

Bridge Youth SERVICE

2020-2021 **Annual Report**





Curiosity and New Ideas



Diversity; Collaboration and Collegiality



Connection and Reach



Flexibility

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President Report Georgia Linton

When I think of the themes of 2021, the following comes to mind: Chance encounters, revisiting our roots, and leaving legacies. Also continuing from last year: Strength through adversity.

Strength through adversity: The year has once again brought many challenges for our community, but I am proud to know and say that The Bridge was present and providing not only our regular services but adapting to the needs of young people throughout COVID. We are living in a time that will be marked in history books, where the suffering and restriction will be studied and dissected. We can only hope that the strength and resilience of our community and young people in our region will also be known.

Revisiting our roots: Responding to the gaps in service and the needs of young people has always been the basis on which The Bridge operates. It is what drives and informs our Board decisions, the work our staff and volunteers do, and the foundations that support the outcomes for the young people we work with.

Leaving legacies: This year the Board reconnected with a founding member, Jim Andreadis who kindly offered both his advice for a project but also shared parts of TBYS history that gave Melinda and I insight into how the foundations were laid. Sadly, founding member John Corboy passed away this year but his legacy as a founding member lives on in the work we continue to do. Long-time Board member and ex-President Charlotte Brewer retired from the Board in July 2021 after more than

10 years of service. Charlotte has made an incredible contribution to TBYS over her years and her leadership has helped steer The Bridge to what we are today.

Chance encounters: It was a chance meeting between two CEOs, that helped tie the above themes up in a neat little bow. The opportunity for a partnership with the Women's Property Initiative was presented and after years of discussing what to do with the Future Development Fund (money raised by our old op-shop Revamp), the Board was excited. The partnership ticked our boxes: It would help fill a gap in services for our young people, it would have a longlasting impacts for participants, and it was a long-term investment in our community.

I am excited to be able to write this report with the knowledge that the secret is out and TBYS are launching our next chapter. The Nest: Solid Foundations is the result of so much hard work from a lot of people but particularly Melinda Lawley our CEO, Jeanette Large (CEO WPI), and Natasha Liddell (Development Manager, WPI). Thank you also to Jim Andreadis who so kindly donated his time and expertise as we sought opportunities to buy land.

On a final note, I wanted to take a moment to thank TBYS Board of Management members, our executive management team, our leadership team, and our staff. Thank you for showing up every day - your commitment to The Bridge Youth Service and better outcomes for young people never goes unnoticed.

CEO Report Melinda Lawley

Nobody wants to read a 2021 report that focuses on COVID. We don't want it to define the year or our achievements. The COVID pandemic has however elevated the characteristics The Bridge Youth Service always demonstrate, enabling us to exceed targets and be there for young people, even when support is only available via phone. Persistent, supportive, flexible, collegial and collaborative: reflective of the values and principles outlined in our new Strategic Plan.

This year has seen the expansion of new services in our quest to address gaps and intervene early. The addition of a psychological service provided by Cameron McGregor who aligns with our quest has been invaluable. Both young people and our staff are benefiting from his approach, through staff development and improving access to mental health services. The inclusion of this service has demonstrated improved outcomes for young people.

We thank our valued partners. We entered a new arrangement with Mitchell Shire Council and received our first federal funds through a supportive partnership with Murray PHN. We continue to work closely with FamilyCare, Rumbalara, CatholicCare, DFFH & DET. Our three-year partnership with Helen McPherson Smith Trust concluded with the Making Quality Happen project wrapping up for the Shepparton Community Share partners. This continuous improvement project leaves a legacy of increased focus on seeking and utilising the 'client voice' and cross audit quality reviews.

Our staff work tirelessly in their respective and varied roles, to achieve better outcomes for young people. They are passionate and skilful. Service Delivery staff create the high levels of trust required for engagement. When young people are engaged, they can start to build the supportive partnerships required to make changes in their lives. They build rapport and look for opportunities the young people might not see for themselves.

They are ably supported by a wonderful leadership team. To Renae and Linda your diligent discussions about all the young people on your teams' caseloads is admirable. Your willingness to share your knowledge and encourage our staff, many of whom are in case management roles for the first time, is a critical factor in the effectiveness of our services.

