

MEDIA RELEASE

Kate's story: Brisbane charities unite to tackle youth homelessness

16 December 2020

Kate, 18, knows better than most how much Brisbane Housing Company's new Cornwall Street affordable apartment complex will mean to those who get to call one of these units home.

"I've been living in transitional housing for 12 months now and it's been really good," said Kate, who graduated from high school last month.

"It's enabled me to finish school, to work and it's been really good because it's convenient and there's a lot of support. Especially when I first moved in, I needed a lot of support," she said. * **video 1.43-2.06**

Four young people and one young family at risk of homelessness will be among the first tenants to move into the new \$10.69 million inner-city architect-designed affordable unit complex at 126 Cornwall Street, Woolloongabba, South Brisbane.

Community housing provider Brisbane Housing Company (BHC) and youth housing and support service Brisbane Youth Service (BYS) are preparing to identify eligible tenants to move into the complex, the first built under the Queensland Government's Partnering for Growth initiative.

Kate said it was tough for any 18 or 19 year-old to find a suitable affordable place to live and projects like Cornwall Street gave young people hope.

"It's really tricky. I have two jobs, I have a year's worth of rental history and it's still not enough to get into most private rentals. It's not really possible for a young person to have much more than that, especially if you're 18 or 19. That's why we need more social housing options that are affordable to young people. Otherwise, how do you ever get out of homelessness?" she said. ** **video 2.52-3.28**

BHC is building 32 new affordable studio, one and two-bedroom apartments, with five specifically allocated for young people who have been living in transitional housing supported by BYS.

BHC CEO Rebecca Oelkers said Cornwall Street residents would be able to access safe, secure, affordable housing, with the five young households benefitting from continued BYS support services to help them into education, training and jobs with the aim of moving into long term homes.

"Young people in dire housing need have the greatest difficulty accessing affordable, safe accommodation due to their incredibly low incomes. Their chances are further compounded by preconceptions in the private market about their ability to manage and sustain a tenancy," Ms Oelkers said.

"As the additional JobSeeker payments have now been reduced and the true fallout from COVID-19 becomes evident, we expect to see more young people pushed into poverty and homelessness.

"Working together with our partners BYS we will be able to provide vulnerable young people with secure housing and a path towards an independent and positive future."

BYS CEO Annemaree Callander said youth homelessness was a critical issue in Australia, with one-quarter of people presenting alone to homelessness services aged between 12 and 25.

"Despite this huge demand at the frontline, less than three per cent of people living in social housing are young people, showing that there are barriers for young people in accessing all types of housing, not just private rental," Ms Callander said.

“Couch surfing is the most common form of homelessness experienced by young people.

“Moving from place to place with no fixed address puts vulnerable young people at serious risk of violence and abuse. It impacts their mental and physical health, sense of identity and makes it increasingly difficult to stay engaged at school or in employment and transition successfully to independence.

“These homes will be life-changing for the young people we work with who have very few affordable options for longer term, stable housing.

“This partnership will provide young people with a real opportunity for independent living that will equip them not only with tenancy skills but also a demonstrated tenancy record to support greater access to private market options after the program.”

Ms Oelkers said BHC was committed to growing the supply of social and affordable housing in Brisbane, including more housing for young people, and will continue to advocate to all levels of government to increase investment in social and affordable housing.

The Cornwall Street building will be completed in January, with the first tenants set to move in from February.

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About BHC

- BHC has provided more than 6,000 households with access to high-quality, well-located affordable housing across Brisbane since it was established in 2002.

About BYS

- BYS has been providing assistance to vulnerable young people and young families since it was established in 1976.
- Each year BYS supports more than 1433 young people, 54 per cent are experiencing homelessness, while 82 percent live in unsafe, unsuitable or unaffordable housing.