

Tasmanians join national call to take action on youth homelessness

Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD) is a national awareness raising campaign that encourages all Australians to take a stand against youth homelessness in our communities.

The National Youth Coalition for Housing (NYCH), who hosts the online Youth Homelessness Matters Day campaign, want to generate a national conversation about youth homelessness to show decision makers that this issue is a priority for the community in the lead up to Youth Homelessness Matters Day on Wednesday 13 April.

In Australia, there are 26,000 young people aged 12 to 25 who are homeless each night and an alarming 42% of the homeless population is under 25 years old.

Family violence and family breakdown are the main causes of youth homelessness.

Joanna Siejka, Co-Chair of NYCH, said, "There is a common misconception that young people leave home because they want to, however, most young people who experience homelessness are escaping a negative home environment which is often fostered through an abusive, violent or broken home.

"If everyone in the community knew how their actions could support early intervention for young people experiencing homelessness, then a huge difference could be made in young peoples' lives, earlier and for the better."

A YHMD event will be held in Hobart on Wednesday 13 April from 11 -2pm at the Elizabeth Street Mall to provide a physical presence to the online campaign in Tasmania. There will be fun activities and giveaways as well as special guest Zac Lockhart, 2016 Tasmanian Young Australian of the Year.

Having experienced youth homelessness firsthand, Zac understands the struggles of the 26,000 homeless youth across Australia, over 400 of whom live in Tasmania.

At just 16 years old Zac Lockhart found himself homeless after circumstances at home forced him to turn to a youth shelter. Zac has since become an Ambassador for youth homelessness, determined to raise awareness and reduce the stigma attached to the issue.

Zac now lives at Thyne House, which is a long term accommodation facility for young people, where he studies full-time, works casually, volunteers and runs his own video production business.

"I've lived here almost four years. The main thing is that you are off the street, have the support that Anglicare provides and an opportunity to get ahead," he said. "I really think that the phrase 'a hand up, not a hand-out' sums up what has been most helpful to me," he said.

Whilst YHMD is a national campaign, Tasmania is the lead agency through the Network of Tasmania and the campaign is supported by a range of organisations and individuals across Tasmania.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

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SHARE.

Break stereotypes that are associated with youth homelessness by sharing stories, statistics and information on social media and with your network. **facebook.com/yhmday & #YHMD2016 on twitter and Instagram**

ACT.

Pledge your support by signing up to our Thunderclap Campaign. Host an event and help us raise awareness about youth homelessness. Write to your local MP about the importance of this issue. Contact your local newspaper and let them know what's happening in your area.
youthhomelessnessmatters.net

For further information:

www.facebook.com/yhmday

www.youthhomelessnessmatters.net

#YHMD2016 on social media

Background Information:

- 42% of the homelessness population is under 25 years old
- 26,000 young Australians between 12 – 25 years old are experiencing homelessness every night
- More than 45% of the young people seeking assistance from homelessness services across Australia need help with family violence and family breakdown.
- The first and most common way young people experience homelessness is couch surfing

#YHMD Campaign Goals

- *Break stereotypes* – Breaking the stigma that young people leave home because they want to, addressing the causes of youth homelessness such as negative home environments and encouraging young people experiencing homelessness to seek support.
- *Engaging government, community and business* – to resource specialist youth homelessness services like youth shelters.
- *Asking for a national plan for addressing youth homelessness* – Youth homelessness needs a strategic approach at a national level to ensure support for young people at every stage from early intervention to crisis support.