



## **YOUTH SANCTUARY PLANS – TO SAVE YOUNG LIVES**

***A new service aimed at tackling the critical issue of youth suicide is taking shape in Perth.***

***It is a low-profile, self-contained residential Youth Sanctuary, at Samaritans House, 60 Bagot Road in Subiaco.***

***This important service will provide early-intervention support for up to five young people at a time, aged between 16 and 24, who are experiencing suicidal thoughts.***

***This service – delivered by Ruah Community Services, Samaritans WA and Telethon Kids Institute and funded by the State Government – will save young lives.***

### **The great need**

Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people in Western Australia, surpassing even the number of young people who die on our roads.

It knows no socio-economic or geographical boundaries – and there may be no outward signs of a young person in crisis or at-risk. It could be your sister, daughter, friend – or someone like them – needing support.

Most young people who die by suicide have not been diagnosed with a mental health disorder or seen a mental health clinician. For the majority, there is no history of self-harm or use of illicit substances at the time of death.

Currently, young people experiencing suicidal crisis, are likely to be taken to a hospital emergency department.

EDs can be confronting places and are not designed to offer ongoing support or follow-up to young people experiencing suicidal thoughts.

So this service is being established in response to the growing mental health crisis and lack of services currently available for young people. This new service will be an early intervention. The critical difference with this service is that young people in WA will not require a medical mental health diagnosis in order to access it. They can be referred by anyone including family or even themselves (self-referral). This means that young people will be able to receive active support and intervention before reaching crisis point.

At present there is a huge unmet need for 'non-medical' options such as the Youth Sanctuary. The service is expected to help up to 300 young people and their families each year.

The Youth Sanctuary fills an important gap in support for young people. It is quiet, discreet – and effective.

### **Good neighbours**

A sense of welcoming community is important for all of us.



Residents at the Youth Sanctuary and those people who work with them, want and need a welcoming community – and, in return, will be good neighbours too.

The residence at 60 Bagot Road in Subiaco will be a short-term home for up to just five young people, with just five staff and/or volunteers at any one time.

The small number of places provided, and the discreet nature of the service, means that the sanctuary will have minimal, if any, impact on local residents.

In fact it is expected there will be less impact and a less obvious presence than there has been during the previous use of this location as a headquarters for Samaritans WA support to vulnerable members of our community. That work will continue from a new location.

It is appreciated that Bagot Road is already a busy thoroughfare, particularly during peak hour, and the use of this Samaritans WA location as a Youth Sanctuary will make no material difference to traffic in the area.

Residents, with the support of experienced staff and volunteer counsellor, will be working quietly and calmly on their health and wellbeing.

#### **How it will work**

The Sanctuary is being established by organisations which have world-leading expertise in youth suicide support and mental health services – Ruah Community Services, Samaritans WA and the Telethon Kids Institute.

It is based on an international model, operated by Maytree UK, which has been working successfully for 20 years.

Young people experiencing suicidal thoughts will be able to access the sanctuary without a medical mental health diagnosis.

They can be referred by anyone including family, or they can refer themselves and get active support and intervention before reaching crisis point. The approach will be non-medical offering trauma-informed therapeutic environment, early intervention in a safe space.

The residents will be able to stay for a maximum of four nights, during which they will have 24/7 support and supervision. Other than the residents and staff/volunteers, there will be no visitors.

Residents can arrive during normal business hours, but not after 5pm or at weekends. The proposed plan includes four standard car parking bays and two drop-off (or short stay) bays.

The Sanctuary will not be advertised and there will not be any kind of 'drop-in' service. All residents will be carefully assessed to ensure they are appropriate for the sanctuary.



### **Experienced providers**

The Youth Sanctuary has \$3m in funding from the State Government and is being delivered by three outstanding community service organisations:

#### **Ruah Community Services**

Ruah has the largest Peer workforce in WA. It will provide people with lived experience to work at the Youth Sanctuary, connecting and supporting the young residents in a unique and very effective way.

Ruah Community Services has been supporting and empowering vulnerable and disadvantaged people to create positive change in their lives for more than 60 years – leading innovation and delivering tailored, wrap-around support for people experiencing mental health challenges, homelessness, family and domestic violence, and, as a result, needing legal advice and support.

#### **Samaritans WA**

Samaritans WA is a part of the worldwide network of more than 400 centres that have been working in suicide prevention space and wellbeing for over 50 years and its one of the oldest phone helplines in Australia. Samaritans WA will provide trained volunteer counsellors to provide humanistic person-centered support to YSS residents.

Samaritans WA approach recognises recovery as an individual, unique and deeply personal process that fosters connectedness, hope, meaning and empowerment. The goal is not only reduction of negative feelings but rather to promote personal wellbeing, build capability and foster resilience. Ultimately, having a sense of purpose and believing that the life is worth living.

#### **Telethon Kids Institute**

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#### **Timing**

Funding has been received and the residential facility has been designed, with no external changes required of the building. The development plans for the internal alterations and Change of Use application from 'Office' to 'Residential Building' are currently with the City of Subiaco and it is hoped that they will be reviewed at the December Council meeting.

It is hoped that the Youth Sanctuary could be operational by xxx, 2023.

### **Further information**

If you would like further information about this service, or to make a comment, please email  
zrinka

**RUAH**

COMMUNITY SERVICES

*Open Hearts. Bold Strides.*