



**Lighthouse
Foundation**

A place where
homeless kids belong

Strategic Direction
2022-2025

Lighting the way forward



A message from our Chairman, Len



Len Warson,
Chairman &
Susan Barton AM,
Founder

We are proud of the history of our Foundation, having grown from our Founder's own home 30 years ago, to now operating 12 households which provide therapeutic care programs for homeless youth and children in crisis situations. In the past year, we cared for 60 babies, children and youths. Their individual needs are complex and the work remains challenging. This is admirable, but it is not clearly enough.

Led by our CEO, Dr Eamonn McCarthy, we are now ready to step up to the challenge of increasing our impact to reach many more at-risk children and homeless young people in the years ahead. We have shown that the Lighthouse model is highly effective in permanently ending homelessness for those who find a place in our homes. We have reached further into the early interventions that prevent homelessness with more supportive foster care systems, and bespoke care for children, who due to their circumstances and trauma history, are not yet able to be fostered. The next step is to reach beyond those living in Lighthouse homes, and to support kinship carers as well as foster carers, and adolescents on the cusp of homelessness who are couch-surfing and barely maintaining a link with school and their classmates. We are determined to grow our impact and to make a significant reduction in the currently growing population of homeless youth. With Census data almost doubling in some states from 2006-2016, we need to prepare ourselves for an even greater wave of youth homelessness, with recent economic stresses, rising unemployment and housing unaffordability having pushed many to the brink.

Our Strategy explains how we will multiply our impact in the years ahead. This will involve more Lighthouse Homes, integration of a Transition phase for young people who are ready for more independence, an expansion of our Hub Home Foster Care model, and extension into proactive outreach work with vulnerable youth. We ask for the support of the community – businesses, philanthropists, volunteers, and the general public to join us in working towards ending youth homelessness. Together we can make this Lighthouse Foundation Strategic Plan come alive.

Len Warson
Chairman, Lighthouse Foundation

The Challenge

Following the global pandemic, Lighthouse Foundation faces new and even greater challenges ahead. Amidst a mental health crises, we are seeing family violence numbers increasing and unexpected circumstances pushing many more children, young people and families to the brink of homelessness. It's become clear that our care services are needed more than ever before, so we need to make sure that everything we're doing is taking us one step closer to our Founder's mission of ending youth homelessness forever.

This Strategy marks the beginning of us 'lighting the way' forward towards broadening our impact and competing with the following challenges currently presented to the sector:



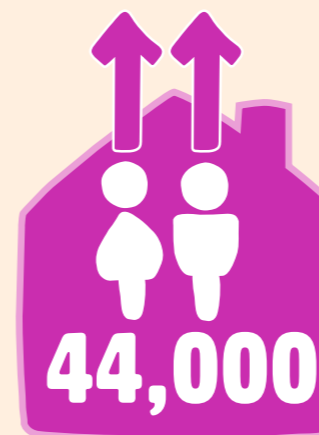
Every 6 minutes police attend a family violence incident in Victoria

We are now seeing the highest rates of family violence reports in the country's history. In Victoria alone, 26,000 women and children are being turned away from homelessness services every year, after being forced to flee the family home.



Up to 85% Of homeless youth are reporting mental health issues

We are in a mental health crisis, with mental health issues being reported in up to 82% of homeless youth in Australia. Despite increased community support initiatives, young people who experience homelessness are less able to access these services and are more likely to disengage with education and unemployment.



44,000 young people are without a safe and loving home

Unexpected circumstances including economic stress, rising unemployment and housing affordability crises have triggered an unprecedented wave of youth homelessness. With 44,000 young people currently without a safe and loving home in Australia, these numbers are expected to rise exponentially over the coming years due to these challenges.

Our Strategy

As one of Australia's most reputable and long-standing therapeutic care providers, Lighthouse Foundation will spearhead our efforts to end youth homelessness by empowering communities and expanding our care services to compete with the growth of the problem.

Our goal
100% growth every year, over the next three years to increase our impact and make a significant reduction in the currently growing population of homeless youth.

Our promise
To grow within an evidence-based, scalable framework and maintain Lighthouse's best-practice, quality care services to help more young people heal and thrive.






"There is a chance here that we can get closer to the best outcome, one that I would want for myself and my own children if they were in need. But our impact needs to be on a broader scale and we need to move faster to keep pace with the growth of the problem in youth homelessness. So, we're planning to do much more, and do it faster"

Dr Eamonn McCarthy,
Lighthouse Foundation CEO

Where are we now, and where do we want to be?

