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BLACKTOWN

House a key to stability for youths

Property allows a safe transition for foster teens

Martha Azzi

JACQUI Divis, 19, is “excited and nervous” to move into Blacktown’s first Property Industry Foundation House which assists homeless youth.

The \$520,000 Burke St home was a project by the PIF, developed alongside Fraser Property Australia, and donated to non-profit organisation Marist180.

The six-bedroom house, which can accommodate five youths aged between 17 and 19, plus a carer, helps them make the transition from foster care to independent living. The home officially opened its doors last week and will see its first tenants move in on Friday.

Miss Divis, who entered foster care when she was 13, said it was a struggle to find a place to live when she reached her late teens.

“I was stuck in a lot of refuges and I had a lot of foster carers, it was really hard for me to find somewhere

that was really stable and long term,” she said.

“I was living out of suitcases and it was a nightmare. I was always prepared to pack my things and go.”

Miss Divis said it was the stability and support that homes such as PIF House provided that allowed teenagers to stay rooted.

“A lot of people end up homeless because they move in with people that don’t have their best interests at heart,” she said. “This is the last stage (staying at PIF House).

“You stay there until 19 and a half, and then you’re out there on your own so you have this time to figure out what you want to do and where you want to go.”

Miss Divis, who left school in Year 10, is completing her Diploma in Community Services and undertaking interviews to land employment.

“I really want to be a police officer but I also want to work in Corrections,” Miss Divis said.

The first sod for the house was turned in early December. Blacktown Mayor Stephen Bali was present when the ribbon was cut to the house, built with the help of many volunteers and donations from the property sector. This is the second PIF House Frasers Property Australia has helped build, development director Ray Baksmati said.

“Youth homelessness affects too many young Australians and the property industry, as the creator of new communities, can and should play a meaningful role in addressing this issue,” Mr Baksmati said.



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Jacqui Divis at Blacktown's first PIF House.