Pre Budget Submission 2027-28

ENDING UNACCOMPANIED CHILD AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

SUPPORTERS

This submission is supported and endorsed by the youth homelessness sector. We acknowledge the leadership of Indigo Junction, Mission Australia and Vinnies WA who instigated, led and collaborated on the data collection, research, consultation and recommendations in this report. We also acknowledge the contribution of young people with lived and living experience to this work.

FOREWORD

Message from the Sector

Western Australia cannot end unaccompanied child and youth homelessness by expanding crisis responses alone. Although this is an important part of the solution, preventing and responding to child and youth homelessness needs a long-term, rights-based, youth-centered and place-based reform partnership that makes homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. The 2027-28 Budget can be the first practical investment in that pathway: co-develop the Strategy; establish two high-fidelity COSS communities to prevent homelessness; strengthen youth-appropriate crisis and supported housing pathways, including Housing First for Youth; and fund the youth data and End Child and Youth Homelessness Coalition, both required for coordinated action, learning and accountability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and acknowledge their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities in which we live, work and play. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present. We acknowledge that homelessness disproportionately impacts First Nations people as a direct result of colonisation, and are committed to support First Nations-led solutions to homelessness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

The work of the End Child and Youth Homelessness Coalition has been informed by the voices, experiences and specialist knowledge of young people with lived and living experience of homelessness.

Young people have generously shared their stories, insights and ideas in the hope of contributing to better outcomes for other children and young people. Their knowledge comes from navigating systems, services and circumstances that no child or young person should have to experience, and from understanding firsthand what can help, what can cause harm, and what needs to change.

The End Child and Youth Homelessness Coalition acknowledges and values their expertise. Their voices have helped shape our understanding of the challenges facing young people experiencing homelessness and the opportunities to create safer, more responsive and effective support.

This Pre Budget Submission is a part of the Coalition's commitment to ensuring that the contribution of lived experience is not only heard, but translated into meaningful action that improves the lives and futures of children and young people experiencing homelessness.

SUMMARY OF BUDGET COMMITMENTS SOUGHT

PRIORITY	DESCRIPTION & COMMITMENT SOUGHT	ALIGNMENT TO RELEVANT GOVT STRATEGY/ACTION PLANS/COMMITMENTS	INVESTMENT REQUIRED*
Priority 1 **UNACCOMPANIED CHILD AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY FOR WA**	▪ The Office of Homelessness develop an Unaccompanied Child and Youth Homelessness Strategy in collaboration with lived experience and the sector.	**All Paths Lead to a Home Strategy and Action Plan 2026 – 2030** **At Risk Youth Strategy** **Department of Communities Strategic Plan** **WA Housing Strategy 2020- 2030**	**$350 000** 1.4 fte plus costs for lived experience and sector consultation, travel, events and administration
Priority 2 **STRENGTHEN PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION INITIATIVES FOR CHILD AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS**	▪ A 3-year pilot implementation of the evidence-based COSS Model in 2 priority WA communities as a place-based collective impact approach to preventing child and youth homelessness.	**Department of Communities Strategic Plan** **At Risk Youth Strategy** **All Paths Lead to a Home Strategy and Action Plan 2026 - 2030**	**$2 million/year** $3 million required for 3-year pilot per site ($1 million per site per year for one site)
Priority 3 **INVEST IN A DIVERSE RANGE OF ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING MODELS FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.**	▪ Community-based assertive outreach support ▪ Respite night services ▪ Low-threshold 24/7 supported accommodation, - well-resourced Housing First for Youth models ▪ Higher independent living models - in-reach supported accommodation and supportive housing models.	**WA Housing Strategy 2020- 2030** **All Paths Lead to a Home Strategy and Action Plan 2026 - 2030** **Plan for Public Education in Western Australia**	**HF4Y Service Model Design** **$121,500** 3 Youth Foyers – Albany + Bayswater $44.5M Capital, $6.71M Operating/year, Broome $150k Business Case and Feasibility Study
Priority 4 **ESTABLISH A YOUTH-SPECIFIC ADVANCE TO ZERO PROJECT**	▪ Fund an ongoing Project Team to coordinate the Youth Advance to Zero Project	**All Paths Lead to a Home Strategy and Action Plan 2026 - 2030**	**$300,000 / year** Indicative costs for one year include 1.8 FTE plus operating costs
Priority 5 **INVEST IN THE VALUE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE**	▪ Fund Sector Coordination to provide essential backbone support for the work of the Ending Child and Youth Homelessness Coalition for 3 years.	**All Paths Lead to a Home Strategy and Action Plan 2026 - 2030**	**$150 000/ year** Indicative costs for one year include 1 fte plus operating costs

*excl. GST and per annum. Indicative costs provided where available

THE ENDING CHILD AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS COALITION WA

The Ending Child and Youth Homelessness (ECYH) Coalition brings together young people with lived experience, community organisations, specialist services, researchers and system partners around a shared commitment to end unaccompanied child and youth homelessness in Western Australia.

