

Dubbo DOORWAYS

Contact details

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Hours of service: Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Team Leader: Rebecca Hoban
Regional Manager: Vacant

Coordinator: Liz Price
Director Operations: Vivien Tait

About the program

DOORWAYS (Dubbo Orana Options Referral with Brokerage Accommodation and Young peoples Support) began in Dubbo in 1997 and forms a part of the UnitingCare Burnside Youth Service Team. The service provides emergency accommodation and support for young people (aged 16 to 23 years) and their children who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Burnside was mandated to establish an innovative model to replace the former crisis refuge and medium-term accommodation service which had been closed in 1995. The need for this innovative model was established in the report, *The Needs of Young People at Risk of Homelessness in the Dubbo and Orana Region of NSW*.

When the former residential care model of accommodation was closed, there was considerable controversy about the provision of accommodation services to young homeless people. The community of Dubbo had become involved in the closure of the former service due to media involvement. This resulted in a strong sense of community ownership regarding the future of any service that was to provide accommodation to young homeless people.

In 1996, a community forum agreed to the establishment of a new model based on brokerage with accommodation and referral as central components. The model of mentoring was seen as a strong component in the development of accommodation options for young homeless people. The main idea behind the new model was that young people were diverse with very different needs that could only be met in the context of a flexible model of service that was not based on congregate care. Congregate care was seen to simplify and codify the needs of young people who were not served well by this model. As the former refuge service was seen to have failed young homeless people, it was agreed that Dubbo would support this new model.

DOORWAYS responds to the needs of young people and their children in the Orana region (Local Government Areas of Wellington, Dubbo, Narromine, Gilgandra, Warren, Coonamble, Walgett, and Cobar).

Eligibility

DOORWAYS is available for all young people (16- 23 years) – singles, couples, parents, siblings and extended family groups.

The service does not discriminate against young people who have physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities, no income, criminal records, issues with substance use or demonstrate challenging behaviours.

DOORWAYS works actively to ensure Aboriginal young people access the service and the service remains culturally sensitive and appropriate.

Objectives

Social Justice

- Undertake effective social action to achieve positive change for vulnerable children, young people and their families.
- Young people will have access to any services available in their community, which meet their needs.

Protection of children

- Help children have safe, nurturing and enriching relationships and environments in which to develop and thrive.
- Children will be less exposed to abuse and neglect as a result of use of our services.
- Young people with children will have a wider range of accommodation options.

Opportunities for young people

- Young people will have the assistance they require to develop into independent and contributing adults.
- Young people develop and retain positive connections with family and significant others.
- Young people using our services will have the social and living skills and resilience to assist them to become independent adults.

Building strengths in vulnerable communities

- Help children, young people and their families become active participants in the growth and development of their local community.
- Local communities will become more aware of, and responsive to, the issues faced by children, young people and their families.
- Service users are actively involved in the development of their own services.

Referral

Self, family, friends, Centrelink, Police, Community Services, Department of Human Services NSW (formerly DoCS), Job Placement Employment and Training, Department of Housing, hospitals, Homeless Persons Information Centre, schools, TAFE, Lands Council, Family Support, Macquarie Area Health Services (Drug and Alcohol, Mental Health, Sexual Health), Department of Juvenile Justice, Community Health Centre.

Services

DOORWAYS has four service components:

- Information and Referral to provide young people 16-23 years with access to information about accommodation and related support systems. This service may be provided over the telephone or through face-to-face contact
- Support, Advocacy and Outreach to advocate on behalf of homeless young people at the service user and the systems level
- Brokerage to meet the needs of homeless young people by purchasing assistance depending on their individual needs
- Housing Options including assistance with access to public housing and private rental and providing young people with a range of flexible accommodation options.

Funding

DOORWAYS is funded through NAHA (National Affordable Housing Agreement) and CSGP (Community Service Grants Program) and UnitingCare Burnside to provide and innovative support, referral and accommodation service to young from 16-23 inclusively.

Key facts

Each young person's history and needs are individual. DOORWAYS attempts to tailor a package of support to meet these needs and encourage young people to stay in their communities so that they can maintain ties with school, work, family, friends and other support networks.

DOORWAYS is a voluntary service. No young person is forced to accept a service from DOORWAYS. Workers at DOORWAYS believe that access to services, supports and accommodation is a right and should not be used as a punishment or reward.

Stability of accommodation and consistency of support is often an issue for young people. Workers attempt to ensure that young people are always able to identify and develop options or alternative supports. Workers at DOORWAYS offer options to young people, supporting them to make decisions regarding their own lives. They use modelling and negotiation as the primary ways of encouraging appropriate or desirable behaviour.

Self-referral: DOORWAYS actively promotes the service among young people with the intent that they refer themselves. This ensures young people are not dependent upon the professional networks of service providers to find us. Young people are not required to retell their story to a series of workers, and are able to describe their needs rather than depend on the interpretation of a service provider. Self-referral also endorses the voluntary nature of the service.

Planning: DOORWAYS believes that effective service delivery to young people must be well planned, adequately resourced, proactive and service user driven. Action plans are used as tools to empower the young person by encouraging them to take control of their own goals and supporting them in measuring their own progress. This is a dynamic and constantly evolving process and one in which staff are continually involved.

Key worker: DOORWAYS operates with a key worker system. One worker is responsible for working with a young person on meeting their needs, and for coordinating that young person's activities towards achieving their goals. The key worker is the young person's main advocate within the service and builds the strongest relationship with the young person.

Stakeholder relationships: Community relationships enhance access to a range of accommodation and support options, a broader referral network, a firmer understanding of the needs of young people and our own credibility.

Cultural diversity: Approximately 60 to 70% of DOORWAYS service users are Aboriginal. Ensuring that the DOORWAYS building environment and staff encourage young people from culturally diverse backgrounds to continue to access the service, is a priority.