I, Jenny Cook and Leigh Nash form our Executive team. Together we have weathered the COVID storm well. Thinking alike but bringing our own perspectives has made decision making and responding to a rapid, changing environment much easier, thank you. Your competency in leading your teams is evident in the work they complete and the confident way they go about it. Thanks to our supportive Board members who have responded positively and generously in acknowledgment of the great work we have done in another challenging year.

Board of Management News

Current Members:

Georgia Linton
PRESIDENT

lan Michaelson VICE PRESIDENT

Josh Doxey
TREASURER

Melinda Lawley
PUBLIC OFFICER & CEO

Charlotte Brewer
Brett O'Keeffe
Anne Ryan
Mel Doxey

Alan Mitchell

Fiona Le Gassick

Vale John Corboy, Founding Member

We would like to acknowledge the passing of a founding member of the Bridge, John Corboy in April 2021. Amongst the many food-related business achievements and responsibilities, including the Chairman of SPC, John committed time for various community service initiatives. One commitment was to the young people in Shepparton. He was integral to the establishment of the Bridge Youth Service. His vision and determination to provide specialised support for young people in the Shepparton district has contributed to the strong and capable service that the Bridge Youth Service is today. We would like to recognise the achievement of our founding member.

35 years and going strong!

History

In 1986, a 'youth house' was established in Shepparton with a group of volunteers. This service was known as GAP (Goulburn Accommodation Program Inc.) Following the closure of a youth specific health service in 1991 the Shepparton Central Rotary Club made a commitment to raise funds towards a new youth service designed to be an access point for advice, programs and information. The eventual amalgamation of these two services in 1999 after co-tenancy was the beginning of what the Bridge Youth Service is today.

Over 35 years of service has seen The Bridge Youth Service grow to support Mitchell, Murrundindi, Moira and Strathbogie shires as well as the Greater Shepparton City, with offices in Shepparton, Seymour and Wallan in 2021.

Generating Funds for Young People's Futures

In 2003 The Bridge Board decided to open an Opportunity Shop to generate funds for young people. Revamp has been a major fundraiser vehicle for us since then, enabling us to purchase 5/127 Welsford st as a for our workers and young people.

Revamp was closed in 2019 after 16 years in operation. It raised over \$930,000 during this time, 55 people volunteered to work there. Two key retired Board of Management members - Jim Andreadis and Helen Phillips - were important community members who led the establishment of Revamp with Jim providing business and retail expertise and donating goods to establish the stock. Bob and Sandy Coles were the faces of the shop for 12 years. The community of Shepparton rallied behind the initiative and demonstrated fantastic support through donations during the 16 years it was open.



Developing a Purpose-Built Property for Young Mothers

After the purchase of our office building, funds generated by Revamp were then directed into our closely guarded Future Development Fund. Here the funds accumulated with a goal to raise funds to 'give back' to our community in the future.

It is well known that there are not enough safe and affordable housing options in Shepparton for young, single mothers so in January 2021 we called on these funds to purchase some land in Mooroopna to build units for young mothers.

The Nest: Solid Foundations









New Partnership for Young Mothers

Women's Property Initiative (WPI)

A conversation between the two CEOs at a networking event hosted by Kilfinan Australia led to this fruitful partnership. WPI are a community housing organisation based in Melbourne with the expertise to build and manage the rental aspects of the properties. TBYS will then provide the housing, life and parenting skills for the young mothers to settle into their homes to establish good rental history and importantly build a safe and secure home for their children. The project is called 'The Nest: Solid Foundations', launched at our AGM in November 2021.

Residents will typically be young single women up to 25 years of age, and their children. They will be accessing our homelessness and/or family services programs. The young mothers, or expectant mothers, will have experienced a combination of family violence, homelessness, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse or financial insecurity. In addition, they could also have experienced out-of-home care as a child. It is anticipated they will live in the homes for three to five years, although they may choose to move out earlier. Typically, the children will be from infant to preschool age.