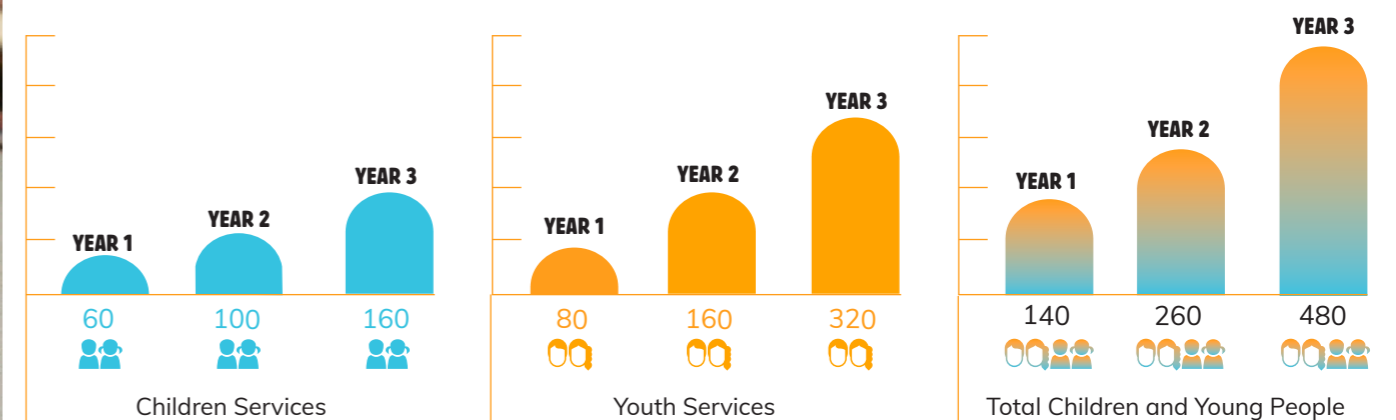
For over 30 years, Lighthouse has been working to break the cycle of homelessness for some of Australia's most vulnerable kids. We currently care for up to 60 young people, children and infants in 12 suburban homes around Melbourne, as well as over 1000 former residents through our 'On For Life' program. In 2019, Lighthouse expanded our child services to support foster families in their own homes as part of a larger early intervention strategy. Although these programs have been highly effective in turning around the lives of at-risk young people, our organisation's growth and impact has remained limited by our capacity to be able to provide new Lighthouse homes and by the finite nature of finding suitable foster carers.

In order to increase our impact and access larger numbers of homeless and at-risk youth to compete with the growth of the problem, our Strategy proposes the following expansions over the next three years:

-  An expansion of our Hub Home Foster Care Model to provide ongoing therapeutic support for existing kinship carers (similar to foster carers but the carer is a family member or relative of the child) in their own homes, who account for approximately 70% of all child protection placements (compared with 17% in foster care).
-  Integration of a Transition Program (which could include dedicated homes) for young people who are 'almost ready' to leave our care, but no longer require the same level of support provided through other Lighthouse programs. This Program will further cement the education and life skills they developed in Lighthouse homes, such as relationship building, cooking and budgeting to prepare for independent living.
-  Extension into proactive outreach work with vulnerable and at-risk youth who are not living in a Lighthouse-run home, but would benefit from Lighthouse's other therapeutic support services e.g. counselling, community support and connections into other care services.

Although these services are new to Lighthouse in many ways, they do not represent a sudden change in direction of our organisation, but rather a continued evolution of our existing, highly successful work with foster children and adolescents. Over the next three years we intend to expand our impact by 100% each year, continue to meaningfully engage with communities and further our research and evidence base to instigate systemic change and ultimately, change more young lives for the better.

Expanding our care to support more youths



Over the next three years

We have made a meaningful difference in our first 30 years, with over 1000 children and young people leading happier, brighter futures through our programs. **Over the next three years we will focus on four priorities.**



1 Deliver quality, best practice care

We will continue to provide quality, best practice care services that produce the greatest possible outcomes for young people. No matter how quickly we expand, we promise that the young people will always remain at the centre of everything we do and receive the tailored supports required to create a better future. This includes the continuation of our On For Life program, providing all former Lighthouse young people with access to practical, long-term relational support for as long as they need it.

