

**INSPIRATIONAL:** Young man turns his life around after living rough to escape 'bad upbringing'

# Homeless Rose blooming

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**WILLIAM** Rose will never forget the gut-wrenching feeling of being 18 years old and homeless.

But Mr Rose, 31, has now transformed his life, securing a job, his own flat, a car and a lovely girlfriend.

Yesterday, Mr Rose candidly discussed his experiences on Youth Homelessness Matters Day at Lismore's Flock Espresso and Eats.

After completing his HSC at Woodenbong Central School, Mr Rose said he felt the only way to improve his life was to leave home - living in a caravan with five younger siblings and his father had taken its toll.

"I finished school and then just went on the streets," he said.

"It was rough; it was a bad upbringing.

"I left home and I achieved much more than I would have by staying at home.

"I wouldn't have a job, my own flat, a car or my lovely girlfriend if I stayed at home."

In the depths of despair, Mr Rose experienced the worst of being homeless.

"I've slept under bridges and on park benches," he said.

"The cold weather and being homeless in the community gets you down."

Fortunately, he wasn't completely alone.

"I was able to stay at a friend's house for a few weeks.

"Then I couch surfed with a couple of families."

Money and drugs soon became serious issues for Mr Rose.

"Money was the hardest thing for me as I would spend it in one day on drugs," he said. "Every once in a while, when I needed food, I had to steal it."

Eventually he found help.

"After being homeless for a few months I eventually got help from Connecting Home."

Mr Rose was placed into transitional housing for 18 months, where he developed life skills.

"My life would be pretty rough without the help from Connecting Home."

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**LIFE LOOKING UP:** Former Connecting Home client William Rose supports national Youth Homelessness Matters Day.

PHOTO: CATHY ADAMS



## YOUTH HOMELESSNESS | Local cafes raising awareness of Australia's hidden problem

THEY are called "the hidden homeless".

While 42% of Australia's homeless population are aged under 25, young people are often hidden from community view.

When youth find themselves without a home they often end up couch surfing, living in a car or in overcrowded, unhealthy

situations.

This is why on national Youth Homelessness Matters Day, local cafes have teamed up with not-for-profit service Connecting Home, to bring the issue into the open and on to our coffee cups.

The idea is that locals will buy a coffee and take a moment to discuss or

reflect on reasons why young people might find themselves without a home.

Connecting Home program manager Shay Kelly said: "Homelessness can happen to any young person and it's often caused by situations beyond their control. 70% of youth leave home be-

cause they are in situations of domestic violence or sexual abuse. It's time to take away the stigma."

In the four months since their inception the Communities North Consortium via the Connecting Home program has worked with 289 youth in this region.

The hidden nature of the issue means that

Australian Bureau of Statistics data often washes over the truth but anecdotally the problem is increasing in the Northern Rivers as domestic violence rates increase, said Ms Kelly.

Look out for cafes which have a donation box displayed on the counter and stickers on cups.