Strategic Plan 2017-2020 Achievements

Marketing Internship



Step Up

Supporting adolescents who use violence in the home

School-based Youth Worker

Partnership with Shepparton Flexible Learning Centre

Completed the joint 'Mitchell Youth Outreach Project' with Mitchell Shire Council

Social Media and Community Engagement

- Social Media strategy and regular posts
- 1,195 Facebook followers 446 Instagram followers
- Community
 Engagement
 Committee
- Youth Ambassador Program
- Awareness Raising Event

'Life after the Oasis' documentary showing

New Fundings for Gaps in Services for Young People

• ERIC

Supporting young people with their Emotional Regulation and Impulse Control Psychologist employed to support young people in programs

 AOD Program for young people



Positive Workplace for Staff

- Workplans and career goal-orientated professional development plans
- 2 Staff employed in new Internship Positions
- Specific leadership training and organisation wide training in ERIC 34 staff trained
- Hour of Power Program

8 Students on

placement

- Health and Wellbeing Committee established
- New leadership roles established
- DHHS
 Capabilities
 Framework
 implemented
- PERMAH framework implemented

Staff Training and Continuous Professional Development Opportunities

- Staff encouraged to complete tertiary qualifications
- 11 Staff completed tertiary level studies supported by TBYS
- 8 Staff completed Certification for Evidence-based programs

Parents Under Pressure (PUP), ERIC specialists

- Continuous Quality Improvement
- Cloud based serverSharePoint implemented
- Passtab (visitors and staff) implemented
- Working from Home equipment and infrastructure installed
- Measuring Impact and Outcomes project begins

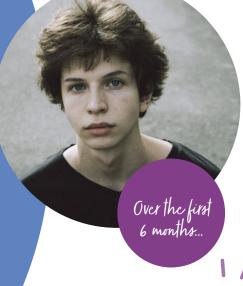
Expansion of Specialist Interventions

Mental Health Practitioner

From January 2021 the Bridge Youth Service has been able to provide a quality Mental Health response thanks to youth specialist Psychologist, Cameron McGregor joined our team.

Once a week, Cameron is available for young people already receiving a service from The Bridge to attend an appointment to address their mental health concerns. Family members are encouraged to be involved in the establishment of a therapy plan. Not only do the young people benefit, our staff gain skills and guidance about the approach they are taking with the young people they are supporting through secondary consultations.

Cameron has a wealth of experience with young people and specialises in Alcohol and Other Drug treatment. Staff in their teams receive professional development about recognising mental health conditions and how to support a young person alongside the service provided by a specialist like a Psychologist.



5 Supervision C

105 = Consultations



47 Secondary



Supporting Young People Misusing Substances

Through funding from Murray
Primary Health Network we piloted
a program using practice elements
to support young people misusing
Alcohol and other Drugs. This was
achieved using the ERIC (Emotional
Regulation & Impulse Control)
program which is made up of modular
intervention elements drawn from
psychological treatments for mental
health and substance use disorders.

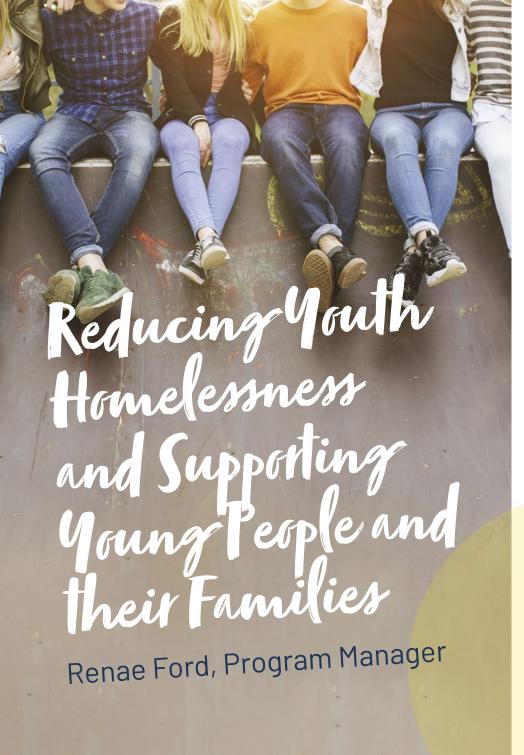


Building Respectful Family Relationships - Step Up Program

Step-Up is an evidenced-based, adolescent family violence intervention program designed to address the use of abuse towards family members. The Step Up program works with adolescents aged 12-17 and their families, within a family focused framework. It is a group program that includes activities for the young person and their parent/carer. The goal of Step-Up is for the young person to stop using violence and abuse toward their family and develop respectful family relationships so that all family members feel safe at home.

ERIC has been incorporated into our Step Up program to assist with the goal of reducing abuse and increasing respectful communication in the family unit.





