

A NATIONAL

# ReportCard

ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS



1. Develop and Implement a National Framework and National Homelessness Action Plan	★★ DEVELOPING
2. Affordable housing for young people	★ LITTLE PROGRESS
3. Refocus service provision on building and resourcing 'communities of services'	★★ DEVELOPING
4. Prevent homelessness by supporting 'at-risk' families	★★ DEVELOPING
5. Resource early intervention for at-risk young people	★ LITTLE PROGRESS
6. A new national approach for the care and protection of children in all states and territories	★★ DEVELOPING
7. Ensure supported accommodation is accessible in all communities	★★ DEVELOPING
8. Redevelop employment (1), D&A (2) and mental health (3) programs for homeless young people	★ (1) LITTLE PROGRESS ★ (2) LITTLE PROGRESS ★★★ (3) ADVANCING
9. A new form of youth housing which links housing to education, training and employment programs	★★★ ADVANCING
10. Post-vention support	★ LITTLE PROGRESS



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## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA LTD

Youth Development Australia Ltd (YDA) is a public benevolent institution created in 2005 by a group of leading thinkers and practitioners in the youth field as a platform for change and as a way of exploring, developing and implementing innovative youth development initiatives. YDA has a foundational commitment to disadvantaged young Australians. The participation of young Australians in the building of their future is a core value. Exercising independence, YDA seeks to be a 'platform for change' and a vehicle that young people can use to realise their ambitions and meet their needs in the 21st Century world to come.



# Foreword



Ten years ago, the National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness (NYC), an independent community inquiry auspiced by Youth Development Australia and funded by The Caledonia Foundation, refocused attention on the troubling issue of youth homelessness. In the same week as the NYC Inquiry report was released, a feature documentary, *The Oasis*, about the lives of five homeless young people and produced by Shark Island Productions was aired on ABC-TV.

The NYC report, *'Australia's Homeless Youth'* presented its findings and recommendations in April 2008, drawing on evidence from public hearings held around Australia, written submissions and the evidence from research.

In addition, the NYC advanced a *Roadmap for Youth Homelessness* to highlight the 10 'must do' strategic areas for action. The NYC argued that by implementing the 10 'must do' strategic areas for action of the Roadmap, the face of youth homelessness in Australia could be transformed.

Following the NYC, the Federal Government led by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd undertook consultations and proposed a White Paper, *The Road Home: A National Approach to*

*Reducing Homelessness* making a bold public commitment by the Australian Government to halve homelessness by 2020.

This Report Card presented to the National Youth Homelessness Conference held on 18-19 March, 2019 makes an assessment of how much progress has actually been made since 2008 against the NYC Roadmap's 10 'must do' strategic areas for action. Referencing the NYC Roadmap, the Report Card is a review of responses to youth homelessness over the past decade from a national perspective.

The Roadmap imagined a truly strategic homelessness response, not just more crisis responses and band-aid measures, but a national effort that would begin to reduce and ultimately end youth homelessness in Australia.

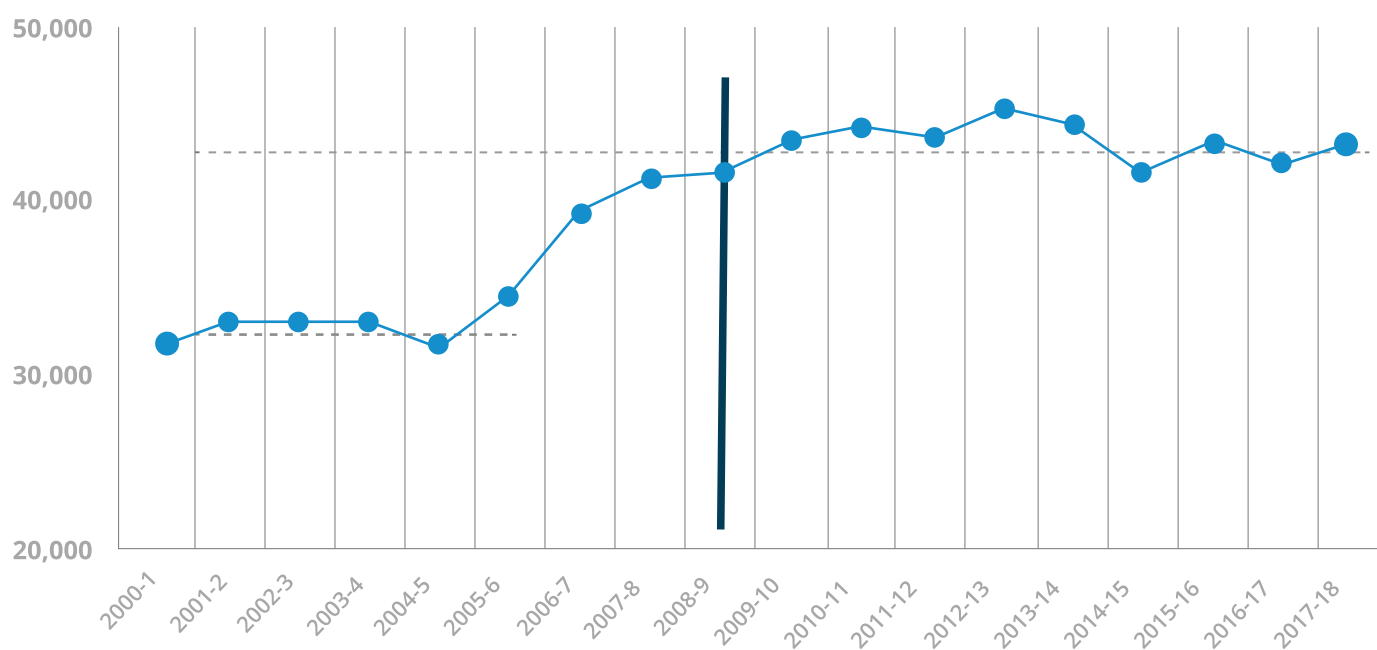
Paraphrasing loosely the writer George Santayana: "those who cannot face up to the failings of the past, will not be able to achieve great successes in the future". In order to steer a strategic course for the future, we have to understand where we have been and face up to what we have, or have not, done. This Report Card seeks to inform that critical and creative movement for change.

