



“THEIR PAST
DOESN'T
DEFINE WHERE
THEY'RE GOING”

YOTS

DUNLEA YOUTH OFF THE STREETS

Young people are often alienated from their community and family when tackling alcohol and drug abuse issues. Without support and guidance, this can make it even harder for them to reach out and get help. Youth Off The Streets (YOTS) is a community organisation supporting young people who are dealing with alcohol and other drug (AOD) dependencies, trauma or homelessness.

Commissioned services that move our community toward an addiction-free life is at the core of WentWest's work in the AOD priority area. The WentWest Commissioning team have been working with Dunlea YOTS since 2017, providing funding and support to ensure that young people in Western Sydney have access to AOD recovery services.

Kellie Lucas has worked as an AOD Counsellor for Youth Off The Streets for over two years. Having trained in psychology and as a social worker, Kellie recognises the rewards of working with young people and helping them to get their lives back on track. *“Young people are open to change and possibilities. The work*

we do with them is hard because they make positive gains and then often have to go home to challenges. It's about helping them understand that their past doesn't define where they're going.” Kellie, along with her team, encourage young people to talk about what they are experiencing and set personal goals, helping them to see that they deserve a better, AOD-free future. Kellie provides an initial assessment to each young person before working through the background causes of their AOD use, including any previous trauma. From there, she helps them connect with other providers to make sure that they have ongoing support. *“I never let go of their hand until someone else is holding the other one.”*

Darrel* was forced out of his family home when his parents learnt of police charges against him resulting from a physical altercation at a party while intoxicated. From police custody, Darrel called his paternal grandmother, who offered accommodation to prevent him from becoming homeless or getting into further trouble. Darrel was suffering from an AOD dependency and anger management issues. His grandmother, Rosemary, contacted Dunlea Family Case Work Support to learn about the effects of AOD and support Darrel with access to Youth Case management support and counselling. A Correctional Officer recommended the family to the Youth Off The Streets program.

Darrel was drinking alcohol daily, continually getting into fights and

associating with the wrong crowd. He had witnessed domestic violence growing up, and his suppressed resentment towards his father was fuelling his anger and depression. Rosemary was deeply affected by her son's behaviour and struggled to forgive him for the domestic violence her grandchild had witnessed.

YOTS assigned a Family Caseworker to ensure that both Darrel and his grandmother received the support they needed. Rosemary was offered counselling and connected to a local AOD support group to minimise social isolation. An AOD Youth Case Manager helped Darrel access detox rehabilitation support, and he also received counselling which helped him decrease his alcohol intake and adopt healthier self-care strategies. Now, when Darrel is having a bad day, he goes to the gym or calls a friend rather than drinking.

As a result of Darrel's commitment to YOTS and other corrective services, the court recognised his passion for turning his life around, and Darrel avoided jail. He has successfully secured a job in construction, and Darrel and Rosemary are much closer now that they have a better understanding of one another. Darrel's relationship with his mother has also improved, and they have agreed to receive external family mediation with Relationship Australia.

For more information about how WentWest supports Western Sydney, visit www.wentwest.com.au.

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of this client.