The Youth & Family Support Team continue to provide impeccable support to young people in a range of diverse programs including:

- Homelessness Program Support
- STAR
- · Adolescent Support
- Targeted Care Packages
- Finding Solutions
- Family Reconciliation

Young people are provided provision of support to address barriers and develop skills to move through homelessness towards sustainable, safe and secure accommodation. Young people are assessed and allocated a dedicated support worker to build rapport to engage in a need for change. Hours are spent outreaching, researching eligibility, determining affordability, guiding financial literacy, gathering and exhausting limited resources, role-modelling and support regulating the complex needs of young people. With extremely restricted housing options for young people experiencing homelessness, the number of support periods continue to rise compared to the last financial year (2019-2020).

Homelessness Program Support

A total of 46 Young People were supported to improve their family relationships to reduce risk of youth homelessness; meanwhile 307 Young People accessed support as they were at risk of or were experiencing homelessness. Further, 61 were supported to sustain their private rental tenancy's reducing their risk of homelessness.

Thanks for your help along the way, I don't think I would've had the courage to live independently without your guidance."

Homelessness Program Support Young Person Feedback

Finding Solutions

123 young people were identified as in crisis or at immediate risk of harm. Workers provided case-management to improve their wellbeing and strengthen their home environment.

Young people were identified as in crisis or immediate risk of harm to have their needs addressed throughout casemanagement. Pro-social activities, day trips, and continuously being there, are key interventions that assist to build trust with young people who previously declined any involvement with services.



Targeted Care Packages

The Youth & Family Team have had an opportunity to move from fixed funded service models to individualised and innovative approaches through Targeted Care Packages (TCP), collaborating with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH).

This new way for us to provide support through TCPs presents an opportunity to be more flexible, client-centred and responsive to the living arrangements and care needs of voung people, consistent with the young person's goals and desired outcomes. They are also intended to encourage creative and collaborative thinking about the ways in which we can most effectively enable young people to reduce the need for residential care through the application of individualised care arrangements.

During 2020-2021 financial year TBYS sustained and prevented the breakdown of four young people's placements. Provision of TCPs has enabled workers the time necessary to build rapport with incredibly vulnerable young people and their families.

Through pro-social activities, day trips, and continuously being there, TCP has been a key resource in building trust with young people that previously declined any involvement with services.

We went for a walk around the lake and spoke about warning signs, triggers and possible 'time outs' as this young person struggles with regulating her emotions. We spoke about being at 0% is cool and calm and 100% is black out and angry. This young person called me this morning from school identifying that she is having a bad day and is currently walking around the track. This young person identified that she was at 50% and needed to get back down to 0% "cool and calm" so she took a time out."

ERIC Worker Feedback/Case Study

I'm sooo grateful for all you have done for me the last year or so, I am thankful that you helped me and I really appreciate it. It was so good to talk to someone professional and clear my mind it made me feel better thank you, Also thanks for the new computer as well. Much appreciated. Thank you for everything."

Young Person Feedback





Young Mothers in Mind

New Program

A program to assist mothers who have experienced family violence with 5 to 6 families attending per term over 2020/2021.

From surveys completed, mothers reflected that they were able to understand their children and respond and connect on a deeper level after attending YMIM.

Young Parents Group Shepparton

Where face to face sessions were not able to be held due to COVID restrictions, facilitators provided support by phone, via Telehealth, provided activity packs and material aid for the families.

Young Parents Group Lower Hume

Young Parents Group commenced in Lower Hume January 2021 in partnership with Maternal and Child Health. 4 to 5 families attending fortnightly sessions regularly in Seymour and Wallan.

Antenatal Community **Education Program**

Weekly workshops with information and guest speakers, including a visit to the birthing section of GV Health.

Integrated Family Services

Case management support with a step up/step down Intensive Support. Many families are linked into the Young Parents Group activities too.

50% of Children

who attended **Young Mothers in Mind** had never met another
child due to COVID restrictions

24 young women

were supported in the Antenatal Community Education Program

25%

identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

8% from our CALD community

Integrated Family Services Feedback

A young mother was struggling with cultural expectations, infant health, lack of support from family, wanting to go back to school and establishing her independence. Add to this the pressure of her husband being in Iraq and trying to assist him to come to Australia. She attended Antenatal program, Young Mothers in Mind (YMIM) and was supported in Integrated Family Services.

