

PASSAGES

YOUTH

ENGAGEMENT HUB

DECEMBER 2019



> PERTH HUB ONE YEAR ON

> NEW MUSIC PROGRAM

> COUCH SURFING

> CHRISTMAS LUNCH

PROVIDING MARGINALISED AND AT RISK YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A SAFE,
AND POSITIVE PLACE TO ACCESS SUPPORT SERVICES.

MESSAGE

from DAVID REED & SUSAN ROONEY

We warmly welcome you to the latest newsletter for the Passages Youth Engagement Hubs.

Our first Passages Youth Engagement Hub in Perth started more than twenty years ago and key to the service model is our Low Threshold and Change approach. We try and remove as many barriers as possible so young people can access the support they need.

Young people, that may be street present, experiencing mental illness or disabilities, domestic and family violence, poverty, social isolation and complex trauma, are welcomed through the door and given individualised support in a safe non-judgemental space so they can make positive changes to their lives.

We have just marked our one year anniversary since our Perth Passages Youth Engagement Hub moved to a new location. The new purpose designed premises has allowed us to expand our service and deliver more effective outcomes and support for young people accessing the service.

We continue to offer new resources and are excited at the launch of a new music program at Perth Passages. This music program is an opportunity to build shared experiences that can help young people's sense of achievement.

Supporting the vulnerable and at risk young people who attend the Passages Youth Engagement Hubs would not be possible without the generous support we receive.

As you read our latest newsletter edition, you will see the incredible difference your generous support makes to their lives.

David Reed
Passages Chairman

Susan Rooney
CEO Vinnies WA



Crisis to Happiness David's Story

Having recently broken up with his partner and mother of his child, David found himself homeless and in financial crisis, arriving at Passages in an emotional state. He had been living on the street which he was finding difficult and felt he had no other options to change the situation he had suddenly found himself in.

At Passages each day, David was able to access showers, wash his clothes and prepare healthy meals which helped him gradually begin to feel emotionally stronger. He was able to acknowledge to staff how he was feeling, and that his main goal was to find stable accommodation, although he had no regular income.

Passages worked with David so he could gain access to Centrelink payments, and organised a short stay in Vinnies Tom Fisher House for seven nights of accommodation and support until his payments came through.

While at Tom Fisher House, David continued to visit Passages for support, including accessing many of the outreach services that work out of the Hub each week. This led to a referral to St Bartholomew's House and was immediately successful in securing a room. The room however was not going to be ready for a couple of days so Vinnies Tom Fisher House extended David's stay, ensuring a smooth transition into his new accommodation.

David's confidence began to grow in his new accommodation and through the relationships that he had built with staff, he continued to seek support so he could work on his mental health and financial issues.

One of David's main goals was to look for a place to live on his own so he could gain his independence back. Passages Youth Workers were able to support David with applying for a unit and he was delighted when he was told he had been successful.

David is proud of his new home and what he has so far been able to achieve with Passages support. He still visits Passages and loves participating in the in-reach services such as Tucker Time, where young people can learn cooking and kitchen skills. His enjoyment of cooking has led him to developing his signature Milo cake which is always a hit with staff and other young people in the service.

The supportive environment that David experienced has helped him feel motivated to work towards gaining a motor trade apprenticeship and he is now excited about what he can achieve in his future.

PASSAGES ONE YEAR ON

The Passages name comes from the idea of providing young people with a “passage” or transition from one life to another. One year on in the new location, it now seems the service itself has also transitioned so it can deliver more opportunities and essential services for young people.

Located in Edward Street, Perth the new centre location ensures all young people walking through the Passages door can have access to a service that has the ability to provide them with more support and opportunities in a safe and welcoming environment.

Extra space and additional consulting rooms has enabled Passages to accommodate a wider range of visiting in-reach services so young people can be put in touch with more support and referrals such as medical assistance two days a week, and a legal service clinic once a week. Rooms can be booked to meet with counsellors and therapists, and since the move, there has been an increase in the number of young people engaging with the service.

Niamh Kiely, Passages Coordinator (Perth) says that the increased space and new open layout has made a significant difference to service delivery. “The new building in itself creates a calming atmosphere with bright open spaces and a homely touch that has such a positive impact on how our young people feel in the Hub and go about their day. We can have conversations in the kitchen or on a lounge which helps us have more opportunity and flexibility to engage with young people when it’s right for them. Over the past 12 months we have seen and experienced how this fresh and welcoming environment is able to impact one’s mental wellbeing in ways that are subtle yet very visible.” Niamh says.

