



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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*For immediate release*

### **Funding boost for youth wellbeing initiatives commended, but falls short in delivering comprehensive and targeted supports**

The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) welcomes the investment in the 2026-27 WA State Budget for young people's wellbeing; especially mental health supports.

"We welcome the announced investment in youth mental health through funding of emergency department alternatives for young people experiencing a mental health crisis. These alternative models will be better suited to meeting young people's needs, ensuring they are supported appropriately when they need it most" said YACWA CEO Kylie Wallace. YACWA are also pleased to hear the government investing in a new mental health hub for Bunbury, providing important and specialised care and support for young people in the region.

"We are also pleased by the Government's investment in initiatives for young people engaging and at risk of engaging with the youth justice system. The expansion of Target 120, with a focus on young people from a CALD background, resourcing trauma-informed and culturally responsive justice programs, and a small uplift in funding across the At Risk Youth Services portfolio is part of a step towards providing targeted support to young people and communities." said YACWA CEO Kylie Wallace.

Additionally, YACWA celebrates the new service agreement with the Youth Pride Network. Youth Pride Network Manager, Chloe Clements, emphasised the importance of this funding.

"The investment will enable us to continue working with LGBTQIA+ young people over the next three years," said Ms Clements. "This funding means we can continue to centre and amplify LGBTQIA+ young people's voices in advocacy and decision making, ensuring their lived experiences directly shape the policies, services and systems that impact their lives."

Whilst YACWA has advocated for increased investment into family and intimate partner violence (FIPV) support, and commend the significant investment into FDV specific services, we note that this budget is a missed opportunity to expand youth-specific and youth-led FIPV supports beyond child protection. There is also a missed



opportunity for the Budget to fund preventative programs which target young people at risk of using violence.

“We know that FIPV is a growing issue for young people and that our State is not yet equipped to address this,” said Ms. Wallace. “Unfortunately, the Budget falls short in addressing the underlying drivers of FIPV for young people, with responses relying too heavily on reacting when issues arise. We need to invest in a spectrum of initiatives, from primary prevention to early intervention and postvention, that centres young people.”

As part of the Ending Child and Youth Homelessness Coalition, YACWA has been advocating for a suite of funding to support the hundreds of young people experiencing homelessness every day in WA. Although we welcome the \$20.3 million funding for two services, it doesn’t go far enough to address the crisis and is far short of our request from the Government.

“The budget allocation does not appear to adequately address the scale of the homelessness crisis that young people are experiencing in WA. We urgently need comprehensive investment in a variety of youth-specific homelessness and housing supports, so that all children and young people have a safe place to call home.” YACWA alongside the Coalition will continue to work with the government to improve our homelessness service system for young people.

Finally, we acknowledge the government’s commitment to delivering Home Stretch, but note the de-funding of leaving care services will have a critical impact for many young people who do not fit the Home Stretch criteria.

“Young people leaving out-of-home care in WA need access to transitional services that are designed to support their stability at a critical stage in their life, providing crucial support to enable their independence,” said Ms. Wallace. “We know that consistent, trusted relationships with carers and support workers increases young people’s sense of connection and belonging, mitigating the risks of homelessness and poor mental health after leaving out-of-home care. The Government needs to expand supports for young people leaving care to prevent further crisis, re-traumatisation, and wellbeing detriments.”

YACWA remains committed to working with the Cook Government to ensure all young people are supported and safe in WA.

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