I wanted to thank you and the bridge family for the constant support throughout my pregnancy and start of motherhood. Without you guys I would have struggled badly. We will definitely be back for YMIM and for you to be able to see how much my son grew."

"Thanks so much for everything you did for me and my baby.

I appreciate everything, there are times where I thought I wouldn't be able to do certain things but you've made everything so much easier. You've helped in times where I most needed my husband and made feel as if he was there supporting me with the support you've provided. There were times where I would cry because I wasn't capable of getting my son's items or providing his basic needs,

you've managed to help and make my day brighter.

My husband wanted me to thank you guys, he also appreciated all the help and support you've offered and his over the moon and cannot describe his excitement. I will be sending you some photos of my son with his dad.

The bridge family you guys are legends! Keep up the good work and amazing support you offer to women! Once again a very big thanks to all of you amazing humans."

Feedback from a thankful Mother

School Re-engagement DET Navigator Program

Over the past 12 months the Navigator Program has expanded to become the Education Settings Team. This recognises the valued partnership between TBYS and Shepparton Flexible Learning Centre (SFLC). A Specialist Youth Worker from TBYS is based on site at the SFLC working directly with young people in partnership with SFLS staff to enhance engagement and attendance.

The communication and the plans coming from Navigator workers is really making a change.

Feedback from School Assistant Principal Thx for everything you have been amazing being there so promptly too we appreciate all ur help."

"Thank you for all your hard work and effort"

"Hi I just wanted to say a massive thank you for all you do for us... I am so happy right now! Looks like you have turned ... around and we are forever grateful"

"So appreciative of the work you are doing with my son. Above and beyond in my opinion"

Feedback from Parents of Navigator Young People

Eighty-two disengaged young people were referred to the Navigator Program adding to existing support/ caseloads of 75 young people for a total of 157 young people. Navigator staff worked across five shires intensively with young people, families, schools, and organisations such as Family Care, CAMHS, NEXUS, private medical health providers and a wide range of community groups. The work is challenging but as stated by one staff member, "incredibly satisfying". 35 percent of those young people referred to Navigator achieved positive outcomes including increased

attendance at school, acceptance into TAFE, gaining employment or fully becoming involved in other programs to improve mental health and social wellbeing. The remainder continue to be case managed by a dedicated and passionate team.

Thanks for your support.
I didn't think I would ever
get back to school."

15 year old Navigator Young Person Navigator Brokerage funds assisted 55 young people in the purchase of school equipment, uniforms, shoes, school camps and sports equipment and memberships all important components of their Re Engagement Plans.

The recent addition of Navigator Mental Health Brokerage has ensured that TBYS can provide a response that is both timely and specialised. This is achieved by direct access to our in-house Psychologist and further strengthened by an agreement with local youth specialist Mental health providers.

Thank you for your wonderful support and assistance with young person and the family. You are an amazing worker, and they are very lucky to have you in their corner!

Feedback from External Agency regarding Navigator worker

Research Grant "Step Up - Addressing Adolescent Violence in the Home"

In February of 2021, we successfully applied for funding through the **Learning Systems Grant** process from the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

This grant allowed for the introduction of Step Up+, a one-on-one 8 session intervention for young people who have identified needing support in the areas of building respectful relationships, emotional regulation and impulse control. The program has seen 16 young people supported in areas such as emotional literacy, decision making, identity and values, and flexible thinking. The final report of the effectiveness of this model will be completed in December 2021.

Our Step Up+ worker Lauren has been working with a young person who uses English as an additional language through the Step Up+ program. Lauren and the young person work through an interpreter and have developed a great relationship. We asked the young person for their feedback on the program, and this is what they had to say.

When I talk to you (Lauren) I feel calm and comfortable. I'm not as scared of asking the male teachers questions at school now. The pictures we took on my last day at SELC (were a highlight). I was nervous about leaving, but then now I look back on these and have happy memories. Even when I have nightmares I think about those happy memories."

Feedback from a participant

Lauren adds that this young person has now identified through an ERIC session on Identity and Values that they would like to be a photographer when they grow up.

When asked what the young person had learned about themselves through these sessions, they reported, "I'm getting a bit more braver."





