



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Wodonga's Youth Foyer on track**

Wodonga's Education First Youth Foyer is on track to open in just over a year.

Construction of the \$15.75 million facility began in October last year at Wodonga TAFE's McKoy Street campus and, when completed in mid-2025, will be home to 40 at-risk or disadvantaged young people.

The project has been funded as part of the Victorian Government's \$50 million investment to combat youth homelessness under the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build program in partnership with Beyond Housing, Wodonga Institute of TAFE, and Junction Support Services.

The Education First Youth Foyer program is designed to break the cycle of homelessness by empowering young people aged 16 to 24 to build secure and sustainable futures. This includes supported housing, education, employment, training, and a wealth of support and opportunities.

Beyond Housing will manage the Wodonga Youth Foyer, while Junction Support Services will provide essential support to residents.

Beyond Housing CEO Celia Adams said one in four people experiencing homelessness in Wodonga was a young person aged 12-24, according to the 2021 Census data.

"The Education First Youth Foyers are about much more than shelter; they are incubators of hope, offering young individuals facing homelessness the keys to unlocking a promising future," Ms Adams said.

She highlighted that over 7.5 years, 276 youths have advanced through the Shepparton Education First Youth Foyer, achieving notable successes such as five buying their own homes, one becoming a Youth Development Worker at Berry Street, and another serving as an Ambassador for the Foyer Foundation.

"Education First Youth Foyers are transformational. They breathe hope and opportunity into the lives of young people facing homelessness. Wodonga needs a Foyer, and we're thrilled to collaborate with the Victorian Government and our partners to make this happen," she said.

Megan Hanley, CEO of Junction Support Services, emphasised the importance of this initiative, stating, "Today's housing environment demands prevention and pathways for young people.

"Completing education can be challenging for young people with limited family and community support and connections.

"The innovative Wodonga Education First Youth Foyer offers a safe and stable living environment so young people can focus on education and employment pathways and become active contributors and role models in their local community.

“Junction is proud to work with the consortium and the government to see this crucial resource implemented in our local community.”

Wodonga TAFE CEO Phil Paterson believes this initiative will be life-changing for Wodonga's young people.

"We're proud to provide the land for Wodonga Education First Youth Foyer at our McKoy Street campus. This project will open doors to accessible and innovative learning, and career and employment pathways - ultimately strengthening our community and changing the lives of disadvantaged young people in our region."

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