

MEDIA RELEASE: Renewed calls to invest in a standalone child and youth housing and homelessness plan

Media Release | *Monday 5 August 2024*

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), the peak body for young people aged 12-25, has renewed calls for the State Government to prioritise the housing needs of young Tasmanians as Homelessness Week kicks off around the country today.

Homelessness Week 2024 is an annual event that aims to build community support and government commitment to end homelessness in our communities. This year's theme 'Homelessness Action Now' speaks to the urgent need for governments to act as the number of people experiencing homelessness in Australia continues to rise.

Concerningly, here in Tasmania, 39% of the States' homeless population is under the age of 25 years. Children under the age of 16 presenting alone to specialist homelessness services are particularly vulnerable.

YNOT CEO, Ms Tania Hunt, highlighted the critical importance of investing in a standalone, targeted plan to end child and youth homelessness in our State.

"Tasmania's first 20-year Housing Strategy fails to adequately respond to the unique and often complex care and housing needs of all children and young people in Tasmania. We need a targeted plan, with a youth-specific focus, to guide service delivery and coordinate outcomes in the youth homelessness service system." Ms Hunt said.

"Young people's experience of homelessness is different to adults. Many are forced to leave unsafe environments because of family violence, abuse and neglect and returning is simply not an option. Many young people are couch surfing and living in overcrowded dwellings, placing them at an increased risk of exploitation and harm."

"A larger number of young people now face homelessness because they are unable to break into the private rental market."

"Strategies to prevent youth homelessness need to respond to the unique care and housing needs of all children and young people and be age appropriate. Importantly, any youth-specific housing and homelessness plan needs to include young people with lived experience of homelessness and be adequately funded to affect meaningful change."

"Youth Homelessness Matters. More must be done to ensure all children and young people in Tasmania have a roof over their head and access to the care and support they need to thrive."

A Youth Homelessness Snapshot in Tasmania:

- 39% of Tasmania's homeless population is under the age of 25 years.ⁱ
- Children and young people are impacted most by homelessness in our state. Experiencing homelessness early in life increases the risk of homelessness over the course of their life.
- Young people face significant vulnerabilities and are at increased risk of harm, abuse and exploitation when they do not have a safe home.ⁱⁱ
- Despite recent investment in youth homelessness initiatives, youth homelessness services are at breaking point. Many are overwhelmed by the current demand for services, the increasing

complexity of issues experienced by young people accessing services, and the lack of resources and support available for workers and young people.

ENDS

For more information or to arrange an interview

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ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *Census of Population and Housing*, Australian Government.

ⁱⁱ Yfoundations (2023). National Housing & Homelessness Plan Issues Paper.