

Julie's story:

One MYC case study

Like MANY in society who are powerless, the voices of young people living on the streets is rarely heard. Perhaps it is because they have no voice that many in society readily judge their actions and character under convenient, even prejudicial labels.

“Julie” 16, one of the young people who is today being supported by Marist Youth Care accommodations, tells the story of her recent past in her own voice: I was 14-years-old and my life was a mess. I no longer trusted my mum. I'd tried to tell her something... really wanted to open up to her about it, but she was always too busy. She had no time for me and anything I might've had to say.

“My stepfather I just despised – hated the sight of him; wished he was dead. I couldn't stand the idea of living in the same house as him anymore. Every time I looked in the mirror all I could see was my own ugliness staring back at me. Finally, it got too much and I just ran away.

“I lived rough on the streets: drugs, booze, squats, sleeping on the ground. All I ever met were other street people. The kids had faces as troubled as mine. One time I found myself talking to a lady social worker about myself. It was the first time any adult actually wanted to listen to me.

“It took months for me to open up to her about my stepfather sexually assaulting me at home and how bad that made me feel. I told her I thought death would be better than going back there. I thought about death a lot as a release from this shameful secret I'd been carrying around.

“I was eventually placed in care in one of the Marist Youth Care's cottages in Western Sydney. I've gone back to school now. I'm getting a lot of support I didn't know before from older people. I'm even playing netball in the local comp. I've got good friends I can open up to. Things are getting better for me.”