

Young people at Horizon House Warrnambool are motoring towards a greater level of independence and reaching a key milestone, as they work towards earning their driver's license thanks to an L to P Program run by Warrnambool City Council.

Horizon House Warrnambool resident Bray got his driver's license through the Program in February, just three days after his 18th birthday. "The L to P Program was a great help for me, it meant I was able to gain my driver's license when I had no other way of getting it," Bray said. "Being in a country town, there's not much public transport and having your license opens up so many more possibilities for work and gives you the ability to get to places you need to be."

Horizon House Warrnambool Support Co-ordinator Lara Venzo said when a young person moves into the house, if they express an interest in getting their license, they set that as a goal and are enrolled into the program.

"The L to P Program provides young people who don't have access to driver training with free lessons and a dedicated, trained mentor who supports them log the 120 hours of driving time they need to be eligible to sit for their final test," Lara said. "The mentors in the L to P Program have all been trained and they're matched with young people based on their personality and the young person's requirements. It's brilliant because it removes the significant financial barrier that many of our young people face when it comes to getting their license."

Bray said his mentor was great and very supportive and accommodating, helping him to overcome any challenges he was having and build his confidence behind the wheel. "I did 100 hours of driving practice with my mentor, we had really strong communication and always had a good time and made the drives enjoyable by going to cool places," Bray said. "I got my driver's license on the first go and now I'm working to get the car I saved up and bought myself while I was learning to drive roadworthy."

Lara said that for young people in Horizon House who participate in the program it can become about much more than just their driver's license. "For many of our young people this is the first time they've set themselves a really big goal that requires a long-term commitment and a lot of work to achieve," Lara said. "Achieving that goal teaches them that things that seemed far away and difficult are within their reach and that if they work hard, apply themselves and take advantage of the support available, they can get there. That filters through to their attitude towards school, work and other areas of their life. For many young people this process motivates them to save for a car and helps them learn about budgeting, putting money away and reaching a financial goal."

"We've currently got four of our young people in the Program and have another four who have already secured their license through L to P. One of them recently moved to Melbourne for university and is about to get himself to and from campus in the car he saved up and bought. He's also able to drive down and visit us at the House when he comes home on holidays which is really special," Lara said.

St John of God Horizon Houses provide a range of long term accommodation options for young people who need support and assistance to establish and maintain their independence. They provide stability and support for vulnerable young people aged 16 to 22 years old to help them set and achieve their goals and independence.

