



Advocacy groups join forces to call for action on youth homelessness

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"I've been homeless most of my life. And, like, for me it's gotten to the point I always keep a block mattress in my back of my car." — young person, aged 20

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), the peak body for young people aged 12-25 years, has joined forces with key advocacy groups on [National Youth Homelessness Matters Day \(YHMD\)](#) to urge governments at all levels to act as a matter of urgency to combat the youth homelessness scourge.

Collectively, YNOT, Shelter Tasmania, TasCOSS, Colony 47, Youth, Family & Community Connections, Anglicare Tasmania and Youth Futures lend our support to the [national campaign which calls on the Australian Government to develop a standalone, targeted strategy to end child and youth homelessness](#).

Concerningly, here in Tasmania young people aged 12-24 years represent one quarter (25%) of the homeless population. Children under the age of 16 years presenting alone to specialist homelessness services are particularly vulnerable.

YNOT CEO, Ms Tania Hunt, said there are a number of contributing factors which mean that young people are at increased risk of homelessness.

"Key drivers of youth homelessness include family and domestic violence, parental alcohol and drug abuse and transitioning out of home to independence," Ms Hunt said.

"Low wages, insecure work, increased cost of living pressures and a lack of appropriate housing options — headlined by an impenetrable private housing market — are all adding fuel to the fire, with even more young people at risk of homelessness.

"Young people's experiences of homelessness vary and is often hidden and out of view, be it couch surfing or shelter hopping, but consistently one thing we're told by young people is that without a safe, secure home it is near on impossible to access employment and education opportunities."

Ms Hunt called on the Tasmanian Government to employ a coordinated and targeted approach to respond to the housing needs of young Tasmanians seeking support.

"We recognise and welcome Government investment in targeted initiatives to support young people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, including Youth2Independence facilities, Youth at Risk Centres, responding to the needs of unaccompanied homeless children under 16 years of age, and piloting shared tenancy options within social housing," she said.

"However, the reality is we're tinkering round the edges of a fragmented service system that has been underinvested in by governments of all persuasions for decades.

"This is a complex issue that needs specific housing solutions that are age appropriate, accommodate all young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and take into account the expertise of young people who are best placed to identify what needs to be done.



“Children and young people are the most precious resource we have and it is paramount we do everything we can to give them the best start in life.

“There is no excuse for inaction on this issue. We’re talking about a basic human right,” Ms Hunt said.

Shelter Tasmania CEO, Ms Pattie Chugg, said as the peak body for housing and homelessness in Tasmania they are highly concerned by increasing levels of youth homelessness.

“Evidence shows that experiencing homelessness early in life increases the risk of homelessness in later life. Young people are particularly disadvantaged in Tasmania’s competitive and expensive private rental market due to lower incomes, discrimination and lack of rental history,” Ms Chugg said.

“Housing crisis is the number one reason for Tasmanians to seek assistance from specialist homelessness services. The only effective solution to end youth homelessness is to ensure a pathway for all young Tasmanians to be securely housed.

“We need to boost social housing to be 10% of homes. Young people deserve the safe home they need to fulfil their potential.”

TasCOSS Acting CEO, Dr Charlie Burton, called on the Government to address the drivers of youth homelessness and housing stress, starting with ensuring they have access to a decent income.

“Poverty among young people is higher than the rest of the population, and unemployment is much higher — Tasmania’s unemployment rate is 3.8%, but youth unemployment is 8.7% and notably worse in some parts of the state,” Dr Burton said.

“For young people to have a safe and affordable roof over their head, we need to support them. This starts with increasing the rate of Youth Allowance, JobSeeker and Commonwealth Rent Assistance, and providing young people with priority access to meaningful and local training pathways and employment opportunities.”

By the Numbers — A Homelessness Snapshot in Tasmania:

- Young people under 25 years represent 39% of the homeless population in Tasmania.
 - <12 = 14%
 - 12-18 = 10%
 - 19-24 = 15%
- The highest rates of homelessness in Tasmania per 10,000 people in 2021 were for those in the age group 19-24 years (93 people per 10,000).
- In 2021, a quarter (25%) of all people experiencing homelessness in Tasmania were aged between 12 to 24 years (586 people).

ENDS

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