Collective action works because no single organisation, service or government agency can solve homelessness alone: the Coalition combines lived experience, evidence, data and the collective capability to identify where change is needed and coordinate action to enable that change.

Its approach is to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring by preventing young people from entering homelessness wherever possible, rapidly identifying and responding when they do, and providing the housing and support needed for a safe and sustained exit—using place-based approaches that integrate early intervention, Housing First for Youth and real-time data to progressively build a system capable of ending, rather than simply managing, child and youth homelessness across WA.

HOMELESSNESS AS RARE, BRIEF AND NON-RECURRING

Informed by Advance to Zero methodology and the work of the WA Alliance to End Homelessness, the other peaks and sector representatives from the Ending Child and Youth Homelessness (ECYH) Coalition support a homelessness prevention and response investment framework which results in experiences of homelessness being rare, brief and non-recurring. The below table reflects how the five Priorities outlined in this Pre Budget Submission work toward achieving these outcomes, with the inclusion of enablers for ending child and youth homelessness.

OUTCOME	SYSTEM TASK	PBS RESPONSE
RARE	Prevent inflow	Two three-year COSS Model communities: universal school-based identification linked to proactive community youth and family support.
BRIEF	Respond quickly	Safe family reconnection where recoverable; otherwise, rapid access to age-appropriate crisis support and supported youth accommodation.
NON-RECURRING	Sustain exits	Housing First for Youth, Youth Foyers and other developmentally appropriate housing and support that prevents a return to homelessness.
ENABLED	Coordinate and learn	A jointly governed strategy; lived-experience voice; Youth Advance to Zero, By Name List (BNL) and Youth AHVTT capability; and ECYH Coalition coordination and support.

SOLUTIONS

Five priorities are put forward for adoption in the 2027-28 State Budget based on the following evidence provided.

Priority 1: Strategy

WA STRATEGY FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILD AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS WITH A FOCUS ON INCLUDING HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

To have a safe place to sleep is a human right. Housing is fundamental to safety, health, education and wellbeing. Children and young people are not responsible for their circumstances or for keeping themselves safe.

Unaccompanied children and young people experiencing homelessness are among WA's most vulnerable community members. Emerging data indicates that this is a growing issue requiring a coordinated, statewide and planned response across metropolitan and regional WA.

The ECYH Coalition proposes that the Office of Homelessness lead the development of a WA Strategy for Unaccompanied Child and Youth Homelessness, in partnership with young people with lived experience, Aboriginal communities and the community services sector.

The Strategy should sit alongside All Paths Lead to a Home and its 2026–2030 Action Plan, providing a specific focus on children and young people and supporting delivery of the State's broader homelessness priorities. There is an opportunity for the State Government to work in genuine partnership with the youth homelessness and community services sector to translate these commitments into practical, coordinated responses. The sector brings significant expertise, local knowledge and established relationships with children, young people, families and communities.

STRENGTHENING THE CURRENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

While **All Paths Lead to a Home** provides an important statewide framework, there is an opportunity to strengthen the focus on children and young people experiencing homelessness. A dedicated Strategy should address the gaps in the current homelessness response by:

- **Setting an explicit ambition to end child and youth homelessness,** rather than focusing primarily on managing homelessness and its impacts.
- **Prioritising prevention,** with earlier intervention to address family breakdown, family and domestic violence, housing instability and other pathways into homelessness.
- **Establishing long-term, measurable targets,** informed by reliable evidence of need and disaggregated data on children and young people.
- **Developing appropriate accommodation models across the service continuum,** from prevention and early intervention through to crisis accommodation, transitional and longer-term housing, including models designed specifically for young people.
- **Improving youth-specific funding and data collection,** enabling government and the sector to understand the scale and nature of child and youth homelessness and invest according to identified need.
- **Strengthening coordinated service provision,** ensuring children and young people can access a connected response across housing, child protection, health, education, family support, justice and community services.

