

# Investment properties that invest in the lives of children and young people



Veritas' Supported Independent Living and Residential Services are bolstered through partnerships with local landlords, real estate agents and Community Housing Providers who provide suitable accommodation to Veritas' service users. Aaron and Kristen decided to get involved after hearing about the life-changing impact they could have on local young people, while still receiving market rent for their investment properties.

"My wife and I decided to rent a house to Veritas about three years ago. We were sold when we heard it would accommodate eight- to 14-year-old kids, who might otherwise be sleeping in motel rooms. We thought if we're ever going to take a punt on something, this was the time. So, we did," says Aaron, of the first property he and Kristen rented to Veritas House. This house serves as an Interim Care Home; one of two that Veritas operates.

The couple weighed up their decision before committing to an initial 12-month contract. "What could go wrong?" Aaron says he and Kristen asked themselves. "The house could get damaged. You could get all the neighbors offside. There are risks, but this is for a good cause," they reasoned. "We see it as; we've given these kids a chance to get out of the cycle [of disadvantage]. A lot of them come from violence that you can only imagine. So, it's peace of mind knowing that there's a few kids getting a hand; they're getting education, they're getting meals and being cared for."

As a property manager, Aaron acknowledges the realities of providing accommodation for vulnerable young people who have experienced trauma and disadvantage. "To be fair, there were some teething problems at the start. But we opened a dialogue and shared our concerns, and the thing I like about Veritas is that it wasn't a decision by committee. It was someone saying, 'Yes, we hear you. Yes, we'll fix that. Yes, you have our word going forward.' And that word's been kept. Once the ground rules got set, I find it's been very easy to deal with Veritas. So, we decided to rent our second house to them, probably eight months ago," says Aaron.

The availability of this second property couldn't have come at a more critical time. Veritas caseworkers had been put in contact with Jordan, aged 17, who was struggling in his current Out of Care Home placement after the death of one of his carers. "Jordan was determined to live independently," says Veritas' Supported Independent Living Services Team Leader, Sharon Jones. "Veritas had worked with Jordan to obtain Centrelink payments, but we were still faced with our biggest hurdle; finding a suitable property."

Properties are getting more difficult to find in the current rental market. The vacancy rates are low, rents are high, and we are competing against many other applications with every property we're applying for. Then along came Aaron and Kristen, who offered us another property. We were able to offer it to Jordan and he was so excited. It was just a few blocks away from his school and close to town. It was perfect. Jordan was involved in purchasing furniture for the property to make it his own," says Sharon. Jordan continues to work with his Veritas caseworker to prepare for his transition from the Permanency Support Program (Foster Care) to independent living, self-reliance and adulthood. Having safe and stable housing has meant that Jordan has been able to graduate Year 12 and has found part-time employment with a local mentoring and camp program, assisting other young boys to participate within their community and build resilience.

"I'd encourage people that have properties, especially experienced landlords, to consider it," says Aaron. "You have a chain of authority through Veritas from Caseworkers through to Executive Managers. But there's a natural connection between the property owner to the property, there's good feedback and transparency. Something goes wrong with your property, they'll tell you, but they'll also fix it. There's benefit on both sides; the security you get in your rent is well worth the inconvenience of a few problems here and there. But the inconvenience you're getting is also balanced by the fact that you're giving a kid a chance. It's a system where everyone benefits."

\*Names changed and generic images used to protect privacy.

If you would like information about the benefits of leasing your property to a young person in the SILS program with Veritas House, call our SILARS Operations Manager, Bronte Emanuel on 6332 3882 or email [Bronte.Emanuel@veritashouse.org.au](mailto:Bronte.Emanuel@veritashouse.org.au).

