

Kristy's Story

This story is to be read in conjunction with Launch Housing's teaching resource for high school students.



Like most 17-year-old students, Kristy is counting down the days until she finishes her education, is able to create her own home and spread her wings. She has faced and continues to face many hurdles in her marathon to achieving her dreams. With fierce intelligence and quick wit, Kristy presents as a strong-willed, independent and mature teenager with a passion for youth and social work. What one may not notice on first glance, however, is that she was once one of the 28,000 young people who experience homelessness in Australia (ABS Census 2016).

Kristy is a student living at one of the [Education First Youth Foyers](#). This is her story.



“One day, I showed up to school, bruises covering my face, as my dad had gotten really mad and hit me. I was 14 years old, and I thought that behaviour was normal. Now, I know it's not. I was 15 when I first left home. It's been more than a year since I moved to the Education First Youth Foyer; I had heard about it from a boy at the refuge I was staying at before coming here.

I admit, I was pretty messed up when I arrived; it's the things you see, and hear when you don't have a place to sleep, it messes with you.

I'm grateful; this is the only place that's had my back. I feel comfortable enough to call it *home*. Not once have the support workers not tried to help me, despite all the dark times.

All the students at the Foyer have been through a lot of turmoil. So, we all understand each other and I know they'll stick with me. In some ways, it's like choosing a new family...actually, they are my family now.

I was unmotivated, when I first moved in, but now I feel more secure and stronger. It's clearer now, that distinction between right and wrong. I should've learnt those values growing up, but I didn't.

Ideally, I wanted to finish my Victorian Certificate of Education, but I got knocked back from a school where I applied to finish Year 12. They didn't accept me because I lived in a place like this [Youth Foyer]. Society needs to change, I've lost jobs because people have Googled where I've lived, realised my circumstances, and then let me go.

One of my worst experiences, was during an apprenticeship at a hairdressers, the owner said: 'Don't bother coming to work again, as we don't want you to steal from our tills.'

That wasn't the only time I've been let go because of my situation. At a different hair salon, a staff member gave me a cookie, then lied to the manager and said I had stolen it. Before firing me, she said: 'First you steal a cookie, and next you'll steal our products.'

Things are better now, I'm doing a traineeship at HoMie, and studying a Certificate III Retail. I'm also starting a job at a different retail store.

Growing up, my parents never showed support when I accomplished something. This is the first time in my life that when I achieved a goal, the support workers got excited for me. It's also the first place that someone has asked: 'Are you ok?'

The Foyer is the safest place I've been in, and it's the most amazing program I've heard of for people experiencing homelessness aged 16 -

24. Here, I always know my voice will be heard. No matter what happens they care.



Eventually, I want to study youth work and in the years to come, I hope to have somewhere that's mine. Even if it's renting.

When it comes to youth homelessness, awareness is important and breaking down stereotypes. I hate stereotypes, they're terrible. Problems like [homelessness] won't get better, unless people start changing their behaviours. Some people still treat their children horribly."