

Story one of hope for homeless

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ON FILM: Ryan Garvey shares his story of homelessness through a film, which he shows to support worker Dan Wilson. Photo: Geoff O'Neill 140515GOB01

AFTER a series of tragic circumstances, Tamworth youth Ryan Garvey found himself homeless.

His mother passed away two years ago, leaving him and his brother to fend for themselves.

Their father was lost to suicide when Ryan was six months old.

“Being raised by a single mum has given me the respect and morals I have today,” Ryan said.

“After my mother passed away, there was a year of not knowing where my next feed was going to come from the next day.

“We’d live off a piece of bread a day, or a sandwich. Sometimes my aunties would bring baked pies or quiches.”

His brother become embroiled in the drug scene.

“My brother was addicted to drugs. He had to go to rehab and was leasing our house,” he said.

Ryan had to scramble to pack up his mother’s belongings in only five days.

“I was panicking. I had absolutely no idea where to begin,” he said.

Fortunately, the then-21-year-old approached the youth refuge and was given a place to stay that same night and was given “a good, solid feed”.

“It felt like a massive weight off my shoulders when the refuge could take me in,” he said.

Ryan spent three months in the refuge and moved into transitional housing, proving he was capable of renting and living on his own.

The time limit on the transitional home saw him back in the refuge for another three months, until he was finally able to lease a place of his own.

It was a long and challenging road for Ryan, who struggled to find a place to rent as he had no rental history to refer to.

Dan Wilson from Tamworth Family Support Services helped to present Ryan’s case and advocate for him.

For the past six months Ryan has been happy and secure in his new home. “I’m loving it...it feels amazing,” he said.

With ABC Open, Ryan has created a short video about his journey through homelessness, which will be screened tonight at the homelessness gala in Blazes at Wests.

Youth refuge bursting at the seams as kids regularly turned away

TAMWORTH’S youth refuge is constantly full and has been forced to turn away young people in need.

Tamworth Family Support Services business development manager Leigh Smith the crisis accommodation in Tamworth was full to bursting.

“Realistically it is full... all the time,” Mr Smith said. “People are having to be turned away, unfortunately.”

But limited space at the refuge for new youth in need of shelter is only part of the problem – the transitional housing young people can move into after their stay at the refuge is also frequently full.

Homes North chief executive Maree McKenzie said young people in refuges needed support, not simply housing.

“Young people are in refuges because they have nowhere else to go,” Ms McKenzie said.

“There are quite complex issues that land them in a refuge ... there might be abuse or neglect at home, or they may have mental issues and their family can't cope.”

The revelation comes on the back of a report that found only 72 out of 472 rental properties across the New England were affordable for locals living on welfare.

“We need to seriously look at young people as well... the income support (such as Youth Allowance) is not even at basic survival level,” Ms McKenzie said.