



## Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia

### Introduction

YACSA is the peak body in South Australia representing the interests of young people, youth workers, organisations and networks throughout the non-government youth sector. Policy positions are independent and not aligned with any political party or movement. YACSA supports the fundamental right of all young people to participate in and contribute to all aspects of community life, particularly the decision-making processes that impact them.

YACSA welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia. Access to affordable housing that is appropriate, safe, secure, and sustainable is one of the most important determinants of young people's social, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

We note that young people, especially those who are experiencing social disadvantage in one or more of its many forms, often face a myriad of challenges and barriers associated with securing and maintaining long-term accommodation. These challenges may increase the likelihood of young people living in housing that is unsafe, crowded, insecure, below minimum standards or in some cases may lead to them becoming homeless.

YACSA consulted member organisations who work in the housing and homelessness services sectors to inform this submission.

### Key points

This submission outlines the following:

- Australian governments are obligated through international human rights instruments to ensure that all citizens enjoy a basic standard of living that includes access to housing and the continuous improvement of living conditions.
- Young people are at an increased risk of homelessness when they are impacted by issues such as domestic and family violence, unemployment and underemployment, the casualisation of the workforce and insecure employment, inadequate rates of income support and a lack of access to affordable housing options.
- Young people experiencing homelessness face a disproportionate range of health impacts including mental health issues and other chronic conditions compared to the rest of the population.

- Early intervention and prevention responses that address family functioning, education and training, targeted service provision and supports, increases in affordable housing, increases to income support and policy and culture change have the best chance of decreasing youth homelessness.

## Human rights

YACSA notes that Australian governments are obligated to ensure that all citizens enjoy a basic standard of living. According to Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)<sup>1</sup> - of which Australia is a signatory - all citizens have the right to a basic standard of living that includes adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions<sup>2</sup>.

With many young people unable to afford to live independently including thousands experiencing homelessness, successive governments have failed in the realisation of this right for all young people.

## Young people and homelessness

Homelessness is a significant issue for young people. The 2016 Census reported that over 27,680 young people (12-24) were homeless in Australia<sup>3</sup>. However, we note that while the 2016 Census number is significant, the actual number of young people experiencing homelessness is known to be much higher with the vast numbers of “invisible homelessness” not counted in the official statistics<sup>4</sup>.

According to the 2016 Census, 59% of homeless young people (12–24) were living in “severely” crowded dwellings, 18% were in supported accommodation, 9% were living in boarding houses, and 10% were staying temporarily with other households<sup>5</sup>.

With a shortage of affordable housing options and increasing unemployment and underemployment, young people (15-24) are the most common age group to experience “couch surfing”. Many of these young people may not even consider that they are experiencing homelessness and as such will experience delays accessing support from Specialist Homelessness Services<sup>6</sup>.

By understanding that the overwhelming majority of homeless young people are “invisible”, we can begin to understand that preventative measures are vital to support young people who are at risk of homelessness<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, opened for signature 16 December 1966, 999 UNTS 171 (entered into force 23 March 1976), <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1980/23.html>, viewed 9 December 2019.

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 993, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016. cat. no. 2049.0. Canberra: ABS, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> J Fildes, B Perrens, J Plummer. Young people’s experiences of homelessness: Findings from the Youth Survey 2017, Mission Australia. Viewed 12 March 2020, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/780-young-people-s-experience-of-homelessness-findings-from-the-youth-survey-2017>, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016. cat. no. 2049.0. Canberra: ABS, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Couch surfers: a profile of Specialist Homelessness Services clients. Cat. no. HOU 298. Canberra: AIHW, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> L Rycken, S Antoine. Ending Youth Homelessness: solutions from young people. Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. 2020.

## The costs of youth homelessness

Affordable, suitable and stable housing is fundamental in ensuring the economic, social, psychological and physical wellbeing of young people<sup>8</sup>, but unemployment, casualised and unstable jobs, increasingly high rental costs, and a lack of affordable, suitable and stable housing makes transitioning to and maintaining independent living a challenge<sup>9 10</sup>.