The Strategy should also align with priorities within the WA Youth Action Plan 2024–2027, At Risk Youth Strategy 2022–2027, Path to Safety 2020–2030 and Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022–2032, bringing these existing commitments together around the specific needs of children and young people experiencing homelessness.

A dedicated Strategy would provide a clear framework for prevention, early intervention, immediate safety, crisis accommodation, stable housing and ongoing support, ensuring responses are age-appropriate, culturally safe and focused on the wellbeing and safety of children and young people.

This is an opportunity to take decisive action on child and youth homelessness. The State Government can lead a coordinated response that prevents children and young people from becoming homeless, provides immediate access to safe crisis accommodation when homelessness occurs, and creates clear pathways into stable, age-appropriate housing with ongoing support. Acting now would strengthen accountability across housing, child protection, health, education and community services, close critical gaps in the current system, and deliver safer, more stable futures for children and young people across metropolitan and regional WA.

The Coalition is seeking a commitment from the State Government to develop and implement a WA Strategy for Unaccompanied Child and Youth Homelessness, led by the Office of Homelessness and developed in partnership with lived experience and the community services sector, with housing as a human right at its centre.

HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

Members of the ECYH Coalition recognise that housing is a human right and strongly support legislating the right to housing through a WA Human Rights Act or other legislative instruments. In the absence of legislative protection, a WA Strategy for Unaccompanied Child and Youth Homelessness must be grounded in the recognition that housing is a human right. At a minimum, this means acknowledging that:

- Children and young people are empowered rights holders rather than passive recipients of welfare or charity. Access to housing and safety should not depend on a young person's ability to navigate complex systems, meet program eligibility requirements or find an available service.
- Government has the ultimate responsibility for housing children and young people and must do everything in their power to make sure this right is protected.
- Homelessness is evidence of a systemic failure to protect the right to housing.
- Children and young people must not be discriminated against in the realisation of their right to housing; and all children and young people are equally entitled to adequate housing regardless of their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, location, religion, race or any other factor.
- Children and young people are entitled to adequate housing, not just shelter. This means, at minimum, that housing must be secure, affordable, accessible, habitable, well-located, culturally adequate and have access to services, materials, facilities and infrastructure.

EVIDENCE

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

There is evidence internationally that a strategic approach underpinned by human rights has shown success in significantly reducing the prevalence of child and youth homelessness[1] England is an example of this approach. On a single day in 2025, England recorded zero (0) under 18-year-olds rough sleeping. As applicable Australian figures are not available for the same year, the comparison for 2021 reveals that again there were zero (0) young people recorded sleeping rough in England and according to Australian census data there were 347[2] State based figures further demonstrate this, with WA's population significantly lower than England's and still recording much higher rates. On the same day, WA data indicates that 98 young people, under the age of 18, were rough sleeping.[3]

In England, the legislative structure determines that there is a statutory duty driven by the Homelessness Reduction Act where local authorities are legally required to prevent homelessness and house children and young people, who are legally classified as a priority need group. This ensures that all children and young people under the age of 18 are provided with a safe place to sleep. The impact of this is reflected in the figures above. Recent changes also require local councils to inform schools, GP practices and health services when a child is placed in temporary accommodation to support on-going service provision and avoid disrupted schooling and health service access.[4]

In Western Australia, there are no legal rights to housing for children and young people and no current strategic approach to specifically meet their unique and developmental needs. A Strategy underpinned by the recognition that children and young people have a right to adequate housing will provide this.

AUSTRALIAN AND PERTH METROPOLITAN CONTEXT

Child and Youth Homelessness Data Snapshot

Across a 6-month period, January to June 2026, 19 youth accommodation service providers recorded 2653 times they could not assist a young person or child requesting crisis accommodation, due to a lack of bed availability. (Figure 1).

JAN 2026 - JUNE 2026	
Total Unassisted Requests (accommodation)	2653
Average Unassisted	
Month	442
Week	103
Day	15

Figure 1: 19 Accommodation services in the Perth/Metro (including Rockingham and Joondalup) provided data to the coalition on the unassisted requests for youth accommodation.

On the 20th of August 2026:

- **393 unaccompanied children and young people** were listed as homeless on the By Name List in Perth Metro and Rockingham and on this date, 29% of them were left unsheltered.
- Perth metropolitan youth accommodation service providers counted **108 children and young people rough sleeping and seeking crisis accommodation** with 0 beds available. Including Perth metropolitan and Rockingham regions, there were 114 children and young people who were rough sleeping and seeking crisis accommodation. (Fig. 2)
- Comparatively, the same services collected the same data in 2024 across a two-month period, and on average, **69 children and young people were rough sleeping and seeking crisis accommodation** with an average of 1.2 beds available.