Passages continues to offer practical assistance and support to the young people experiencing disadvantage, homelessness and disconnection in our community. Providing a non-judgemental environment and removing barriers for marginalised young people in a positive and safe place to access support is Passages Low Threshold and Change approach which has proven to be highly successful model. According to Sandy

McKiernan, Executive Manager Vinnies Specialist Services, the new location has helped raise the profile on Passages unique service delivery.

“The new building certainly has been a draw card for those wanting to understand our work and our model; they are always impressed when they visit and meet the team and our young people. Passages Low Threshold and Change model is evidence based so we are able to achieve strong outcomes for young people with complex issues and now we are able to showcase this successful service in a purpose built centre.”

The man who set the wheels in motion to get Passages off the ground twenty years ago was David Reed. He has been Passages Chairman since the beginning and was instrumental in the service becoming a joint venture between Vinnies WA and Perth Rotary where he has been a member for 45 years. He is incredibly proud of the work the service does and feels the move twelve months ago was a significant milestone in Passages history. David says, “The move to our new location clearly demonstrates our continued commitment to addressing youth homelessness in Western Australia. Young people deserve to feel safe and respected and this is evident in the unique and impactful work Passages does.”

Moving forward, funding seems to be the biggest challenge for the service. Passages receives no ongoing funding from the State government and yet it fills a unique and critical role in the Western Australian youth services system. Despite this, service delivery continues each day, often being the first step off the street for young people with complex needs. It is this engagement that supports a young person’s transition, a transition that can now be experienced in a new bigger and brighter space.



THRIVE PROGRAM



Passages Peel Coordinator Jade Gillespie was recently invited to the Billy Dower Youth Centre in Mandurah as part of the THRIVE program.

Young women in high school can participate in this six week program where they can learn new skills, build confidence and make new friends. The THRIVE program is designed so that young women will gain these valuable skills that can help them deal with the pressures of high school and throughout life.

The THRIVE youth development staff try and link the young girls participating in the program with local Mandurah youth services. It was in this context that Jade spoke to the group about what Passages is and the services that can be offered to young people in the area. Not only was the group interested in how it could be of benefit to them, but they were keen to also find out how they could give back to others.

On the day, the girls chose to devote their group activity to cooking so they could donate meals to Passages to help other young people who may need it. Thanks to the girls for their great culinary skills preparing, cooking and packaging more than 50 meals for Jade's return to Passages.

COUCH SURFING

For the third year running, Passages Youth Engagement Hub held their annual Couch Surfing Race down on the Mandurah Foreshore in August.

The race has grown in popularity each year and is the main event of West Aus Crisis' Homelessness Awareness Day, which raises awareness of the plight of homelessness in the Peel region.

This year six couches took part which were decorated by community sector service providers in and around Mandurah including Passages Youth Engagement Hub, Pat Thomas House, Halo Inc, West Aus Crisis, Peel Connect, Works and Services from the City of Mandurah and Palmerston/Anglicare.

The Passages Peel team received some pre-race support and a bit of extra muscle from the Mandurah Men's Shed fixing the wheels to the couches, and our very own Vinnies truck drivers who kindly delivered all the couch entrants to the Mandurah Foreshore.

Entertainment and pop up stalls featured on the day with the Passages stall attracting a great deal of attention, handing out warm jackets, toiletries,

shoes, socks and gloves to people experiencing homelessness in the Peel area.

Weather for the race and event was a little intermittent but the sun did remain out long enough for the race to finish. This year's winner was Palmerston/Anglicare, completing the race in under one minute, with a close second from the City of Mandurah, and Passages Youth Engagement Hub in third place.

One of the winning team's participants from the City of Mandurah who took part for the first time said "What a great day, the race was brilliant and rounded the event up in such great spirit, so well done to the organisers."

Thanks to Men's Shed, Acton Trophies, Kennards and the Vinnies truck drivers for their support and help. And also to our Passages staff for their great efforts organising the race for another year.





SOUL GOOD

Passages Perth has been feeling the groove with the introduction of a new music program for young people.

Every Monday at Passages Perth there is a steady stream of young people arriving for their music sessions. Keen and ready, young people have been creating hip hop tracks as well as finding their singing voices since it began only a few months ago.

Called Soul'd Out, the program came about when one of the Passages Youth Workers at the Perth Hub wanted to introduce a music program after having done similar workshops with young inmates in prisons. Aaron had seen how music really connected with inmates as part of their rehabilitation, and felt that it could be a valuable tool for working with young people at Passages. He says that music can be a powerful way for young people to be able to express themselves, helping them work towards building their self-esteem by being a distraction from their current situation.

