



...AT A GLANCE

NEEDS ANALYSIS INTO MENTAL HEALTH AND RISK OF HOMELESSNESS FOR VULNERABLE JEWISH YOUTH

“ I had a really close friend from school who used to come hide in my house because [her family] would call the police to chase her. Then [she'd] leave really early, roam the streets and go to school. ”

Person with lived experience

“ No one wants to say that they came from an abusive home, mainly because no one would want to marry someone who has been through abuse. ”

Person with lived experience

“ This program is helping me to reconnect to Judaism in ways I wasn't sure were possible. ”

Current 'Pathfinder'

“ If a young adult is questioning their beliefs and may be rejected, it puts them in a space of where do they go from here. ”

Community leader

“ If there are mental health issues, that's not only a stain on the person, it's a stain on the whole family. ”

Support organisations

“ I was asked once, how are you doing... this was my only experience as a teenager which was so powerful for me to have someone ask, 'Are you ok?' ”

Person with lived experience

37 Jewish young people aged 12 - 24 are homeless or marginally housed in Victoria (conservative annual estimate)

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN THE JEWISH POPULATION

- **266 Jewish people** of all ages were homeless or marginally housed across **Australia** (2016 Census).
- **147 people** (55%) of these resided in Victoria, with an estimate that **37 are young people aged 12-24**.
(Estimate is based on prevalence data from the general population that indicates 25% of people experiencing homelessness in Victoria were aged 12-24 in 2021 (Census data).
- **15 people** lived in supported accommodation.
- **16 people** lived in boarding houses.
- **73 people** lived in crowded dwellings.
- **29 people** lived in severely crowded dwellings.
- It is estimated that actual numbers are higher than the data listed above.

Note:

- Data has been gathered from Markus and Muntz (2016) and the Australian Census (2021).
- These values must be viewed as estimates only. Limited data availability and anecdotal evidence produced the above calculations.

THE PROBLEM

- Increased calls to Pathways since COVID-19 regarding Jewish teenagers at risk of running away.
- Religious and cultural differences often cause tension leading to runaways.
- Limited info on youth homelessness in Melbourne's religious Jewish communities.
- Currently, Pathways legally serves 18+.
- Pathways aims to expand support to at risk teenagers/families.

Impact Co. was engaged by **Pathways Melbourne** to explore:

1. The needs of vulnerable religious Jewish young people in Melbourne.
2. Provide recommendations to inform how Pathways might adapt its services to support this cohort and their families.

INSIGHTS IDENTIFIED

1. A range of unique risk and protective factors, exist for young people growing up in religious Jewish communities in Melbourne.
2. A range of resources are available to the community, however, gaps exist.
3. Significant barriers exist for religious Jewish young people and their families in Melbourne to get support when needed.
4. The religious Jewish communities in Melbourne have mixed perceptions of and engagement with Pathways.

WHO WAS INTERVIEWED?

43 people

31 hours of interviews and focus groups

4 stakeholder groups

11

people with lived experience aged 17+

7

parents of young people with lived experience

14

community leaders; Rabbis and school principals

14

support organisations; Jewish community organisations, local state government services, youth mental health services

* some people were included in multiple groups

THE ROLE FOR PATHWAYS MELBOURNE

Strategic opportunities identified

1

Expand current programs

Offer current programs/activities to younger people and parents

Increase existing resource capacity.

2

Targeted non-clinical support

For young people and parents
Employ a case worker to triage under 18s to advocate and refer to third party professional services.

3

Targeted community education & advocacy

Deliver culturally informed youth-focused support for Jewish families, community leaders and organisations.

4

~~Targeted Clinical support~~

~~Deferred High risk and services exist elsewhere.~~

THE ROLE FOR MELBOURNE'S BROADER JEWISH COMMUNITY

- Major shift in attitudes towards poor mental health
- Acknowledgement of homelessness issues in Melbourne's Jewish community
- Confidential environment for at-risk youth and their families
- A Jewish safe house for young people to go to when in crisis

“ I have not told my parent as I was taught there is only one path to life, I am scared. ”

Person with lived experience

“ We hosted an Adass boy who wasn't getting on with his family... he was sleeping on the couch at 770 shul, and my husband asked if he'd like to come home and stay. He was just too damaged at the time, and we didn't have the skills to manage it. ”

Person with lived experience

“ As a teenager I didn't question Judaism. It wasn't such an option as it was my safety and home and questioning that could have been too destructive. ”

Person with lived experience

“ The biggest thing has been validation... having a mentor is less about advice and more about validation... and also someone that has an understanding of the Jewish culture, but not judging. ”

Current 'Pathfinder'

“ We have everything everyone else has. We're just better at hiding it. ”

Support organisations

“ There is no coordination. A need for care is identified and a panic occurs during the crisis... people run around like chooks without heads to try to find someone ”

Support organisations

“ There is no safety in terms of privacy. ”

Person with lived experience

“ Young people are paying the price for the increasing polarisation between religion and modernism. ”

Community leader