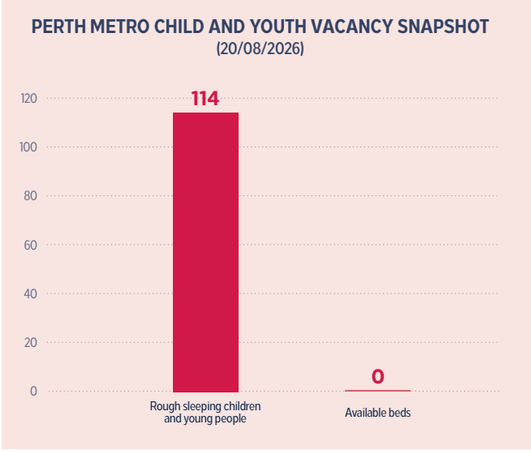


Figure 2

Of the 38 young people and children who have completed the Australian Homelessness and Vulnerability Triage tool (AHVTT):

- 1 in 7 did not have access to food and water, toilet, shower, or laundry or replacement clothes when they needed them,
- 23% had no one they can rely on or who cares about them,
- 26% did not feel safe where they slept,
- 83% experienced violence in the last year,
- 82% experienced violence at home between family members,
- 69% thought about or tried hurting themselves or others,
- 28% were surrounded by people that made them do things they did not want to do,
- 23% were denied medical help,
- 1 in 5 attended the emergency department 5 or more times in the last year,
- 5% were currently or might be pregnant.

Between 2012–13 to 2022–23, approximately 520 children who had received SHS support at any point in their life passed away.[5] Over the past 11 years, 177 children under 14 years old have died while experiencing homelessness in Australia.[6] On average, one young person experiencing homelessness dies every five days.[7,8]

The call for a dedicated child and youth housing and homelessness Strategy is not new. Connolly, Moore and Robinson (2022) highlighted the importance of governments committing to the highest standards for our children and young people, identifying them as a priority cohort, ensuring responses are age-appropriate, culturally safe and with input from children and young people with lived experience. The ECYH Coalition echoes this and acknowledges the varied metro, regional, and remote contexts for the development of a relevant Strategy to prevent and respond to homelessness for children and young people across the state.

HOW WILL THIS HELP THE GOVERNMENT DELIVER ON ITS COMMITMENTS?

The ECYH Coalition acknowledges the government's recent investment in youth-specific accommodation and support. In addition to aligning with the WA Youth Action Plan 2024–2027, At Risk Youth Strategy 2022–2027, Path to Safety 2020–2030 and Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022–2032, the government's Goals and Outcomes outlined in the All Paths Lead to a Home Strategy and the Department of Communities' Strategic Plan can be achieved through further investment as outlined in the Priority Areas of this document. Reducing homelessness through prevention, early intervention and the provision of appropriate housing models ensures children and young people are safe and supported, builds community safety and resilience and achieves the government's homelessness reduction targets.

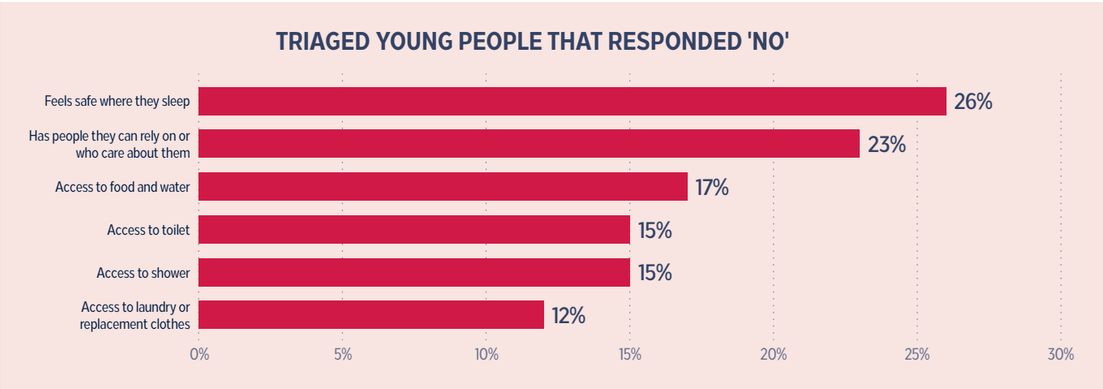


Figure 3: Triaged young people are those that completed the AHVTT (n = 38) in the Perth/Metro (Perth Zero Project and Rockingham Zero Project). The average age was 20 years old. The average length of homelessness was 7 months at the time of survey.