Action:

- ☀ Grow and maintain quality/capacity of current care services.
- ☀ Maintain additional supports provided to foster carers via our Hub Home.
- ☀ Continue to implement IT services which improve our care services, including the Family Journey system.
- ☀ Ensure our homes are of a very high standard, providing a safe, secure environment for our young people to be able to heal and thrive.
- ☀ Ensure all Lighthouse homes are at full capacity and young people's individual KPIs are achieved i.e. attachment, relational and emotional wellbeing, life skills, physical wellness, cultural and spiritual belongingness, education, training and hobbies.
- ☀ Further integrate the community, committees and volunteers into our programs to create layered, ongoing support for every young person in our care.
- ☀ Continue our 'On For Life' offering, providing support to all former young people upon request.



2 Expand youth services & meaningfully collaborate

We will expand our youth services to help meet the growing demand and collaborate with sector partners to make a meaningful difference to the lives of vulnerable young people. Our goal is not simply to work with more youth, but to broaden our collective impact and spearhead our endeavor to end youth homelessness through early intervention measures.

Action:

- ☀ Expand our Children's services to include kinship care.
- ☀ Expand our Youth Services to include a pro-active outreach model of care to help vulnerable and at-risk young people who would benefit from Lighthouse therapeutic support. This service will be performed out of a small local resource Hub, similar to our Youth Resource Centre.
- ☀ Collaborate with sector partners, including child protection area directors and social housing organisations, to provide additional care services and supports.
- ☀ Work alongside East Area child protection in standing up foster and kinship care services in their area.
- ☀ Secure funding for the rent/purchase of the Eastern Hub Home to support our foster and kinship carers.
- ☀ Secure additional large building(s) and/or clustered dwellings to increase our bed capacity per home.
- ☀ Explore social enterprise opportunities.



3 Lead through research & inspire advocacy

We will expand the work of the Lighthouse Research Institute and collaborate in order to expedite evidence gathering, evaluate expanding service delivery and continuously improve our youth services. Ongoing data collection and analysis will provide new insights into the treatment of homelessness, increasing the effectiveness of our advocacy and effecting policy change.

Action:

- ☀ Expand the Research Institute's evidence-collection, evaluation and training capabilities.
- ☀ Incorporate contemporary homelessness research and contribute new insights and data to the sector.
- ☀ Ensure Lighthouse representation at all key forums, with strategic involvement in panels and working groups, in collaboration with others.
- ☀ Proactively seek out opportunities to partner with relevant services.
- ☀ Promote and maintain an organisation-wide culture of collaboration.
- ☀ Produce individualised executive summaries and program logics to guide service delivery and fundraising efforts.
- ☀ Establish a 3-tier data collection and analysis plan to grow our evidence base.
- ☀ Distribute data to inform
 1. service delivery,
 2. learning and development,
 3. marketing and fundraising.
- ☀ Complete program/outcome logics and executive summaries in accordance with data analysis/operational changes.
- ☀ Create a system supporting the ongoing analysis of data, to provide a robust evidence base as the foundation for advocacy and policy change.



4 Enhance organisational capacity & empower communities

We will invest in our people and brand to ensure that our organisation is at optimum capacity to deliver our strategy and empower the community to end youth homelessness. This includes creating meaningful community service partnerships with others who have aligned goals, and can help us increase our youth services and overall impact.

Action:

- ☀ Align and invest in human resources development.
- ☀ Deepen staff and program alignment to our purpose, vision, mission, and principles.
- ☀ Invest in and strengthen our brand and communications in order to increase public awareness of youth homelessness, foster care and kinship care.
- ☀ Enhance our fundraising ability, revenue stream and technological infrastructure.
- ☀ Expand our reach and capacity by developing meaningful partnerships with value aligned trusts, foundations, organisations, individuals and businesses.
- ☀ Complete stakeholder, internal and community brand-awareness surveys to year-on-year increase across all audiences.
- ☀ Commence and complete a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to further develop and create respectful relationships and create meaningful opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.





Supporting our work

There are many ways to support our work:

- ☀ Volunteering time, skills and experience
- ☀ Raising funds
- ☀ Donating products and money
- ☀ Setting up workplace giving
- ☀ Lending a voice to our campaigns
- ☀ Sponsoring projects and events
- ☀ Partnering in our work
- ☀ Social investment
- ☀ Bequests

“Never doubt that a single individual or small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has. I’m confident that with our young people’s courage, Lighthouse’s care and a supportive community around us, we can finally put an end to youth homelessness in Australia once and for all”

Susan Barton AM,
Founder

To find out more visit our website
lighthousefoundation.org.au
or call (03) 9093 7500

