



Embargo till 6 April 2011

SEEKING THE HIDDEN: YOUTH HOMELESSNESS MATTERS!

Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2011 is on 6 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 in August, it will be important to make sure that as many young people as possible who are experiencing homelessness on Census night are counted as such. Most homeless young people are staying in youth shelters or sleeping on friends' couches and moving from friend to friend.

“A large proportion of young people who are experiencing homelessness on Census night could be described as “hidden homeless”. Many young people enter homelessness but are initially hidden, moving between extended family and friends or other less than safe or appropriate placements. For this group, it is vital that there is sustained investment in early intervention programs to prevent them from becoming chronically homeless,” Homelessness Australia Chairperson, Narelle Clay said.

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 it 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,” Homelessness Australia CEO Nicole Lawder said.

The costs of youth homelessness, both socially and economically are significant. Youth Homelessness Matters Day provides us with a vital opportunity to increase community awareness and understanding of the significant problem of youth homelessness in Australia. By raising awareness Homelessness Australia believes we can ensure that thousands of young people who are currently excluded from the benefits and opportunities that young people enjoy are brought in from the margins.

“The costs of youth homelessness, both social and economic are enormous. It is vital that the whole community takes action to reduce its impact. Will today's young people still be homeless in 2020? We hope the answer is no,” Narelle Clay said.

Please contact:

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INFORMATION:

**Homelessness Australia's 2011 Campaign MY Address *Diversity in homelessness*
highlights diverse people, from diverse addresses for diverse reasons.**

Our organisations

Homelessness Australia is the national peak body representing more than 1500 providers of direct services for people experiencing homelessness and working to achieve our aim of creating a framework to end homelessness. For more information, please visit www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au

Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2011 Hide and Seek: The Hidden Nature of Youth Homelessness

"On any given night in Australia 105,000 people are homeless and nearly half of these are under the age of 25" <http://www.youthhomelessnessmatters.net/Default.aspx>

The numbers

- On any given night approximately 105,000 Australians have no safe and secure place to call home.
- 56% of those were male, 44% female.
- Of those, 44,000 (43%) are under 25 and 12,000 are children aged 0-12.
- Evidence indicates that homelessness is increasing among children and families and older Australians.
- Just under 205,000 people received support from specialist homelessness services in 2008/09. Of those, just over 79,000 were children.
- 1 in 39 Australian children aged 0-4 spent time in a homelessness service in 2008/09.
- As at January 2010, 233,171 Australians were on social housing waiting lists.
- The National Housing Supply Council estimates that the shortage of affordable housing dwellings in Australia has reached 493,000.

The causes

- Escaping domestic and family violence is the most often cited reason given by women for seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services in 2008/09.
- Family breakdown was the most often cited reason given by young people.
- Financial crisis and being unable to meet housing costs were the most often cited reasons given by men.
- People leaving institutions such as child protection, foster care, mental health settings and prisons are at a much higher risk of becoming homeless than other Australians.
- The shortage of affordable housing is a cause of homelessness as well as being a major factor preventing people from being re-housed quickly.

The solutions

- Provide funding for an additional 220,000 affordable houses by 2020.
- Extend the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness for a further five years from 2013 with a minimum of \$849 million.
- Increase non-pension income support payments by \$45 per week (which needs to be indexed).
- Increase funding for early intervention programs that have been proven to work.
- Support the homelessness sector workforce to ensure clients achieve their best outcomes.