Priority 2: Prevention

STRENGTHEN PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION INITIATIVES FOR CHILD AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Western Australia's homelessness service system is currently geared toward crisis responses, primarily intervening only after homelessness has occurred. However, this system is already underfunded and overstretched. To truly address the root causes of homelessness and reduce long-term demand on crisis services, **new, targeted funding is urgently needed** to support programs, initiatives, and sector reforms that aim to **prevent homelessness before it begins.**

The ECYH Coalition is proposing to address the need to strengthen prevention and early interventions for child and youth homelessness by the Government investing in a pilot of the successful and evidence-based Community of Schools and Services (COSS) Model – **to implement screening surveys and immediate support in schools for WA students who may be at-risk of experiencing homelessness.** This will have a significant impact in diverting children and young people from the accumulative, traumatic experience of homelessness.

EVIDENCE

Evidence shows that **early intervention works**, but the window of opportunity is narrow. If a young person does not have the structural foundations for self-sufficiency by age 25, their chances of successfully transitioning to independent adult life decrease significantly.[9] Meanwhile, **late intervention is far more costly**. In 2024, Australians spent $22.3 billion on late-stage responses in child protection, youth justice, health and homelessness crises just on services until the age of 24 but for some there is a large lifetime cost representing avoidable spending that strains public systems, reduces productivity, and harms wellbeing.[10] A 2016 study on *The Costs of Youth Homelessness in Australia* found that youth homelessness costs **$17,868 per person per year** in health and justice services, not including the costs of homelessness accommodation and support.[11]

Western Australia's spending reflects the national pattern: most funding goes to **reactive systems** like child protection and justice, while **very little is invested in prevention**. This approach is both a **social and economic failure**, condemning many young people to cycles of repeated crises and costing the state and the WA community more and more without investment in prevention.

Based on this evidence, the ECYH Coalition considers that early screening in schools and appropriate community supports using the COSS Model will enable proactive support to be delivered to vulnerable children and young people and their families as a proven way achieving significant community-level outcomes.

HOW WILL THIS HELP THE GOVERNMENT DELIVER ON ITS COMMITMENTS?

Priority 2 delivers on the following government commitments:

- The *At Risk Youth Strategy 2022–2027* aims to strengthen coordinated responses for young people aged 10-24 who are experiencing significant vulnerability. Priority Outcome 2 of the Strategy states that at risk young people can access early, timely, and targeted interventions to address their priority needs and transition positively into adulthood.
- All Paths Lead to a Home, WA's 10 Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030 commits to the outcome of preventing homelessness through young people at risk being identified early and connected to appropriate supports.
- Department of Communities' Strategic Plan 2026 – 2030's Outcomes including children and young people are safe and supported and Communities are resilient.

EVIDENCE: COSS MODEL CASE STUDY

This innovative Australian early intervention program identifies children and young people at risk of homelessness through population screening surveys in schools to identify vulnerable children and young people so that proactive youth and family support can be delivered by a collective of agencies and schools.

The COSS Model is the most rigorously evaluated youth homelessness prevention approach in Australia. Independent and peer-reviewed evaluations and evidence from funded Australian COSS Model communities in Albury, NSW, and Geelong, VIC, demonstrate:[12,13,14]

- 40% reduction in adolescents aged 12–18 entering the Geelong Specialist Homelessness Service system—from a historical average of approximately 230 a year to about 130
- 20% reduction in early school leaving across the three original participating schools
- 95–97% of identified and supported young people do not enter the homelessness service system in the two years following their identification of risk
- Improved school attendance and engagement
- Reduced psychological distress
- The importance of formalised community-level inter-agency coordination
- Cost effective data based on achieved outcomes

Also, peer-reviewed evidence has demonstrated the COSS Model's success at reducing students' psychological distress.[15]

These are unprecedented results in youth homelessness prevention and identify the COSS Model as one of the most effective youth homelessness prevention and early intervention approaches yet developed anywhere.

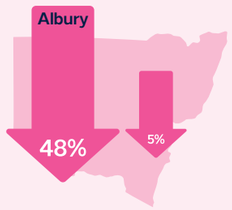
This Australian innovation, the COSS Model of prevention and early intervention has received international recognition in the prevention of youth homelessness space in the UK, several European countries, and Canada.

