



Homelessness and Young People

Young people experiencing homelessness face a hard time finding somewhere safe and secure to live. It is more difficult for them to maintain support, connect with their community and participate in education, training and employment. Young people who experience homelessness are at increased risk of experiencing ongoing homelessness as adults and there are more young women who are homeless than young men.



Why aren't young people living at home?

Family breakdown and domestic and family violence are two of the primary reasons young women seek support from homelessness assistance services. Family breakdown is also one of the primary reasons young men seek support from services. For some young people fleeing physical, sexual and emotional abuse, reconciliation with their families may not be possible. With adequate support and resources reconciliation may be possible for some young people and their families.

What are the education and employment issues facing young people who are homeless?

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of homeless youth aged 12–18 decreased by nearly 16% and the rate of homeless school students aged 12–18 decreased by 23.5%. The two factors most likely to be associated with the change are early intervention initiatives and an improved labour market for young people during that time. In recent years however, the global recession has had a negative impact on the labour market and has disproportionately affected young people. The rate of youth unemployment is more than double the general jobless rate of 5.8%, which the government expects will peak at 8.5%, and alarmingly, growth in unemployment of young people aged 15-19 years rose from 11.3% in August 2008 to 17.6% in August 2009. High levels of unemployment do not encourage increased levels of education and training—the proportion of 15-24 year olds in full-time education increased by only 1.4 percentage points over the year to August 2009. In this climate, early intervention measures will be all the more important to support young people to not become homeless.

Can young people who are homeless access services or support in Australia?

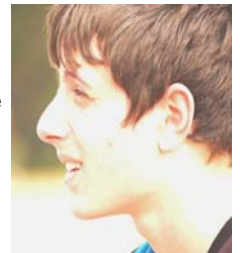
Homelessness assistance services in Australia cannot meet the demand for accommodation. Most of the people turned away from services every day are aged under 20. Young people also have difficulty securing long-term accommodation and are particularly affected by poverty and the shortage of affordable housing in Australia. The Youth Allowance rate makes it difficult for independent young people to meet the basic costs of living. Young people face a long wait for public housing and often experience discrimination in the private rental market.

The stats

- 41,300 independent young people aged between 15 and 25 were accommodated in the homelessness service system in 2007–08.
- Indigenous young people are proportionately more at risk of homelessness than non-Indigenous youth.
- 1 in every 49 young women between 15 and 19 stayed in a homelessness assistance service this year.

Young people under 16

State and Territory governments are responsible for the care and protection of children and young people if their parent or guardian can't care for them for any reason. Family breakdown and the breakdown of foster care and out-of-home care arrangements means there are some young people aged under 16 in the homelessness service system. However, homelessness assistance services are not currently resourced to provide the specific care and support these younger people need.



What needs to happen?

- Adequate provision of prevention and early intervention initiatives.
- Assistance with transition and exit plans to support the bridge between assisted and non-assisted accommodation.
- Increased funding to meet the specific needs of young people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless.
- Sufficient resourcing of State and Territory welfare authorities to meet the needs of young people under 16 in state care and protection to ensure these young people do not become homeless.

References

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