

# Home Time.

Fix housing for young people

## Media release

Embargoed to Friday 15 March 2024

### **National coalition of community organisations calls on the Federal Government to ‘fix housing for young people’ as data reveals 44% still homeless after support**

A coalition of over 80 organisations, including peak bodies, homelessness services, housing providers, unions and others, has written to Federal Minister for Housing and Homelessness Minister Julie Collins seeking urgent action to ‘unlock Australia’s housing system for 16-24-year-olds who are homeless and unable to access housing.

This follows an analysis of the most recent Specialist Homelessness Services data, which revealed that 37,872 children and young people approached homelessness services alone for assistance in 2022/23, including 9,232 children aged 15-17. Over 30% of the total number were First Nations children and young people.

The highest numbers were in New South Wales (12,854), Victoria (11,026), Queensland (5,654), South Australia (3,082) and Western Australia (2,514).

The most alarming finding was that even after assistance from homelessness services, 44% of children and young people 15-24 were still homeless.

These figures confirm what frontline services already know - that Australia's housing and homelessness system is fundamentally broken when it comes to assisting unaccompanied children and young people with the housing and support they need.

Children who lose their homes before the age of 18 have often experienced violence and/or abuse in their family home and frequently have been through state/territory child protection systems before becoming homeless. The harm and trauma they experience after losing their homes has a lifelong impact throughout their lives.

Over 80 organisations across every state and territory have signed on to support this call, including Homelessness Australia, Community Housing Industry Association, Australian Council of Social Service, National Shelter, Australian Services Union, The Salvation Army, Melbourne City Mission, YFoundations, Anglicare Australia, VincentCare Australia, Brotherhood of St Laurence and many others. See [www.hometime.org.au/supporters](http://www.hometime.org.au/supporters) for a complete list.

The 80-plus organisations supporting Home Time have called for the following actions by the Federal Government:

1. Develop and maintain a national pool of 15,000 dedicated youth tenancies for 16-24-year-olds.
2. Provide linked support services to enable young people to pursue their goals and transition to independence.
3. Address the rental gap to ensure viability for housing providers and landlords offering tenancies to young people who have been homeless.

The Federal Government has not yet committed to making unaccompanied children and young people a focus for policy and investment in the next National Housing and Homelessness Plan, which is currently being developed.

#### **Quote attributable to Raymond, 22-year-old man who was homeless as a child and young person**

“What messed me up the most was knowing mates got to wake up with their parents and family. I was waking up alone on a park bench, not knowing where I was or who was around me.”

“I want the youth homelessness numbers to drop. Almost 40,000 unaccompanied children and young people is not okay. I am hoping people are going to listen now - and I hope parents will listen as well.”

### **Quote attributable to Kate Colvin, Homelessness Australia**

“The fact that 44% of children and young people using homelessness services are still homeless after getting help is a stark reflection of the lack of housing options for this group.”

“These young people are at a crossroads in their lives. If they get the housing and support they need, we know they can thrive. Without it, we are pushing young people down a path full of risks and lost opportunities. This Budget, we urgently need the Government to invest in youth tenancies linked to support.”

### **Quote attributable to Shorna Moore, Melbourne City Mission**

“For too many young people in Australia, the sound of the bell ringing at 3:30 is a stark reminder that there’s nowhere safe for them to go and no parent to pick them up.”

“Every year, thousands of children and young people come to MCM alone and in crisis. They have lived with instability, fear and trauma and have been told over and over again that there is no housing for them. Without a home, these children and young people are forced into situations that most adults would never comprehend experiencing.”

“The Government has a clear responsibility to provide housing for children and young people who turn up alone to homelessness services for help. As a wealthy country, we should be able to look after children and young people with nowhere to live and no family to rely on.”

### **Quote attributable to Wendy Hayhurst, Community Housing Industry Association**

“The Federal Government needs to address the community housing rental gap caused by low Youth Allowance payments and the lack of financial support to providers offering youth tenancies.”

“The Federal Government is investing billions of dollars in new social and affordable housing, and it’s important that young people’s needs are a priority. Community housing providers want to be part of the solution and work with the government to offer safe homes and brighter futures to 16-24-year-olds experiencing homelessness.”

### **Quote attributable to Trish Connolly, Yfoundations**

“Imagine you have nowhere to sleep tonight. Your home isn’t safe, there’s no bed at the refuge, and you’ve overstayed your welcome on friends’ couches. Your options are a sleeping bag in the park, a night with a guy who’ll insist on sex if you stay, or going home to the violence and abuse. On Youth Allowance, you can’t compete for private rentals, and getting social housing will take years because young people are rarely prioritised.”

“This is why the Home Time campaign is critical for young people in Australia right now. To escape violence and homelessness, they need housing and support.”

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