"As the facilitator of the program the most evident observation I have made so far is the confidence it instills in young people. Initially all participants are very nervous and by the end of the session they are on a high and bounce out of the studio. It's such a great feeling to see how they light up with a new found belief in themselves."

He also says that young people participating in the Passages music program can and do develop music relationships with each other, giving them a sense of belonging and capability. Aaron says. "It's such a massive thing to have in common as they now are all writing music tracks with each other and coming to show me which tracks they have written which is awesome. It also means they are making a lot more positive relationships through the music, instead of street or drug related ones."

"I WANT TO DO MY OWN MUSIC TO REACH OUT TO OTHER PEOPLE BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO GO THROUGH STUFF."

One young person who had just completed her recording session was Jas Rose Chapman Jones. She has been coming to Passages for about 18 months and was eager to do a music session, deciding to sing for the first time. She says "I love music, I can relate to it, you know if I feel sad I try and put upbeat songs on. But some songs I just relate to."

At only 19, Jas has been through a lot, having experienced prison, living on the streets and drug issues. With a positive attitude and natural confidence, she now wants to share her past experiences through music. "I love music as that's why I want to do my own music to reach out to other people because I know what it's like to go through stuff."

The strength she has found and where she is today she says in large is due to the support she has received so far from Passages. "Just coming to Passages when I was on the streets was my safe spot. This was like my family, like I had a reason to belong. They made me feel loved, even though it was just people caring, people just doing little things that matters most. You don't understand, I wouldn't be who I am today if it wasn't for Passages," Jas says.

After listening to her new recording, Jas sat there genuinely surprised by how she sounded and the praise being given to her from staff and other young people on the day. Although this was the first session with only a couple of verses done, Jas was eager to return to do another so she could continue her singing and complete the track. She proudly states, "To look back and say six months ago I was a junkie and on the streets and now look what support can do."

RISING

Passages relies on donations for young people who access the service, and one school who has been regularly helping out is Sacred Heart Sorrento College.

The school has been a long supporter of Passages, and as an integral part of their Social Justice Program, believe that students can relate to the plight of the young people who use the service and therefore want to help in any way they can.

It really is a team effort with school parents regularly cooking, packaging and delivering up to 350 takeaway meals to Passages. Students get involved with activities such as their

Winter Sleepout, which this year saw over 100 Year 10 students participate and donate their sleeping bags and blankets. There is also regular giving throughout the year such as for Easter and Christmas.

Two Year 7 art club students have been putting their artistic talents to use recently by finishing a large painting they had been commissioned specifically for Passages. Under the supervision of their Art teacher, students Leah Dineen and Grace Kane set about painting at their after school art club once a week for two terms. Titled "Rising", the beautiful canvas in

calm and soothing blues and pinks, features hot air balloons drifting and rising through the sky. The girls wanted a painting to reflect a message of hope, with the balloons symbolising young people can rise above their challenges. The painting has now found its intended location in Passages and has made a colourful and inspirational addition to the space.

Thanks to the two talented student artists for this beautiful piece of artwork. We also extend our appreciation to Sacred Heart Sorrento College and all its students for their continued support and commitment to changing the lives of vulnerable young Western Australians.

Stable Accommodation Brad & Kathryn's Story

Brad first accessed Passages approximately 18 months ago. He was experiencing financial difficulty as he had just lost his job and was supporting himself and his partner, Kathryn. At the time, Brad and Kathryn were living in a tent in the backyard of his parent's property and were desperate to get back on their feet.

When Brad came to Passages Peel, he was immediately given support such as food, blankets and toiletries for him and his partner. But the main focus was Passages linking him in with one of the in-reach services that visit weekly. The Centrelink Community Engagement team were able to process Brad's claim for job seekers allowance which meant he could get financial stability and could then start looking for accommodation for him and his partner. Passages was also able to connect Brad and Kathryn with a Housing Support Officer who was able to advocate

with real estate agents on their behalf, however due to only having one income the couple's applications were consistently unsuccessful.

Passages staff then realised that supporting Brad's partner Kathryn to find employment was also essential and were able to provide her with interview attire and a smart rider for her to attend job interviews. Kathryn was very proactive in her job search and soon after was offered a part-time position at a local café as a Barista.

Now that the couple's income had increased, they were able to revisit their budget with the Housing Support Officer and expand their search for accommodation options. The couple were successful in securing a place to live but had very little furnishings for their new home. Vinnies was able to assist the couple with furniture, linen and other household items and Passages staff were able to help them set up their budget for bills so they wouldn't fall behind.



