



Homelessness Australia

Creating a framework for ending homelessness

MEDIA RELEASE

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YOUNG AND HOMELESS, BUT NOT HELPLESS

Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2010 is on 14 April – a timely reminder that of the 105,000 people who are homeless on any given night in Australia, nearly half are aged under 25.

Research has identified that if young people are not properly supported when they first experience homelessness, they have a higher chance of becoming homeless in their adult lives. Around 40% of people homeless as adults were first homeless as young people.

With the national Census taking place next year, it will be important to make sure that homeless young people are counted. Youth homelessness is often only seen in the community as street homelessness. However most homeless young people are staying in youth shelters or sleeping on friends' couches and moving from friend to friend.

“The community needs to stop judging homeless youth and create opportunities for young people to avoid becoming homeless and to access long term housing”, said Maria Leebeek, Chairperson of the National Youth Coalition for Housing. “Young people experiencing homelessness are homeless, but not helpless”.

“New investment announced in the stimulus package in 2009 for social housing is welcome”, said Simon Smith, Executive Officer. “But it will take time for the full benefit of this money to be felt”.

There are some groups of young people who face particular challenges. Some Indigenous young people live in substandard or overcrowded conditions. Culturally or linguistically diverse young people may have difficulties with language, learning new cultural norms and understanding different political and social systems.

“There are different causes of homelessness among young people, and is important that young people are able to access appropriate support to address the underlying causes of their homelessness whilst they are supported to maintain or re-engage with their education or secure appropriate employment”, said Ms Leebeek.

“Equally, it is very pleasing to see a range of projects funded under the homelessness White Paper for young people”, said Mr Smith. “Many of these are short term or time limited projects. Funding will need to continue well past 2013 to make a lasting difference”.

“Will today's youth homeless still be homeless in 2020? We hope the answer is no.”

For comment:

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