

Rotary Tiny Home Project

The Need

Around 23% of people experiencing homelessness are children and young people between 12 and 24 (ABS Census 2021). Once homeless it is very difficult for a young person to get back to normal independent living, and a lifetime of homelessness and misery beckons. A major factor in child homelessness is the transition out of “out of home care” (foster care, group homes and transitional high needs care). Children and young people who enter this care system have often experienced high levels of harm and trauma.

At age 18, the young people are required to transition out of OOHC, at a time when they lack substantial support and are at increased risk of homelessness, substance abuse, unplanned pregnancy and involvement with the criminal justice system. As a result, 43% of young people leaving care do not have stable accommodation and are at significant risk of homelessness (WA Auditor General report 2018-19).

Home Stretch Program

WA State Government has recently committed to the Home Stretch program. This is to support young people aged 18-21 transitioning out of OOHC, based on their individual needs and aspirations. The program provides the young person with support, funds and the opportunity to stay on with their carer during this transitional period, under the supervision of a Provider. The program is keen to deploy innovative housing solutions – to ease the transition to independent life and prevent youth homelessness

Solution Approach

The Tiny Home approach to address the problem is to house these young people for a period of years in their own small home on the same property as foster families, with appropriate support through the family, Rotarians and professional social support providers. These foster families may well be the same ones that care for the young person prior to the transition. This model has been proven by Melbourne organization Kids Under Cover (KUC). They install relocatable 1- and 2-bedroom studios in the back yard of a family or carer’s home. The young person moves in and becomes part of the family, who look after them – providing the young person with a secure and stable environment for as long as it takes to transition to an independent lifestyle. The studio remains in place for as long as it is required, when it can be re-used, re-located, or dismantled with material repurposed. KUC complement the housing with scholarships for education or job training to help the young people break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

KUC have 628 studios on the ground as at June 2022, and have housed a total of 940 young people in this way. Their model has an impressive record of success in preventing youth homelessness.



Rotary Tiny Home Project

The project uses the proven KUC model of locating a unit in a family’s back yard. It is a separate initiative from KUC but with KUC support - KUC have agreed to provide full documentation and share their expertise. Once the project has established itself there is the opportunity for some or all of the units to pass onto KUC ownership and management, and to be fully incorporated into the KUC organization. We are also working towards the project being adopted as an official part of the “Home Stretch” program.

The Unit

The first unit has been built to KUC's approved design – a 4m x 6m unit with bedroom, bathroom and room for storage of personal items and study space. While the KUC unit has no kitchen, this unit will have space for a small fridge, tea & coffee facilities. The unit is capable of being removed after use, either by crane or by dismantling.

An initial supplier will be Buildtech Solutions who can produce kits for the units in their Kewdale factory. Buildtech provides all the documentation approvals and certification for the unit.



Compliance

The unit comes under the heading of “granny flat” for building, design and council regulations, meaning it requires limited council approval. Compliance with building regulations are the responsibility of the unit manufacturer.

Finances

Capital cost of the unit is \$110,000 (plus GST) installed. Capital funding is planned from an initial Rotary Donation (\$25,000) and a loan (\$85,000 at 7%). Rotary retains ownership of the unit and will pay all the costs of building, approvals and connections. Rotary will also furnish the unit (included in the \$110,000) with a bed, TV, wardrobe, desk, chair, and side table, which will then be given to the young person at the end of their contract. Funding for additional items and unforeseen expenses are also available through Home Stretch (Invest in Me), other charities and government programs.

The recurrent income and costs (per fortnight) for the Project are shown in the following table:

Item	F/Night	Comment
Income		
Rent	465	
Outgoings		
Loan repayment	261	Repayment of principal and interest @ 7%
Property Mgt & Maint	58	Looking after property, collecting rent etc
Insurance	45	
Utilities contribution	31	Paid to home owner for rates, water, power, Internet
Total Costs	395	
Profit / Loss	70	To be retained to fund future units

Young Person

For the Young Person, the picture is as follows (again per fortnight):

Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4 +	Comment
Income					
Housing Allowance	464	348	232	0	State: Home Stretch payment
Youth Allowance	639	639	639	639	Federal; 18 or older and living away from home
Rent Assistance	188	188	188	188	Federal; Youth rate when paid with Youth Allowance
Total Income	1,291	1,175	1,059	827	
Outgoings					
Rental	465	465	465	465	
Payment to Host	300	300	300	300	For meals, laundry etc
Total Outgoings	765	765	765	765	
Left over	526	410	294	62	For other expenses

As the Home Stretch Housing Allowance decreases from year 2 onwards, the Young Person will have to find work to augment their income.

Rotary will work with the Home Stretch provider to train young people and connect them with flexible part-time work and training, with the goal of long-term employment and financial independence. Typical training options are: barista courses, driving supervision, White Card building training and leadership training. Rotary will also provide mentors to support the Young Person through the training and help them get employment. This training and employment can go onto their CVs for future opportunities. Also, if they pay their rent for 3 years, Rotary will vouch for them as good rent payers and allow them to keep the furniture.

Role of Rotary

Rotary is best at piloting a project that will establish a successful model to be followed - not at owning significant assets or running major operations. To that end Rotary's primary role will be to see it through to completion of a successful pilot period, and then hand it over to appropriate organisations to follow through, ensuring the ongoing project is as successful as it can be.

Initial Pilot

An initial pilot will comprise installation and running of 1 unit which has already been built. Suitable candidates will be sourced by a Home Stretch provider: Salvos, Wanslea or Yorganop. The suitability of sites will be assessed by Buildtech.

Contracts

The terms and conditions will be specified by agreements between the four parties: Rotary, Young Person, Host, Home Stretch provider.

Governance

The project is governed by a Project Board consisting of Rotarians, Andy Kazim (Anglicare, who is also in charge of "Home Stretch") as adviser on the social world, and a KUC representative.

Risks

There are risks: the viability of a troubled Young Person living in a small unit and supported by a caring family, ensuring the project is sustainable beyond the pilot installation. It is up to the Project Board to understand and manage these.