

MEDIA RELEASE: WA NEEDS DEDICATED YOUTH HOMELESSNESS PROGRAMS

Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia says WA must take action in response to alarming youth homelessness figures.

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- A [new report from Mission Australia](#), released today, highlights a significant jump in young people experiencing first-time homelessness across Australia for the first time since 2017.
- 1 in 20 young people experienced homelessness for the first time over 2020 and 2021, according to responses to Mission Australia's annual Youth Survey.
- Experiences of youth homelessness increased significantly over the COVID-19 pandemic and have almost doubled among young people with disability.
- The report highlighted significant risk factors associated with youth homelessness, including family conflict, COVID-19, and discrimination.
- Experience of homelessness as a young person drastically increases the likelihood of future long-term homelessness.
- The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia say young people have been left out of homelessness responses and need dedicated investment, including a Housing First for Youth pilot program.

Comments attributable to Sandy McKiernan, CEO Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

“Youth homelessness in Western Australia is at near-crisis point. This research confirms what we have been hearing from services and young people for years – more and more young people are slipping through the cracks and into homelessness. Rising rental prices and COVID-19 have hit young people hard, and they’ve received very little targeted support to manage.”

“The WA Government is doing a lot of work on homelessness, but young people are missing out. Adult homelessness programs do not work as well for young people – youth homelessness looks different, has different causes, and needs different responses. We can’t solve this with a one-size-fits-all approach.”

“This report shows we cannot keep relying on crisis-based interventions – young people need approaches that prevent harm and keep them well. Young people and the community services sector have long talked about the need to fund dedicated youth housing-first models which recognise the unique causes and drivers of youth homelessness and intervene before they are entrenched.”

“The best approach to youth homelessness we have is to prevent it before it starts. We know that young people who experience homelessness are far more likely to experience entrenched homelessness again later in life. Family conflict and homelessness disrupt young people’s education, their social connections, and their ability to find a sense of belonging in the community. We need more investment in approaches that work to intervene early and provide a safety net to young people to end the cycle of homelessness.”

“However, when young people are experiencing homelessness, we need to get them into safe housing as soon as possible. Adult models that do this are great, but unless they’re modified for young people, they don’t always work for them and address their unique needs. Young people navigate the world and access services differently to adults – they’re in different forms of work and are likely to want to move homes later in life. We need approaches that recognise how young people enter and experience homelessness and provide them the support they need to exit homelessness permanently.”

“YACWA is working to develop a new model of care for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. In the coming months, we’ll be bringing together young people and experts in this space to understand what a real Housing First for Youth program looks like and works best in Western Australia. We’re hopeful the WA Government will work with us on this to translate it into a pilot to address this crisis.”

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About the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) is the peak body for young people aged 12 to 25 and the youth sector in Western Australia. YACWA operates primarily as a human rights organization and seeks to address the exclusion of young people in a rapidly changing society.

YACWA represents approximately 100 member organisations delivering critical services to young people and the community, and fights for the rights of the 600,000 young people living in Western Australia.