The cost of youth homelessness goes much further than the deleterious impacts felt by young people and extends to a burden felt by government budgets and the rest of the community. The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia report notes that there are significant costs associated with young people (15-24) experiencing homelessness in the areas of accommodation and support services as well as additional costs of \$355 million on health services and \$391 million on the justice system per year<sup>11</sup>.

The experience of chronic disadvantage, family violence, and negative family functioning, unemployment, insecure work, mental health issues and a lack of suitable, affordable and sustainable housing can be devastating for young people with the long-term health and wellbeing impacts weighing heavily on communities and state and federal health budgets.

## Health issues for homeless young people

Young people experiencing homelessness face a disproportionate range of health issues compared to the general population. The Costs of Youth Homelessness in Australia project report found that over half (53%) of the homeless young people surveyed described being diagnosed with at least one mental health condition<sup>12</sup>. In addition, the incidence of self-injury and suicidality in homeless young people is not only higher than the rest of the population but is also higher than any other group of disadvantaged young people<sup>13</sup>. Alarming, 20% of homeless young women and 12% of homeless young men had attempted suicide in the six months prior to the survey<sup>14</sup> and over half (55%) of those young people had not received any counselling or professional support<sup>15</sup>.

It's not only mental health issues that are instigated or exacerbated by homelessness. Homeless young people are also at higher risk for infectious diseases such as influenza, hepatitis, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and more serious conditions such as diabetes, asthma and pneumonia<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Youth Action. A NSW for Young People: Beyond 2019. Viewed 23 March 2020, [https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/youthaction/pages/1542/attachments/original/1544592185/A\\_NSW\\_for\\_Young\\_People\\_Report.pdf?1544592185](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/youthaction/pages/1542/attachments/original/1544592185/A_NSW_for_Young_People_Report.pdf?1544592185), 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> P.K. Mackie. Young people and housing: identifying the key issues, International Journal of Housing Policy, 16:2, 137-143, viewed 12 March 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14616718.2016.1159273>, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> J Fildes, B Perrens, B. J Plummer. Young people's experiences of homelessness: Findings from the Youth Survey 2017, Mission Australia. 2018.

<sup>12</sup> P Flatau, M Thielking, D MacKenzie, A Steen. The Cost of Youth Homelessness In Australia Study: The Australian Youth Homelessness Experience, Snapshot Report 1. Viewed 10 March 2019, [https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/UWA\\_Cost\\_of\\_Youth\\_Homelessness\\_2\\_KuddSko.pdf](https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/UWA_Cost_of_Youth_Homelessness_2_KuddSko.pdf), 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Mission Australia. Youth Mental Health and Homelessness Report. <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/news-blog/news-media/youth-mental-health-homelessness-report>, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> J. Edidin, Z. Ganim, S. Hunter, Scott. N. Karnik. The Mental and Physical Health of Homeless Youth: A Literature Review. Child psychiatry and human development. 43. 354-75. 2011.

An individual's residential environment has a significant impact on health equity through its influence on access, community connectedness, personal behaviour and safety. When communities have ready and equitable access to appropriate and affordable housing, impacts from factors such as homelessness, housing overcrowding, social exclusion and poor physical and mental health can be reduced<sup>17</sup>.

## **Factors affecting the incidence of homelessness**

### *Family violence*

The 2016 Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia Study Snapshot<sup>18</sup>, found that family violence is a major driver of young people becoming homeless. Of the approximately 400 homeless young people surveyed, over one third reported that they had experienced violence in the home (between parents) where police attended, with 14% experiencing police attending their home on more than 10 occasions. A further two-thirds (63%) of respondents to the survey had been placed in some form of out-of-home care before turning 18.

In 2017-18, almost 2 in 5 young people (15-24) reported domestic and family violence to Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS)<sup>19</sup>. Young people are susceptible not only to domestic and family violence from parents or guardians but may also experience domestic and family violence in their own intimate partner relationships.

Positive family support is vital for young people to effectively transition to independent living. When young people are forced to leave home early, they can find it extremely difficult to achieve the income necessary to make this transition a reality and are much more likely to experience homelessness and long-term disadvantage<sup>20</sup>.

