

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Funding boost for regional young people welcomed, but targeted housing and homelessness initiatives urgently needed for young people

The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) welcomes the 2025-26 WA State Budget's investments in early intervention and prevention initiatives for young people, particularly community-led and place-based programs in regional and rural WA. However, YACWA are disappointed in the lack of targeted initiatives to address youth homelessness.

"With at least 3500 young people experiencing homelessness in WA every day, this is a significant human rights issue, representing a sustained lack of investment in crisis, transitional and social housing for some of our State's most vulnerable people," said Interim CEO Kylie Wallace. "Without targeted and sustained investment into youth-focused housing and homelessness solutions, we will continue to see the same cycles of disadvantage."

Whilst YACWA commends the \$4.8 million investment to the Perth Passages Youth Engagement Hub, which they have been advocating for, they say the Budget falls short in addressing the critical challenges young people face in relation to housing and homelessness. Most adults experiencing homelessness were first homeless as young people – highlighting the need for early intervention.

"Young people in WA need supported pathways out of homelessness," said Ms. Wallace. "We know that over 700 young people present alone to specialist homelessness services every single day in WA. But we also know that the Youth Foyer model works. Combining housing with education and employment support, over 80% of young people transition successfully from Foyer into sustained safe and stable housing. We urge the State Government to play its role in expanding this evidence-based model across WA to support young people to build independent, stable futures." The Budget includes more than \$13 million of new investment into community-based youth initiatives across regional WA, such as the establishment of the Kununurra Night Space and the Pilbara Safe Spaces.

"We are pleased with the direction of this funding that keep young people safe, engaged, and connected to their communities," said Ms. Wallace. "Programs like the Pilbara Safe Spaces and the Kununurra Night Space recognise that young people thrive when they are supported."

\$20.3 million has been committed to implementing a Therapeutic Model of Care for young people detained in Banksia Hill and \$65 million towards regional mental health services for young people as a part of the Infants, Children and Adolescents Taskforce - signalling an important shift in the Government's approach towards

diversionary and rehabilitative services for young people. However, there is a missed opportunity to fully commit to a system that prioritises support and rehabilitation over punitive responses within the justice system.

“YACWA believes that we need to shift our focus from locking up young people to investing in the supports that prevent their involvement in the justice system,” Ms. Wallace said. “A comprehensive reform of our youth justice system is essential - a genuine commitment that addresses the root causes of offending and centres young people’s wellbeing. These pathways generate long-term social and economic benefits for individual young people and the community as a whole.”

YACWA welcomes the Government’s investment in prevention and early intervention but urges comprehensive action on the broader social factors affecting young people’s lives.

YACWA remains committed to working with the Cook Government to ensure that all young people – particularly our most vulnerable – have access to the support, safety, and opportunities they need to thrive.

YACWA’s detailed state budget analysis is available at yacwa.org.au.

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