By being able to provide the individualised support to both Brad and Kathryn, they were able to get the start they needed for accommodation and employment.

The couple continue to be supported by Passages and now with some renewed confidence are more motivated than ever to continue to improve their situation. Brad is now receiving help looking to complete his Certificate 3 as a Boiler Maker and Kathryn is searching for catering roles on the mines. They are incredibly grateful for the support provided by Passages in their time of crisis.

My time at Passages

A student youth worker's reflection on their time spent at Passages Perth.

Have you ever wondered about the sort of life someone has when you pass them on the street, or sit across from them on the train?

For the young people of Passages, the paths they have trodden to get here have been anything but easy. To hear some of their stories, it would be easy to assume of any person in the same situation that they'd thrown their hands up and given in to the ceaseless struggle of everyday life. And yet in reality, they continue to remain the strongest and most resilient people I have ever come across. In the face of adversity, they continue to fight courageously towards carving out their own futures.

As a student who is studying Youth Work, I have learnt a great deal from my time at Passages Perth. It has been rewarding to see the steps that some of the young people have taken, such as securing housing or taking the next leap forward to seek mental health support. To see the development of the realisation that seeking help is natural, as opposed to being considered a weakness or flaw of character. But in turn, it's also about the little things as well, like one of our young people teaching me how to make his favourite cake. I'm not what I would consider any sort of chef or baker, and it was the first cake I'd ever made.

We shared jokes and laughter about the ridiculousness of my ineptitude, and at the end of it got to share our efforts with the other young people at the service. That particular day I went home with the biggest smile on my face, not only did I have a blast, but I learned an important lesson from a young person. They have their own knowledge, skills and experiences to impart – and it reconfirmed my belief that we should always be listening to and learning for the future of our people.

However, it's not just the young people that makes Passages such a warm and welcoming place. The staff are amazing people, driven by their desire to see young people grow and succeed. Staples of the Passages weekly calendar are Soul'd Out that allows for the growth and nurturing of artistic creativity and Tuesday Tucker Time. One member of staff has even begun sourcing foods for some of our culturally diverse clients, placing an importance on the connection to and memory of their cultures which is so important.

I will always cherish the memories I've made here at Passages Perth and the lessons it has taught me. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to St Vincent de Paul Society and the Passages team, of which I hope to repay by stepping out into the world and being the best youth worker I can possibly be. It makes me sad to think that I won't continue to be around to witness their wins and share in their stories, but they are in the most capable hands they possibly could be. If there was one thing I would like to depart with saying to both our staff and young people, is thank you. Thank you for inviting me into your space and letting me be a part of your lives. I will always carry that memory around with me wherever I go.



PASSAGES PRIDE



For the sixth year, Passages have participated in the Pride Parade which was held in November.

Passages supports young people from a range of different backgrounds in a safe space where individuals are respected and celebrated for who they are. This annual event is a great opportunity for youth workers to celebrate with, and signal their support for gender and sexually diverse young people who access Passages.

Leading up to the night, Passages Perth hosted a popular craft session where young people and local services could come together to create props and decorate clothing for the Parade which was made possible with a grant provided by the City of Vincent. Artistic skills and creative abilities were on display throughout the session, with colour and rainbows becoming popular T-shirt themes.

Passages staff, along with members from Mission Australia, Crossroads, West and Perth Inner City Youth Service (PICYS), were part of the 115 organisations that marched in the Parade with this year's theme being Reflect: love, heroes, community and identity.

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FESTIVE FEAST

Christmas can be one of the worst times of the year for vulnerable young people as it is a time that is focussed on family and celebration.

For many young people, celebrating at Christmas time is not part of their reality and they rely on Passages to provide them with the basic necessities and support that they simply don't have.

Each year both Passages Hubs hold a Christmas lunch a couple of days prior to Christmas Day.

The lunch includes bonbons, gifts and a traditional meal with all the trimmings which is expertly cooked by staff with a little extra help from some of the young people attending.

Passages Christmas Lunch and a breakfast on Christmas Eve, is an important time where young people can share conversation, companionship and some Christmas cheer, which many may not get the opportunity to experience at this time of year.



www.passages.org.au

Perth

143 Edward Street
Perth WA 6000

P (08) 9228 1478
F (08) 9228 9572

E passages@svdpwa.org.au

Peel

20 Davey Street
Mandurah WA 6210

P (08) 9583 5160
F (08) 9583 5170

E passages@svdpwa.org.au