

Youth Housing and Homelessness

Safe, secure and affordable housing options for young people in Tasmania are important as many young people live outside the family home and manage their own home, income and other needs. In Tasmania however, safe, secure and affordable housing options are limited. Transitioning into independent living is an important milestone for many young people, yet many face barriers in seeking secure and affordable housing. Young people face discrimination in the rental market, particularly as assumptions are made regarding their lifestyle. Landlords and real estate agents frequently question a young person's ability to meet the rental requirements; this is not surprising given the low rate of income support. Many young people seeking housing are receiving income support, a payment that limits the type of accommodation young people can afford and with this being their only source of income they can be unappealing as a tenant in the rental market. Young people under the age of 16 face additional barriers in finding suitable housing as eligibility for public housing and community housing stipulate the individual must be over the age of 16, thus creating an additional barrier to finding suitable housing.

While many young people experience difficulties finding suitable housing, there are also many young people who are homeless. Homelessness can be categorised as primary, secondary or tertiary, with many homeless services adopting these categories. Homelessness Australia reports, using Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Housing and Population data and AIHW Specialist Homeless Services data, that the rate of homelessness in Australia is 49 out of every 10,000 people. At the time of the 2011 census it was reported that in Tasmania there were 1,579 homeless people, which in an increase from the 2006 census data. 30.9% of homeless Tasmanians are under the age of 25, demonstrating the need for improved housing services to assist young people to find safe, secure and affordable housing.

There are many reasons why a young person may be homeless. The most common reasons include: running away from home to escape abuse or neglect, leaving home but not being able to afford housing or to escape from domestic violence. Young people exiting State care with few support networks in place may also be at an increased risk of



homelessness and may need additional assistance in finding housing. Assisting young people to find safe, secure and affordable housing is important as homelessness increases the risk of mental illness, poor physical health and nutrition and is often correlated with poor social skills, low levels of literacy and numeracy and criminal behaviour.

YNOT is committed to:

- Working to ensure that all young people have a safe and secure home.
- Advocating for a range of appropriate and affordable housing options to meet the needs of young people, including crisis, supported, transitional and long term housing options across the State.
- Promoting the importance and resourcing of youth support services (e.g. youth mental health services) which aid in tackling the causal affects of homelessness.
- Raising awareness and understanding of youth homelessness amongst the community.
- Ensuring that young people have access to public housing services, regardless of age.
- Advocating for community education to increase the awareness of the rights and responsibilities of young tenants, targeting both tenants and the wide community.
- Advocating for specialised homelessness services and housing options for young people under the age of 16.

Future Vision

A Tasmania where young people have access to safe, secure and affordable housing and the support services in place ensure they have the resources and information they need to access and maintain such housing. A Tasmania in which strategies and initiatives are implemented to assist homeless young people to transition into housing, education and employment.

References

Homelessness Australia <http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/index.php/about-homelessness/what-is-homelessness>

Homelessness Australia 2013, <http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/index.php/about-homelessness/homeless-statistics>

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