Using the ERIC Program

The ERIC therapeutic framework developed by Dr Kate Hall of Deakin University continues to be embedded in staff practice at The Bridge Youth Service, as well as forming the foundations for individual programs. All staff at The Bridge Youth Service are trained in using ERIC. It is important for young people to be able to regulate their emotions and impulses as it assists them to express their thoughts, share their fears, maintain healthy relationships and demonstrate behaviours that are acceptable in school and employment settings. Using the Emotional Regulation & Impulse Control (ERIC) program as a therapeutic intervention assists young people to improve their emotional response to many situations in their lives. It can assist in building respectful, rather than abusive, relationships.

The research is measuring the improvement in Emotional Regulation and Impulse Control, measured with pre and post testing using the DERS-16 tool (2015). This tool measures five domains: Impulse, Goals, Strategies, Non-acceptance, Clarity.

The project will measure whether the young person has improved their emotional regulation and impulse control. It is predicted that this will in turn improve the functioning of parent/ family relationships. It will also include a capacity building focus which allows staff to build their skills in utilising ERIC to support other young people in their case management roles.

The project began in 2020 and will conclude in December 2021.

eric.org.au

"Developing respectful relationships"



After a prolonged refurbishment process and COVID restrictions we finally moved into our Wallan office in February 2021.

The opportunity arose for us to manage the Wallan Youth Hub in partnership with the Mitchell Shire Council.

With many of our staff living in the south end of our catchment, the office is in a great position to meet the expanding population and provide a great space for young people to participate in Groupwork on site.

The increased exposure of our service in Wallan has already been beneficial. Funding bodies have been interested to see our commitment to this part of our catchment. Wallan Secondary College has been utilising the Group space for a Year 9 program and we have been able to hold our Young Parent's program onsite.

Making Quality Happen Project Completed May 2021

How four
community-based
organisations worked
collectively in an open door
approach to supporting
quality continuous
improvement.

Achievements

- A common E-learning platform implemented to build staff capacity and orientation
- Paid Internship program for fourthyear students La Trobe University Social Work stream
- Coordinated placements across the four organisations
- Community of Practice 17 quality practitioners trained forming an audit team across all four agencies which undertook 27 audits of common policies and processes in the agencies
- Client Voice network

Shepparton Community Share is a collaboration of four local not for profit organisations in the Goulburn Area. Primarily located in Shepparton the four organisations, The Bridge Youth Service, FamilyCare, Primary Care Connect and Connect GV.

In January 2019 we embarked on a shared project with our Project Manager Trish Quibell, employed by the Bridge Youth Service to complete the two-year project with the aims to: develop a collective, flexible, responsive, replicable and sustainable quality system, and a client-centred approach which strengthens client outcomes and experience of service provision.

Pleasingly once they graduated, all of the interns who took up this opportunity for a paid internship were employed in the four organisations.

We thank HMSTrust for their commitment to regional and rural projects and to considering projects which build capacity and promote collaboration within our communities.

This project was generously funded by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. Helen Macpherson Smith Trust.















Statistics and Achievements

Despite facing a world wide pandemic, we remained strong and created solutions to continue our support for young people. Here is a snapshot of what we achieved over the 12 months.

Homelessness, Tenancy Support

307 young people

were assisted with **Housing Support Case Management** participants

involved in **Family Reconciliation** / Mediation



involved in **STAR Housing** We asked our young people about their experience...

84%

felt really happy after their visit to The Bridge

felt their worker

was extremely supportive

would return and tell their friends about TBYS

Family Relationships & Violence Issues

26 young people

and their parents were supported in the **Step Up Program** over the 14 sessions



by our Family Violence Specialists

Disengaging from School & Risky Behaviours

82 referrals

from the Department of Education & Training for the **Navigator Program**

42 young people

were supported in **Links to Education** 4

Targeted Care Packages

30 families

attended Young **Parents Group**

young mums

Young Parents, Sexual Health,

Pregnancy & Family Services

were supported in Young mums in mind 137 families

received support through ChildFirst Services

involved in **Finding Solutions** & Adolescent **Support Program**

vouna people were involved in the **Mentoring Program**



first time parents received **Pregnancy Support** & Antenatal Care

vouna people sort Options Counselling









Placement

Options for young people



(03) 5831 2390

127 Welsford St, Shepparton 54 Tallarook St, Seymour 119 Wellington St, Wallan www.thebridge.org.au