### *Unemployment and the employment market*

Youth unemployment and underemployment have been significant issues in Australia for decades, but the COVID-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns and restrictions has decimated industries that typically employed young people. In data released by the ABS in May, jobs in the accommodation and food services industry decreased by 27.1%, and jobs in the arts and recreation services industry decreased by 19%. This has led to a 14.6% decrease in employment for young people under 20 and a

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<sup>17</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australia's health 2016. Australia's health series no. 15. Cat. no. AUS 199. Canberra: AIHW. 2016.

<sup>18</sup> P Flatau, M Thielking, D MacKenzie, A Steen. The Cost of Youth Homelessness In Australia Study: The Australian Youth Homelessness Experience, Snapshot Report 1. Viewed 10 March 2019, [https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/UWA\\_Cost\\_of\\_Youth\\_Homelessness\\_2\\_KuddSko.pdf](https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/UWA_Cost_of_Youth_Homelessness_2_KuddSko.pdf), 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Mission Australia. Out of the shadows: domestic and family violence: a leading cause of homelessness in Australia. Viewed online 20 March 2020, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/domestic-and-family-violence>, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> P Flatau, M Thielking, D MacKenzie, A Steen. The Cost of Youth Homelessness In Australia Study: The Australian Youth Homelessness Experience, Snapshot Report 1. Viewed 10 March 2019, [https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/UWA\\_Cost\\_of\\_Youth\\_Homelessness\\_2\\_KuddSko.pdf](https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/UWA_Cost_of_Youth_Homelessness_2_KuddSko.pdf), 2015.

10.7% decrease in employment for young people 20-29, which demonstrate the largest declines in employment in any age group<sup>21</sup>.

Across the country, the overall unemployment rate rose in April to 6.2% (13.9% are aged 15-24), meaning 823,300 people are unemployed nationally<sup>22</sup>. There is a further 1,816,100 (138,100 in South Australia) who are underemployed and looking for more hours<sup>23</sup>.

In South Australia, the jobless rate is similarly dismal with 62,900 unemployed people (including 20,300 young people aged 15-24) competing for only 11,700 available jobs<sup>24</sup> <sup>25</sup>. This means that for many young people, finding and maintaining a job that pays for the necessities of life, including housing is increasingly out of reach.

The recent Grattan Institute report described the current economic downturn as one of, if not the worst economic downturn in Australia's history. It will take years for the economy to regain ground and the longer this takes, the less likely the labour market will recover. Young people will be the hardest hit over the coming years as they are more likely to be employed in industries most affected by the response to COVID-19<sup>26</sup>.

With the sustained impacts of COVID-19 on youth unemployment, increasing casualisation of the shrinking workforce and an inadequate income support system that fails to provide even the basics of independent living, young people will undoubtedly continue to experience increasing barriers to appropriate, affordable and stable housing.

### *Casualisation of the workforce and insecure employment*

Even before the detrimental impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on economic and employment markets in Australia, increased automation, globalisation and insecure and casualised employment has transformed the employment market, particularly for young people.

The number of entry-level jobs has declined significantly since 2006 and youth unemployment has remained high since the GFC<sup>27</sup>. Competition is fierce and the jobs that are available are increasingly casual and insecure. Previously, young people could be assured of full-time or regular part-time

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<sup>21</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia – Week Ending 2 May 2020 ABS cat. no. 6160.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Labour Force, Australia, April 2020 ABS cat. no. 6202.0. Canberra: ABS, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Labour Force, Australia, April 2020 ABS cat. no. 6202.0. Canberra: ABS, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Job Vacancies, Australia, February 2020 ABS cat. no. 6354.0. Canberra: ABS, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> B. Coates., M. Cowgill., T. Chen., W. Mackey. *Shutdown: estimating the COVID-19 employment shock*. Grattan Institute, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> K. Torii, K.. M. O'Connell. Preparing Young People for the Future of Work. Mitchell Institute Policy Paper No. 01/2017. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.

employment with industry standard conditions but there's been a decline in full and part-time work since the 1980's with no shortage of prospective employees vying for every available job<sup>28</sup>.

HILDA data shows that since 2001, casual and part-time employment increased for workers below the age of 25. Non-standard employment (permanent part-time and casual) for young people 15-24 has risen from 68% to 76% and there has been an increase in casual employment for young people from 48.2% in 2001 to 54.1% in 2017<sup>29</sup>.