The Coalition proposes two disadvantaged community locations that have a readiness to introduce the model in metropolitan Perth. WA Government investment in the implementation of COSS Model in 2 community sites over 3 years will serve as a demonstration of a cost-effective prevention strategy for reducing child and youth homelessness community by community.

THE ACHIEVABLE OUTCOMES FROM THE ALBURY PROJECT PILOT

An average **40%** decrease of risk within the first year of service delivery

Of the identified 614 at-risk students supported, only about **5.6%** ever entered the SHS crisis system within 2 years of identification



A decrease of **48%** in youth homelessness in Albury compared to 5% for the rest of NSW over the same 4 years

Priority 3: Investment in accommodation models

INVEST IN A DIVERSE RANGE OF ACCOMMODATION, HOUSING AND SUPPORT MODELS FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

With youth homelessness rising significantly in Western Australia, there is an urgent need for targeted housing approaches that reflect the unique developmental needs and lived experience of young people. The response to unaccompanied child and youth homelessness needs to be provided as a continuum of support, with service models that reflect the different needs, stages and support required for children and young people to move toward independence and into adulthood. While the State Government has been engaged in consultation for homelessness service commissioning, the Coalition is **calling for appropriate and on-going investment** in 1) services **specifically designed** for unaccompanied child and youth homelessness, including relational practice approaches 2) **adequate supply** to meet the demand and 3) a **diverse range** of options for accommodation, housing and support.

Currently in Western Australia, there are identified gaps in responses to homelessness for this cohort, with the service system being fragmented, limited by inadequate funding, non-contemporary service contracts and missing appropriate levels of accommodation availability. A continuum of support, grounded in relational practice approaches is required to meet the needs of unaccompanied children and young people, ranging from community-based assertive outreach support, respite night services, low-threshold 24/7 supported accommodation and higher independent living options such as in-reach supported accommodation and supportive housing models.

COMMUNITY-BASED ASSERTIVE OUTREACH

To ensure that young people always have support and a safe place to go, funding is needed to establish and expand **Place-Based Youth Service Hubs, Night Safe Spaces, Assertive Outreach** and Respite Night Accommodation Services across Western Australia. This includes establishing new supports in high-need areas and increasing the scope of existing services. Targeted at child and youth rough-sleepers, it is fundamental to provide immediate support, a safe place and access to accommodation with on-site support. Apart from Northbridge/Perth, assertive outreach models are not funded by government to focus primarily on children and young people. Access to Place-based Youth Service Hubs and Night Safe Spaces is only limited to Perth city, with the need growing in other metropolitan and regional areas. Likewise, there is only one Respite Night Accommodation Service (Building Resilience Independence Guidance & Housing Transition – BRIGHT) for young people in care, no other service exists for those young people aged under 18 seeking immediate accommodation.

LOW THRESHOLD 24/7 SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION AND RESPITE NIGHT SERVICES

There is an urgent need to increase the capability and availability of crisis accommodation. This includes adequate funding of **low threshold 24/7 accommodation** for children and young people of all ages. The highest priority is young people aged 21-25, when it is not appropriate to house them together with older adults.

IN-REACH SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

There is a clear need to initiate a whole of government approach to providing both capital and operational funding for higher independent living housing models, such as Youth Foyers for young people moving out of crisis services and particularly in communities where there is strong momentum and readiness to develop the effective prevention of child and youth homelessness with community support. With over 30 years of global success, the Youth Foyer model is backed by strong evidence and has demonstrated a substantial return on investment.

Two **Youth Foyers** are investment ready now - Albany and Bayswater have land secured, concept plans developed and strong local government and community support. Broome has been identified as the priority location for an Aboriginal-led Youth Foyer, with strong support from local community, requiring community co-design to revise the business case to progress. For Albany and Bayswater, the Capital costs would be $44.5M and Operating costs per annum, $6.71M. This would result in additional 161 beds for Western Australia. For Broome, $150K investment would deliver a business case and feasibility study for an Aboriginal-led Youth Foyer.

The implementation of well-resourced **Housing First for Youth (HF4Y)** models are essential to ensure young people have immediate access to long-term supportive housing. HF4Y builds on the core principles of the broader Housing First model – such as a right to housing with no preconditions, youth choice, youth voice, and self-determination, positive youth development and wellness orientation, individualised and client-driven support as well as social inclusion and community integration. In addition to the funding commitment for Yaakiny at Indigo Junction, continued resourcing to expand high-fidelity HF4Y models is needed in West Australia to complement existing youth homelessness services.

