

Homeless youth complex is progressing

Beau Greenway

A DORM-STYLE building aimed to help reduce youth homelessness and encourage education in the North East is on track to be built by the end of 2025.

Construction is progressing on the Education First Youth Foyer for at Wodonga TAFE on McKoy Street with the bulk of underground works and concrete foundations completed.

The \$15.7 million project, which will support at risk young people between the ages of 16 and 24 for up to two years, is a collaboration between Wodonga TAFE, the Victorian government, Beyond Housing, Junction Support Services and Brotherhood of St Laurence.

It will include 40 self-contained studio apartments, a communal kitchen, dining area, courtyard, and staff rooms.

Beyond Housing chief executive Celia Adams said the building, initially slated for completion in mid-2025, would be ready to welcome its first residents by the end of next year.



Premier Building and Construction general manager Anthony Baker, Beyond Housing chief executive Celia Adams, Northern Victoria MP Jaclyn Symes, Junction Support Services chief executive Megan Hanley, The Foyer Foundation practice manager Mark Cox and Wodonga TAFE chief executive Phil Paterson on the construction site.

"We know the critical need, we've seen it firsthand in other regional areas and we know the difference it is going to make," she said. "We're on track for completion by the end of 2025 and it's a super exciting feeling knowing it's not that far away."

The Foyer Foundation practice manager Mark Cox said residents would be required to complete a Certificate I in Developing Independence at Wodonga TAFE as part of their stay at the youth foyer.

"It is a 12-week course that

each young person living at the youth foyer completes with their coach and an instructor from TAFE," he said.

"It contains 11 life skill modules. Things like acquiring personal belongings, knowing their legal rights, building self esteem and

those skills that often you don't learn in school, and particularly for our young people that haven't necessarily had stable family environments."

Junction Support Services chief executive Megan Hanley said the course wasn't

exclusive to those at the youth foyer.

"We have a range of programs at Junction that support young people with disengagement with education, and that's a great pathway into a foyer already set up to be successful," she said.

Wodonga TAFE chief executive Phil Paterson said it would be a fantastic asset for the community.

"While I'm hugely proud of about it from what we can deliver as an education partner, I think the fact that it services not only education, but homelessness as well is important," he said.

Northern Victoria MP Jaclyn Symes said the Wodonga youth foyer would change lives.

"This is based on a model that is shown to work. It's about identifying young people who are at risk of homelessness between 16 and 24 and giving them the opportunity to move into their own studio apartment that is supported by staff 24/7," she said.

Once complete the Wodonga youth foyer will be the fourth in Victoria.

Driver filmed his own actions

A DANGEROUS drink-driver forced other motorists off the road after overtaking vehicles, crossing double lines, and travelling in a bike lane, all while filming his actions on his phone.

Malaysian national Chin Keong Goh, 31, had been spotted travelling erratically in a silver Honda Civic on Edwards Street in Wangaratta on November 20 last year.

Multiple calls were made to triple zero about 9am as his car weaved in and out of lanes near Wangaratta High School during the school drop-off period.

He drove across bike lanes and swerved near vehicles while filming himself.

Goh was spotted on the Wangaratta-Yarrawonga Road about 15 minutes later, crossing double lines and travelling for 300 metres in the wrong lane.

Six cars were forced to take evasive action to avoid a crash.

The fruit picker was spotted by detectives on Parfitt Road at 9.40am.

He overtook three cars on the shoulder of the road near Ovens Ford, and crossed onto the wrong side of the road.

He stopped after 500 metres.

He was arrested and blew an alcohol reading of 0.083 at the Wangaratta station.

Video footage was obtained from Goh's phone showing the offending.

Lawyer Geoff Clancy told the Wangaratta court his client had been in the country for seven years and was based in Wangaratta, and undertook seasonal work.

He had been involved in a service station theft nine days before the driving offences.

"The driving offences are very serious," magistrate Ian Watkins said in Wodonga court.

"At that hour of the day, near a school, it could have caused a serious accident, killing or injuring young people.

"Nevertheless, I take into account you are a hard worker and do not have any prior convictions for driving offences in Australia."

Mr Watkins banned Goh from driving for a period of six months and ordered that he pay a fine of \$1500 on charges of dangerous driving, drink-driving, unlicensed driving and theft.

Another night, another call out to car fire

Blair Thomson and Janet Howie

TWO more vehicles have been set on fire on the Border, with a stolen car from Albury found burning in the median strip of the Hume Freeway on Sunday.

The incident followed another car blaze in the early

hours of Friday at Lavington.

Fire crews were called to the freeway at Barnawartha about 8.30am on February 11. A silver Subaru Forester was torched in the median strip.

Meanwhile, firefighters from the Albury Central brigade responded to Friday's blaze about 1.26am.

The vehicle was burning in parkland near the corner of Colley and Tracy streets.

Close to 20 cars have now been burnt in the region since the start of the year.

Police continue to investigate the matters.

Anyone with information can call (02) 6049 2600 or 1800 333 000.

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