In addition, while university study was once a reliable pathway to full-time employment, this is no longer the case. In 2019, the full-time employment rate for bachelor level graduates (four months after graduation) was 72.2%, down from 72.9% in 2018 and 85% in 2007<sup>30 31 32</sup>.

Underemployment is another issue impacting on the ability of young people to earn an income to be able to live independently. The 2018 HILDA survey results found that 31% of workers aged 15-19 and 20% of workers aged 20-24 were underemployed<sup>33</sup>.

There are simply not enough jobs for the number of people seeking work. This has created an environment not seen before where young people, if they are lucky enough to get a job, potentially face increasing financial exclusion ranging from being ineligible for housing and car loans, to paying for rent, food, health care and day to day expenses<sup>34</sup>. For those who are reliant on income support, which is set well below the minimum wage<sup>35</sup> and Henderson Poverty Line<sup>36</sup>, their experience of poverty, inequality and disadvantage is exacerbated.

### *Inadequate rates of income support*

Recipients of income support should be able to access appropriate housing, be able to afford nutritious food, pay for utilities, buy clothing, access quality health care, dental, optometry services, and be able to maintain their own transport or have access to public transport. Unfortunately, with government providing relatively static rates of income support in an economic environment where the cost of living is increasing considerably, people in receipt of income support face substantial barriers to their financial inclusion in their communities. In data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the "Living Cost

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<sup>28</sup> A Smith, 'Workforce casualisation: the discussion we have been avoiding', *BRW*, 22 October 2013,

[http://www.brw.com.au/p/leadership/workforce\\_casualisation\\_the\\_discussion\\_e6DEzUdUr5NFkzQCaeJhOJ](http://www.brw.com.au/p/leadership/workforce_casualisation_the_discussion_e6DEzUdUr5NFkzQCaeJhOJ) viewed 8 August 2019,

<sup>29</sup> R. Wilkins, L. Inga. *The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 18* Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, University of Melbourne, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> K. Torii, K. M. O'Connell. *Preparing Young People for the Future of Work*. Mitchell Institute Policy Paper No. 01/2017. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.

<sup>31</sup> Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT). *2018 Graduate Outcomes Survey National Report*. Viewed online 12 August 2019, [https://www.qilt.edu.au/docs/default-source/gos-reports/2018-gos/2018-gos-national-report-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=a729e33c\\_4](https://www.qilt.edu.au/docs/default-source/gos-reports/2018-gos/2018-gos-national-report-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=a729e33c_4), 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT). *2019 Graduate Outcomes Survey National Report*. Viewed online 18 March 2020, <https://www.qilt.edu.au/docs/default-source/gos-reports/2019-gos/2019-gos-national-report.pdf>, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> R. Wilkins, L. Inga. *The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 16*. Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, University of Melbourne, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, *Select Committee on Poverty in South Australia*, viewed online, 18 August 2019, <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/617>, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Fairwork Ombudsman, *Minimum Wages, The Australian Government*, viewed online 6 March 2020 <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/fact-sheets/minimum-workplace-entitlements/minimum-wages>, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research. *Poverty Lines: Australia*, ISSN 1448-0530 March Quarter 2019, [https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/3121686/Poverty-lines-Australia-March-Quarter-2019.pdf](https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/3121686/Poverty-lines-Australia-March-Quarter-2019.pdf), 2019.

Indexes" (LCI), the cost of living for JobSeeker Payment recipients rose by 1.9% over the preceding financial year, compared to the average (CPI) of 1.6%. The reason for this is that the monthly costs for someone on Youth Allowance or JobSeeker Payment is centred on necessities such as housing, food, petrol and health care, and these costs are rising at higher rates<sup>37</sup>.

The temporary COVID-19 supplement has provided some relief for young people receiving income support, effectively doubling most rates of Youth Allowance and JobSeeker payments. However, the supplement is due to cease in September and the maximum rate of Youth Allowance and JobSeeker payable is set to revert back to pre-COVID-19 rates.