The Coalition proposes an investment for a youth-led co-design process, incorporating evaluation findings from the establishment of Yaakiny, to shape the HF4Y framework, and the enabling systemic conditions required for its success. The cost of this process is estimated at $121,500 excluding GST ($133,500 including GST). The outcome would be a fully costed HF4Y model ready for government support and implementation.

EVIDENCE

Unaccompanied children and young people have unique needs, and different approaches are required to meet those needs. AHURI's (2026) article argues that the supported accommodation system is not designed for young people, that it is an under-recognised group, with different drivers and solutions, that care conditionality leads to exclusion and as a result children and young people experiencing homelessness are not receiving the support they need. It is essential that the stability, security and housing available to their mainstream peers is also available to children and young people experiencing homelessness.

In February 2026, 26 Youth Accommodation services were surveyed, and no respondents described their services as low threshold 24/7 supported accommodation. Further to this, there were no Respite Night Services and no Supportive Housing models for unaccompanied children and young people experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, evidence shows, for the investment in a range of responses, including higher independent living models, the government will save $6 for every $1 invested in Youth Foyers – driven by reduced public service cost.[16]

The private rental market continues to be out of reach for the majority of young people. According to Anglicare WA's 2026 report, there were **no available rental properties** affordable for a young person receiving Youth Allowance. Even for a single person in a shared house there were no properties which were affordable and this was the case across the state. The median rent in WA was $747 per week and even a room in a shared house was still $280 per week. With the maximum Youth Allowance rate per week for singles under 18 living away from home being $338.60[17] this is completely unattainable.[18]

Further, Mission Australia's annual Youth Survey sub-report of WA responses from more than 1500 young people highlighted a startling number of unaccompanied young people experiencing homelessness (54 individuals, representing 53% of those experiencing homelessness, meaning more young people are experiencing homelessness on their own rather than with family). Not surprisingly, 45% said that a contributing reason for homelessness was "couldn't find or keep somewhere to live that we could afford" (Mission Australia, 2025).

HOW WILL THIS HELP THE GOVERNMENT DELIVER ON ITS COMMITMENTS?

Priority 3 delivers on the following government's commitments:

- WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030 – connecting people to safe, stable and sustainable homes, while improving housing choices and outcomes for households and communities. Connecting WA households to a home and improving outcomes through a more integrated approach to housing and service assistance. Priority 3 will support young people to access private rental homes and social housing.
- All Paths Lead to a Home, WA's 10 Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030 which commits to outcome 2: Providing safe, secure and stable homes. Specifically, diverse and appropriate housing options are available and accessible, access to safe and permanent housing is the first priority for people experiencing homelessness and individualised support services are available to help people maintain long term housing and achieve their goals.
- For the Department of Education to deliver the Plan for Public Education in Western Australia, the COSS Model builds on the actions for purposeful partnership with families, communities and government, and to strengthen student wellbeing at school and implement system-level initiative that support school leaders and staff to embed whole-school approaches to student wellbeing.

Priority 4

ESTABLISH A YOUTH-SPECIFIC ADVANCE TO ZERO PROJECT

Currently, coordination across Western Australia's youth homelessness system is **fragmented**. While many providers deliver high-quality programs, the absence of dedicated, **youth-specific coordination** roles leads to duplication of effort and persistent gaps in service delivery. Without a centralised structure to align services and data, opportunities for collaboration are missed and young people are falling through the cracks. The Coalition aspires to make unaccompanied child and youth homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring, while improving safety, belonging, wellbeing, education, agency and connection.

WA has successfully demonstrated the value of By-Name Lists for adult homelessness populations, enabling real-time data on who is homeless, their needs, and whether the system is housing people faster than they enter it. However, **youth-specific data is currently underrepresented.**

The Cost of Late Intervention report outlines recommendations, including wrap-around support and investing in youth data. Unaccompanied children and young people face different drivers of homelessness (e.g., family breakdown, out-of-home care transitions, school disengagement), and without tailored data, system responses risk being misaligned.

