



## **Youth Education and Housing first for Wodonga**

**14 February 2023 [Embargoed until 12.01am Wednesday 15 February]**

Wodonga TAFE will be home to a multi-million-dollar centre providing secure supported housing, access to education, training and job-skilling for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The Wodonga Education First Youth Foyer will be developed in partnership between the Victorian Government, BeyondHousing, Wodonga Institute of TAFE and Junction Support Services. It is one of ten new youth housing projects recently announced by the Victorian Minister for Housing The Hon. Colin Brooks MP as part of the Victorian Government's \$50 million commitment to housing for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, under the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build program.

The Education First Youth Foyer program works to break the cycle of homelessness by supporting young people, aged 16 to 24, to build a secure and sustainable livelihood by providing them supported housing alongside access to education, employment, training, and a suite of other supports and opportunities.

Wodonga TAFE will provide the site for the Foyer to be built at its McKoy Street campus, with construction expected to be completed by mid-2025. Wodonga TAFE CEO Phil Paterson said the initiative will be life changing for Wodonga's young people.

"This is an amazing and much-needed outcome that will provide great benefits for our region. Wodonga Education First Youth Foyer will change young people's lives through dedicated support, accommodation, services, and education. We can help young people achieve their personal and career aspirations, breaking down the barriers to successful futures."

"Wodonga TAFE is proud to provide the land for the construction of Wodonga Education First Youth Foyer at our McKoy Street campus. We look forward to working with our partners to provide accessible and innovative learning, and career and employment pathways - ultimately strengthening our community."

The Wodonga Youth Foyer will be managed by BeyondHousing with Junction Support Services providing vital supports to residents. It will be home to 40 at risk or disadvantaged young people who commit to training and study in exchange for subsidised accommodation and support for up to two years.

BeyondHousing CEO Celia Adams welcomed the commitment to Wodonga's young people through this housing and education initiative.

"We have a long-standing commitment to ending homelessness here in Wodonga and look forward to working with our partners to deliver the Foyer project. Education First Youth Foyers are evidence based. They make a real difference to the lives of many young people experiencing homelessness. Wodonga needs a Foyer and we're delighted at the Victorian Government's investment and the opportunity to work with our partners." Ms. Adams said.



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"One of our biggest objectives here is to help these young people gain the skills, credentials and confidence to build a life of opportunity, and to have the housing skills they need for their independence.

"As a consortium, we thank Minister Brooks and Homes Victoria for their funding commitment which will have a significant impact on the lives of homeless, at risk and disadvantaged young people in this region."

The Wodonga Youth Foyer will be based on the successful Education First Youth Foyer model developed by Brotherhood of St Laurence, which will provide support for the operational model. Junction Support Services will manage support to young people through 24/7 onsite workers and operationalise the model once the Foyer is built.

Junction's CEO Megan Hanley said the initiative is about prevention and pathways for young people which are needed more than ever in today's housing environment.

"As the largest provider of youth homelessness services in the region, we see the impact of homelessness on our young people on a daily basis. We are thrilled that Wodonga will have a Youth Foyer and young people will have the opportunity to live in a safe and stable environment, while continuing education and/or employment pathways," Ms. Hanley said.

"We look forward to working with the consortium and Government to see this crucial resource implemented in our local community."

Young people presenting alone was the 4th largest homelessness services client group in 2021-22, with more than 39,300 young people presenting to homelessness services across Victoria. 1 in 4 people experiencing homelessness in Wodonga is a young person aged 12-24.

**-ENDS-**

Representatives of BeyondHousing, Wodonga TAFE and Junction Support Services will hold a joint media opportunity onsite at Wodonga TAFE. Details as follows:

Date: Wednesday 15 February

Time: 9.30am

Location: Wodonga TAFE McKoy St Campus – The Hangar Building  
[https://maps.app.goo.gl/XPfF5YKXd3HnN9Td8?g\\_st=ic](https://maps.app.goo.gl/XPfF5YKXd3HnN9Td8?g_st=ic)

Spokespersons available: Phil Paterson, CEO Wodonga TAFE  
Charlie Bird, Chief Development and Asset Officer BeyondHousing  
Megan Hanley, CEO Junction Support Services

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**BeyondHousing** is the largest not-for-profit community housing organisation within the Goulburn and Ovens Murray regions of Victoria and is the main entry point for the homelessness system. Our vision is for *Home. Not Homeless*. We provide homes for renters who need them and the support they need to keep them. We are committed to preventing and ending homelessness, addressing housing affordability, and fostering housing stability. BeyondHousing provides a range of supports for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

**Junction Support Services** is a not-for-profit organisation in north-east Victoria that supports people who are disadvantaged through poverty, homelessness, family breakdown, social isolation, family violence, mental ill health and drug and alcohol addiction.

**Wodonga TAFE** is the educational provider of choice servicing the North East of regional Victoria. Wodonga TAFE plays a critical role in supporting continued growth throughout our community and industries. With a mission to strengthen our communities and industries through accessible and innovative learning. Wodonga TAFE's success is underpinned by an uncompromising commitment to; driving student success; helping build our communities through education; working in partnership with all industry; inspiring futures through innovative and sustainable practices; and empowering and supporting our staff. We strive to build success through learning for everyone who engages with Wodonga Institute of TAFE.