The annual CPI increase to Youth Allowance and JobSeeker Payment does not keep up with the rising costs of rent, food, utilities and transport and should be raised immediately to accurately reflect wage growth and the rising cost of living.

### *Access to housing for young people*

A recent University of New South Wales report on housing affordability and homelessness is clear that the housing crisis in Australia is not based on a shortage of housing supply but is in fact influenced by a shortage of affordable housing. Unemployment, underemployment, income support rates set below the poverty line and the minimum wage and skyrocketing rent costs combine to increase housing stress, housing overcrowding and homelessness<sup>38 39 40</sup>.

Unemployment, insecure employment and low rates of income support means that young people are more likely to rent than other groups<sup>41</sup>. Given that rents are growing more quickly than incomes, young people are more likely to live in poor quality housing, experience housing overcrowding, insatiability and housing stress and face negative physical and mental health impacts than other groups<sup>42</sup>.

Access to appropriate, safe and secure housing in Australia is becoming increasingly expensive, with a greater proportion of income being spent on renting or buying a home. The proportion of household

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<sup>37</sup> D. Taylor. Newstart recipients' standard of living going backwards. ABC News Online, 8 August 2019. Viewed online, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-08/newstart-recipients-are-becoming-worse-off-abs-confirms/11394022>

<sup>38</sup> K Muir, C Martin, E Lui, L Kaleveld, P Flatau, L Etuk, H Pawson. Amplify Insights: Housing Affordability & Homelessness. Centre for Social Impact, UNSW Sydney. 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Youth Action. A NSW for Young People: Beyond 2019. Viewed 23 March 2020, [https://d3n8a8pro7vbm.cloudfront.net/youthaction/pages/1542/attachments/original/1544592185/A\\_NSW\\_for\\_Young\\_People\\_Report.pdf?1544592185](https://d3n8a8pro7vbm.cloudfront.net/youthaction/pages/1542/attachments/original/1544592185/A_NSW_for_Young_People_Report.pdf?1544592185), 2019.

<sup>40</sup> P.K. Mackie. Young people and housing: identifying the key issues, International Journal of Housing Policy, 16:2, 137-143, viewed 12 March 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14616718.2016.1159273>, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Housing Assistance in Australia 2019. Viewed 20 March 2020. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/housing-assistance-in-australia-2019/contents/housing-and-housing-assistance-in-australia>, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> NHSC. Key findings of the 2011 State of Supply Report, National Housing Supply Council, Australian Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Canberra, pg.6. Viewed online 31 August 2012 at: [http://www.nhsc.org.au/content/state\\_of\\_supply/2011\\_ssr\\_rpt/docs/nhsc-key-findings-2011.pdf](http://www.nhsc.org.au/content/state_of_supply/2011_ssr_rpt/docs/nhsc-key-findings-2011.pdf), 2011,

income spent on renting a home has been steady at 16-19% since the early 1990s<sup>43</sup>. However, for young people who rent, the proportion of household expenditure on housing can be much higher. Young people (aged 15-24) who rent a home through a private landlord, can spend up to 20.2% of their income on rent. For young people renting through a state or territory housing authority, the proportion of household income spent on rent increases to 25.7%<sup>44</sup>.

Young people in receipt of income support also face significant barriers finding and maintaining suitable housing. The 2019 Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot revealed that out of the 69,000 properties reviewed for the report, only one was affordable for someone in receipt of Youth Allowance and only two were affordable for someone receiving the JobSeeker Payment<sup>45</sup>. Even working people on low rates of pay were locked out of the private rental market with only 2% of rentals affordable to someone receiving the minimum wage<sup>46</sup>.

The National Rental Affordability Index<sup>47</sup> reports that the majority of homes in the Adelaide metropolitan area are "severely unaffordable" for young people living on minimum wage, entry level jobs and income support payments. In South Australia, a single person on JobSeeker Payment pays a staggering 77% of their income on rental accommodation in the metropolitan area and 47% in the rest of the state. Rental stress in the inner city where single people on the JobSeeker Payment are expected to pay more than three quarters of their income on rent, pushes them to the outer fringes of our cities, well away from job opportunities, transport and other infrastructure.

With both Youth Allowance and JobSeeker Payment rates set significantly below both the minimum wage and the poverty line and rental prices soaring across the country, finding suitable housing will be out of reach for many young people.