The Coalition is seeking funding for a Youth Zero Project, supported with operational (backbone) resources, that will work with the WA Advance to Zero/By Name List project and:

1. build the Youth sector capacity to collect and use youth-specific, consent-based data, strengthening the participation in the By-Name List (BNL) and support coordinated service-system improvement;
2. implement and embed the existing Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool (Youth AHVTT) in WA, including training, data quality, culturally safe refinement and BNL integration;
3. effectively and sustainably coordinate and support sector initiatives such as the Youth Rough Sleeper Coordination Group.

EVIDENCE

No single dataset provides a reliable statewide count of unaccompanied child and youth homelessness. Service data shows those who reach services and the By Name List data has the capacity to show people known, consenting and active in participating in AtoZ communities; meaning the true figures of homelessness remain hidden. Enabling the capacity of the youth sector to collect centrally maintained data, supports a comprehensive understanding of the problem, identify risks, coordinate a housing response, test whether the system is improving, and transfer learning between communities.

Funding the Youth Advance to Zero will enable the government to have clear evidence of the most effective way to end rough sleeping in the Perth Metro for unaccompanied homeless children and young people. Specifically, a Youth Advance to Zero, if well established, provides the following essential data:

1. Where, what type, for who and how many *current* youth accommodation beds exist across Perth metro; and
2. Where, what type, for who and how many *new* youth accommodation services are needed to end **Youth Rough Sleeping in the Perth Metro.**

As detailed above, on the 20th of August 2026, the ECYH Coalition gained records of available beds which revealed **zero available beds** for young people against **114 children and young people experiencing rough sleeping** on the By Name List. The Coalition also knows the 114 children and young people represents only those who are included on the By Name List and not all who were rough sleeping on that night. This highlights a critical and persistent shortage of accommodation that cannot be addressed without sustained investment.

Funding will enable the sector to coordinate housing and support more effectively, direct scarce resources to those in greatest need, identify system gaps, and measure whether homelessness inflow is reducing over time. These insights will also assist in gaining philanthropic and private sector support. Overall, urgent government investment is essential to strengthen data capability, maintain an accurate bed count, and drive a more effective response to youth homelessness.

HOW WILL THIS HELP THE GOVERNMENT DELIVER ON ITS COMMITMENTS?

Priority 4 acts on the *'All Paths Lead to a Home: Action Plan Priorities 2026-2030'* specifically in relation to *'Measuring Success'.* The Youth Advance to Zero Project is required **to measure the success of initiatives in the youth homelessness sector.** The data obtained and supported by the Youth Advance to Zero Project could form part of the government's Outcomes Measurement Framework.

Increasing the capacity of the youth sector is a significant contribution to the elements needed for an ideal system as outlined in the government's action plan.

Main Actions this funding will support:

- Action 18: Strengthen the By Name List to improve data quality and effective coordination of services.
- Action 22: Strengthen databases to improve collection, sharing and use of data, information and intelligence, to support people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Action 4: Improve services that connect people sleeping rough to supports and accommodation.

Priority 5

ENDING CHILD AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS COALITION COORDINATION

The ECYH Coalition was established to bring the youth accommodation sector together with the support of peak bodies including the Youth Affairs Council of WA (YACWA), Shelter WA and the WA Alliance to End Homelessness (WAAEH) with the goal of taking all required steps to end child and youth homelessness. The Coalition have worked closely together for 2 years, commencing the Rough Sleepers Coordination Group, focussing on reliable data collection so the prevalence of homelessness for unaccompanied children and young people can be understood and to share our learnings, research, data and solutions with local, state and federal governments.

The sustainability of the ECYH Coalition is critical for ending child and youth homelessness in WA and the support of state government in this is crucial. With funding for one full-time Coordinator, the ECYH Coalition can ensure Coalition partners remain engaged and aligned, accountable and focused on actioning a shared agenda and deliver a sustained, evidence-informed response to child and youth homelessness. It reduces the shared burden on services and peaks to continue this essential work by dedicating resource to its administration and coordination allowing ongoing governance, project management, stakeholder engagement, communications, reporting, and the coordination of shared priorities.

The ECYH Coalition is a key enabling factor for supporting the infrastructure that partners with existing services, government agencies and community partners to work together more effectively to achieve the key goal of ending child and youth homelessness.

HOW WILL THIS HELP THE GOVERNMENT DELIVER ON ITS COMMITMENTS?

Priority 5 delivers on the following government commitments:

- *All Paths Lead to a Home, WA's 10 Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030* which commits to outcome 4: Strengthening and coordinating our responses and impact. This is through services being coordinated and easy to access, responsibility for preventing and responding to homelessness is shared across all levels of government and the community sector.

END NOTES

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