students and Foyer staff. Students must not only complete their studies, but also participate in a range of activities and opportunities offered to successfully complete the program.



Concept floor plans for Wodonga EFYF

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WHAT IS THE COST AND ONGOING EXPENSES?

The construction of a 40-bed accommodation unit that will include studio-style rooms and shared communal areas is estimated to cost \$15m, with land being contributed by Wodonga TAFE.

This facility and support programs provide young people with the services and features they need to succeed, including:

- Learning and upskilling tools
- Access to education, training, and employment opportunities
- Safe, secure, and affordable accommodation for up to two years
- 24-hour on-site support from trained staff
- Opportunity to develop independent living skills and participate in community.

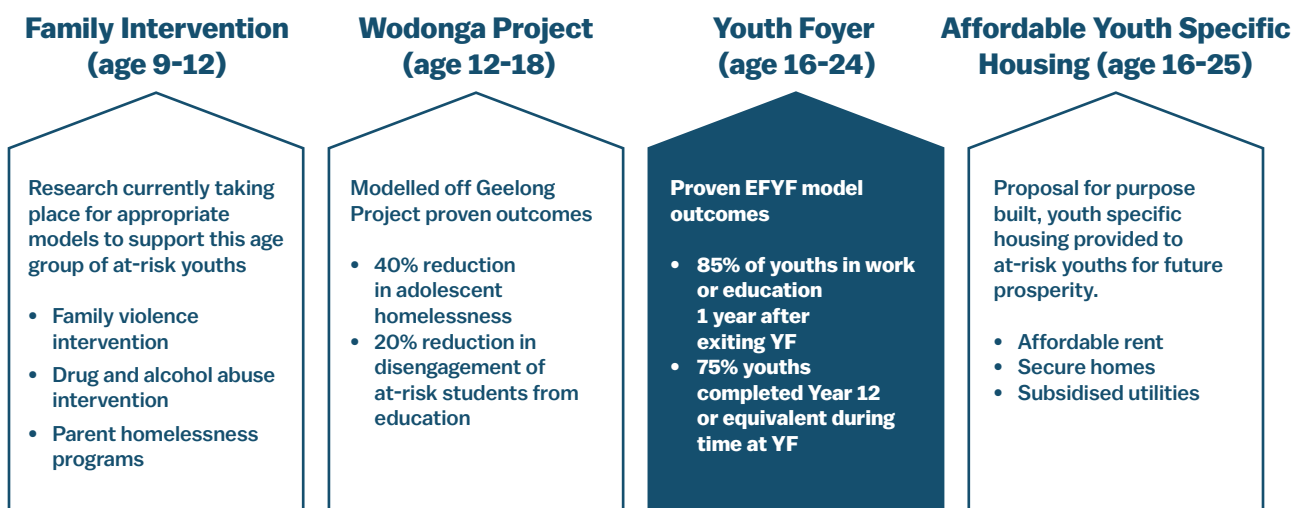
The proponent and partners will proactively work together to build new and leverage existing federal and state key partnerships in government, business, community, and philanthropy to attract and secure sustainable operational funding to cover the recurrent operating costs.

Ongoing operational costs, including 24 hour all-year-round trained supervision of the residents is estimated at \$2m per annum.

WHY YOUTH FOYER?

Under the current EFYF model, the construction of the Youth Foyer represents an opportunity to provide much needed economic stimulus to a region impacted by bushfires, COVID-19 and border closures.

The Youth Foyer provides each resident with the time, personalised attention, mentoring and access to education opportunities needed to lead fulfilling, independent and productive lives.



A Youth focused strategy showcases the opportunity for a full-cycle assistance program which addresses issues for youths from as young as 9 years old. Using the Wodonga Project as a feeder program for the Youth Foyer, it is perfectly placed within this strategy, by offering additional educational advancements and financially secure prospects. There is also the option to consider further development to the model to reflect support for our Indigenous communities.

At its heart, the Youth Foyer model is based on the life-changing proposition that the most constructive outcome achievable for young people, is to ensure they become educated, employable and empowered so they can build better lives and achieve genuine independence.