It is clear that legislative and policy mechanisms need to be developed that drive a significant increase in the number of affordable and appropriate rental properties available to young people.

### **Opportunities for early intervention and prevention of homelessness**

The 2008 White Paper, *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, outlined the need for intervening early to reduce homelessness. Early intervention and prevention responses to address young people experiencing homelessness should focus on family interventions, education and

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<sup>43</sup> J Daley, B Coates, B, T Wiltshire. *Housing affordability: re-imagining the Australian dream*. Grattan Institute, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Housing Occupancy and Costs, Australia, 2017-18* ABS cat. no. 44130.0 Canberra: ABS, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Anglicare Australia. *Rental Affordability Snapshot: National Report April 2019*. Viewed online 6 March 2020.

<https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/final---rental-affordability-snapshota302da309d6962baacc1ff0000899bca.pdf?sfvrsn=4>, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Anglicare Australia. *Rental Affordability Snapshot: National Report April 2019*. Viewed online 6 March 2020.

<https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/final---rental-affordability-snapshota302da309d6962baacc1ff0000899bca.pdf?sfvrsn=4>, 2019.

<sup>47</sup> SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd. *The National Rental Affordability Index*. Viewed 26 March 2020

[https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/Projects/SGS-Economics-and-Planning\\_RAI-November-2019.pdf](https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/Projects/SGS-Economics-and-Planning_RAI-November-2019.pdf), 2019.



training, greater numbers of affordable housing options, targeted service provision and policy and culture change<sup>48</sup>.

The early intervention approach seeks to reach a young person who is at risk of homelessness and respond to their risk factors to prevent them from becoming homeless. As explored earlier, a major driver of homelessness is domestic and family violence. If intervention is able to investigate and mitigate the family issues that pose a risk to the young person leaving home early, then there is both a short and long-term cost saving to the young person and the community<sup>49</sup>.

The Reconnect program, introduced in the mid 1990's, is an example of an early intervention program that provides young people and their families with mediation, counselling, group work and referrals to other services. In evaluations undertaken in 2003 and in 2013, the Reconnect program achieved positive outcomes for both young people and their families<sup>50</sup>.

Another program that has achieved success in reducing youth homelessness is the Geelong Project which is a partnership between the non-government sector, the university sector and schools, and supports young people to remain at home and stay at school while being connected to their community. The project is underpinned by the "community of schools and services" model (COSS) and has seen a 40% reduction in the number of young people entering the SHS system since 2013<sup>51</sup>.

The accessibility of affordable housing is a crucial opportunity to prevent homelessness. The Federal and state governments have an important role to play in improving the affordability of housing for households on the lowest incomes. This includes providing the regulatory environment in which more affordable housing options are available, improving the availability of social housing options and ensuring builders and landlords comply with safety and quality standards. The Federal and state governments also need to ensure the availability of tailored supports for young people and/or their families to support and maintain both their families and their tenancies<sup>52</sup>.

As income is integral to the accessibility and sustainability of housing, the Federal and state governments need to not only ensure that affordable housing exists, but the Federal Government needs to immediately raise the rate of income support payments so that young people can afford to live independently<sup>53</sup>. The Federal and state governments also need to address the drivers of the dire employment market in Australia if we want to reduce the numbers of young people who experience financial exclusion and experience homelessness.

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<sup>48</sup> J Fildes., B Perrens., J Plummer. Young people's experiences of homelessness: Findings from the Youth Survey 2017, Mission Australia. Viewed 12 March 2020, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/780-young-people-s-experience-of-homelessness-findings-from-the-youth-survey-2017>, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> D MacKenzie., P Flatau., A Steen., M Thielking. The Cost of Homelessness in Australia: Research Briefing. ARC Linkage Research Project. 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> The Geelong Project. Viewed 23 March 2020, <http://www.thegeelongproject.com.au>, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Mission Australia. Youth Mental Health and Homelessness Report. <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/news-blog/news-media/youth-mental-health-homelessness-report>, 2017.

<sup>53</sup> L Rycken. S Antoine. Ending Youth Homelessness: solutions from young people. Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. 2020.



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