



parents working, with some young people born into a fourth generation of poverty and unemployment.

The rising costs of housing, both in terms of the purchase price and private rental, means generations are facing the prospect of being locked out of home ownership^v. We need to increase the supply of affordable rental and home purchase dwellings to ensure young people can continue to access the housing market. Young people can face greater discrimination in the housing market than other groups due to a lack of rental references and fewer financial resources, making accessing private rental housing more difficult. Private rental liaison programs can be an important solution.

Funding for services focused on early intervention and prevention of youth homelessness needs to be increased. Proven programs such as Reconnect, specialist youth homelessness services and housing and support models such as youth FOYER models need increased funding. Specialist youth homelessness services have insufficient beds to meet demand, and are forced to turn away one in two people who contact them for help^{vi}.

References

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Homelessness and Young People



When thinking about young people who are experiencing homelessness we often hear the term “street kids” and “runaways” but this is not the reality. Most young people experiencing homelessness are hidden from view and aren’t homeless by choice.



Why do young people become homeless?

Some of the most common reasons for young people experiencing homelessness are housing crisis, domestic and family violence and relationship/family breakdownⁱ.

There are also a number of structural factors which contribute to youth homelessness including poverty, social inequality and youth unemployment. Young people generally have had less opportunity for further education and work experience, making it more difficult for them to gain employment and get access to rental housing and mortgage options.

Young people are less likely to have savings to draw on in case of an emergency. Three quarters of young people who present to specialist homelessness services for assistance have a govern-

ment pension or allowance as their main source of incomeⁱⁱ. Youth wages range from about one third to two thirds of the adult minimum wageⁱⁱⁱ and are often insufficient to keep young people out of poverty^{iv}. In simple terms, a lot of young people don’t have enough money to live on. Table 1 (overleaf) shows a breakdown of what a person living on youth allowance would spend per fortnight.

Why is it so important to combat youth homelessness?

Research^v has shown that those who first experience homelessness at a young age are more likely to experience persistent homelessness in adulthood. Homelessness has large costs to the Australian community in terms of health, justice and community services and this cost (of



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Creating a framework for ending homelessness





Table 1: Comparison of the mean cost of living with youth allowance rates (including maximum rate of CRA) \$526.90/fortnight (as current at April 2013)

Item	Median or minimum cost/fortnight	% of Youth Allowance	Difference (n) +/-
Rent*	\$332.00	63.0	+\$194.90
Food~	\$136.00	25.8	+\$58.90
Transport^	\$41.20	7.8	+\$17.70
Utilities/internet'	\$71.86	13.6	-\$54.16
Incidentals^A	\$25.00	4.7	-\$79.16
Mobile phone**	\$15.00	2.8	-\$94.16

*Based on 33% of median weekly rental / 3 b.r. property in Australia. Source: ABS Census Table Snapshot of Australia Aug 2011.

~Includes minimum average grocery spend for single person plus one take-away meal per fortnight.

'<http://www.rba.gov.au/publications/bulletin/2012/dec/2.html> (estimated price impact of the carbon price is included plus energy regulator approved price increase from January 2013).

^Based on public transport cost of 2 weekly concessional fare bus/rail/ferry tickets in Sydney (concession/student).

^A Incidentals include an occasional coffee or soft drink and expenses incurred during an 'average fortnight'.

**Minimum cost / month is typically \$30 as \$20 of pre-paid credit would not stretch this far for young people.

homelessness) increases the longer a person has been homeless^{vi}.

Young people who experience homelessness are more likely to disengage with education and employment and to be exposed to factors which are detrimental to their health such as drug use, inadequate nutrition, limited access to medical care and school, unsafe sexual encounters and violence^{vii}.

What young people are more at risk of homelessness?

■ Young women

Young women aged 15-24 have the highest rate of assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services. Domestic and family violence and sexual assault are the main reasons for needing help, with one in 41 young women needing help in 2014-15^{viii}.

■ Youth living in poverty

Young people who grow up in poverty are more likely to experience homelessness. ABS data shows that one in six Australians aged 15-24 are living in poverty. Intergenerational unemployment and the high rate of youth unemployment significantly affects young people.

■ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth

Overall, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are much more likely to experience homelessness than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Their rate of homelessness is 487 per 10,000 compared to 49 per 10,000 in the Australian population, meaning young Aboriginal people have a much higher likelihood of experiencing homelessness in their lifetime.



■ Youth with mental illness

Mental illness among young people experiencing homelessness is higher than in the broader population of young people in Australia^{ix}.

Up to 75% of people with mental illness first exhibit symptoms before the age of 25^x. People experiencing homelessness are much more likely to experience anxiety and depression and the longer someone experiences homelessness, the more likely they will develop severe and persistent states of mental illness.

■ Youth from non-English speaking backgrounds

Young people from refugee backgrounds are at least six times more likely to become homeless^{xi}. They face a number of disadvantages including:

- Not knowing the homelessness system
- Lack of social networks
- Language barriers
- Discrimination
- Experiences of torture, trauma and separation.

■ Youth in rural and remote locations

Living in rural and remote locations can be restrictive. There are often limited options for education and employment, as well as available transport and access to services. This can force young people to either leave and "make their own way" or stay and have limited earnings. Young people in regional, rural and remote locations are more likely to require a vehicle to get around and access education,

employment and training opportunities.

Extreme weather events place more pressure than ever on rural and remote families, which can result in lower living standards, restricted opportunities and poorer health outcomes.

■ Youth in state care

Youth who are in foster care and juvenile justice settings are at increased risk of becoming homeless than other young people^{xii}. According to the *Transitioning from Care* report card, as many as forty percent of young people discharged from statutory care experience homelessness within the first 12 months of exiting^{xiii}.

How can we address youth homelessness?

It is important to remember that young people experiencing homelessness have the same needs, hopes and aspirations as other young people. It is important that they have access to affordable, safe and secure housing located close to community centres, transport, employment, education and training opportunities.

Youth have a higher unemployment rate than any other age group, and between 2006 and 2011 the rate of youth unemployment nearly doubled^{xiv}. While more young people are staying in school longer, keeping those at risk of homelessness in the education system can increase their chances of gaining suitable employment. In addition, the cycle of intergenerational unemployment and poverty must be broken. Some young people grow up without ever seeing their

