

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **YOUTH SANCTUARY**

#### ***What is the Youth Sanctuary?***

The Youth Sanctuary is a new service designed to tackle the critical issue of youth suicide, located in Subiaco. It is being delivered by Ruah Community Services and Samaritans WA, co-designed and evaluated by Telethon Kids Institute, and funded by the State Government.

The Youth Sanctuary offers help and support to young people experiencing suicidal thoughts. It offers up to four nights stay providing early intervention for people aged between 16 and 24 who are experiencing suicidal thoughts. The service is not an acute medical facility. It is a therapeutic space providing opportunity for young people experiencing suicidal thoughts to reflect and learn new skills. This is an opportunity to work with them before they reach crisis point.

#### ***Why is it needed?***

Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people in Western Australia. Suicide rates among young people have been increasing steadily over the past 10 years and the significant rise in the number of young people with suicidal thoughts or ideation has prompted increased investment in youth mental health in WA.

#### ***Where is it be located?***

The Sanctuary is centrally located in the inner-city suburb of Subiaco, but will be open to all young Western Australians, wherever they reside in the state.

#### ***Who is delivering the service?***

The service has been co-designed by three organisations with leading expertise in youth suicide support – Ruah Community Services, Samaritans WA and Telethon Kids Institute – with input from young people with lived experience of suicidal thoughts and behaviour.

Ruah and Samaritans WA bring a wealth of experience to the Sanctuary and to the support services being delivered. Research evaluation will be provided by Telethon Kids Institute through its Embrace team, which has a particular focus on youth mental health research.

#### ***How can young people access the service?***

The Sanctuary is expected to open in October 2023 and referrals will open approximately six weeks prior. Referral information will be available on the Ruah Community Services and Samaritans WA websites.

The Sanctuary is not a drop-in centre and all service users need to be referred and assessed before being accepted into the residential program. GPs, other health professionals and counsellors will be aware of the service and can discuss it with young people they feel may be suitable. Additionally, referrals can be made by family, friends or even the young person themselves. Importantly, the referral process requires the young person to directly engage in the referral process.

A medical diagnosis is not required for referral. However, all referrals will be assessed to ensure that the service is right for the young person's needs. Acceptance to the service will only be provided to young people who have been assessed and approved to be suitable for the service.

***Where will the young people staying at the Sanctuary come from?***

Acceptance into the Youth Sanctuary is not geographically based. Eligible young people could come from anywhere in Western Australia. Youth suicide is an issue that can affect us all – it could be your sister, daughter, friend who needs support, or someone just like them. Suicide knows no socio-economic or geographical boundaries. The Sanctuary is available to any young person who is suitable and will benefit from its support. There will be an assessment process prior to entry to ensure the service is appropriate for them.

***How long will they stay there and what help will they receive?***

The Sanctuary is a non-medical, care program for young people who will stay there for up to four nights, receiving early intervention and support from experienced staff including a clinical psychologist, support coordinators, Peer workers and support counsellors. The program is based on the Maytree model from the UK, which has been operating successfully for 20 years.

***Who is eligible for the service?***

The Sanctuary is designed to support young people, aged between 16 and 24, who are experiencing suicidal thoughts. They don't need a mental health diagnosis to use the facility and can be referred there by anyone, including family, friends or health professionals. Young people can also refer themselves.

Currently young people experiencing suicidal thoughts have limited options and often end up in a hospital emergency department, which is far from ideal.

All referrals will be assessed by trained staff prior to admission, to ensure they are eligible for the service. Young people who are in crisis will be referred to other services designed for acute care.

***How many people will be accommodated by the Sanctuary?***

The Sanctuary will accommodate up to five clients and five staff at any one time. There will be no drop-in facility, and visitors will be limited. It will be, as the name suggests, a quiet peaceful therapeutic space with intensive, round-the-clock support.

***Will residents be exposed to distressing or anti-social behaviour?***

Young people who are displaying anti-social behaviour or experiencing suicidal ideation in the context of alcohol and other drug use, or psychosis, will be identified prior to admittance and will not be invited to attend. These young people will be referred to other services specialising in crisis care.

The Sanctuary will be as the name suggests – a quiet, peaceful, temporary home for five young people who will be getting support to help them through a difficult period. They will be supported by trained staff including a clinical psychologist, support coordinators, Peer workers and support counsellors. The focus will be on the young people building hope and resilience.

***When will the service be operational?***

The Youth Sanctuary is scheduled to be operational from October 2023. Renovations to the site are currently being undertaken to make it suitable for a residential facility. Opening dates will be published on the Ruah Community Services and Samaritans WA websites.

***When will referrals be open?***

It is anticipated that the Youth Sanctuary will be accepting referrals from September 2023 prior to the service opening. As this is dependent on renovation works being completed, this may be subject to change. Sector partners and stakeholders will be notified when referrals are open. This will also be advertised on the Ruah Community Services and Samaritans WA websites.

***Who is paying for the Sanctuary?***

The State Government has provided nearly \$3 million to set up this pilot scheme, in response to the growing mental health crisis and the limited services currently available for young people.

Lotterywest has provided \$508,000 towards the refurbishment of the service premises.