# Context

The *Roadmap for Youth Homelessness* developed by the National Youth Commission into Youth Homelessness (2007-08) highlighted the 10 'must do' strategic areas for action to address youth homelessness. Implementing the core 10 points of the Roadmap would change the face of youth homelessness in Australia if genuinely and seriously acted on. The Roadmap proposed a new approach to youth homelessness involving a complex developmental process requiring policy multi-tasking and new ways of connecting different areas of policy and programs – but all the core ingredients needed to be in play.

For many years leading up to 2007-2008, the number of young people entering the Specialist Homelessness Services [SHS] system (formerly SAAP) was about 32,000, then in 2005 it started to rise. After 2008, the number of young people entering the SHS system every year has been about 42,000. The number has not increased at the rate that it did between 2005 and 2009. The flow into youth homelessness seems to have plateaued - but it has not come down. Given that some of the main drivers of homelessness are increasing, there is a risk that the flow of young people into homelessness could continue to rise again in the near future.

## SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES CLIENTS: 15-24 YEARS



2008 White Paper, *The Road Home* 'Halving homelessness by 2020' (?) 'turning off the tap' or early intervention and prevention

Youth homelessness has not been reduced since the National Youth Commission undertook its work and the Australian Government issued its 2008 White Paper and made a down-payment on services and housing for homeless Australians.

A major Australian research study, *The cost of youth homelessness in Australia* (Mackenzie, D., Flatau, P., Steen, A., & Thielking, M. (2016) found that when young people

experience homelessness, there is an average cost to the community and the economy of about \$15,000 per person per year. The costs of providing homelessness services for these young people is about another \$15,000 per person per year in health and justice costs. Health and justice costs alone become an annual aggregate cost of \$626m. Less was spent on all Specialist Homelessness Services throughout Australia - \$619m per year.



# REPORT CARD ASSESSMENT SCHEMA

The NYC Roadmap has been used as the reference point for this assessment. The 2008 White Paper and all the subsequent jurisdictional plans and strategy documents were systematically reviewed against information about what has been done or not done for young people over the decade. Preliminary assessments were then reviewed by experts and experienced leaders in the various areas to reach final ratings.

★ **LITTLE PROGRESS**

★★ **DEVELOPING** (SOME PROGRESS UNDERWAY)

★★★ **ADVANCING** (SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS)

★★★★ **ESTABLISHED** (SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS ACHIEVED)



## 1. Develop and Implement a National Framework and National Homelessness Action Plan

The 2008 White Paper, *The Road Home*, provided a framework for addressing homelessness in Australia. For the first time, a national target of halving homelessness by 2020 was marked as a national goal and three strategic objectives were set to achieve this – ‘turning off the tap’, ‘improving and expanding services’ and ‘breaking the cycle’. The development of a national homelessness strategy commenced but was shelved when the government of the day moved to a National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). This agreement was replaced by a National Housing & Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) in 2018.

In terms of an overall assessment over the past decade, the original 2008 White Paper still broadly informs and shapes Federal, State and Territory governments’ plans and strategy documents, albeit as a shadow framework that is seldom explicitly acknowledged. Various Strategy documents and plans have been issued by the States and Territories. The most recent strategy document from the Victorian Government is *Victoria’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan* (August 2018), an effort criticised as being less of a homelessness strategy and more a refocus on inner-city ‘rough sleeping’.

New South Wales, has issued several documents, *Foundations for Change* followed by *A Way Home: Reducing Homelessness in NSW*, a *NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009 - 2014*. And in 2018, The NSW Government launched its

*NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023* which emphasises a commitment to early intervention.

South Australia’s *Homeless to Home: South Australia’s Homelessness Strategy 2009-2013* has been largely superseded by the Adelaide Zero Project, a plan involving 30 organisations committed to a 2020 target to achieve functional zero homelessness in the CBD of Adelaide.

Queensland’s most recent initiative is a plan, *Partnering for impact to reduce homelessness in Queensland*, that emphasises ‘early intervention’ and supportive housing initiatives as central tenets.

In Western Australia, the Department of Communities is leading a process for developing a whole-of-community 10-year strategy plan to address homelessness in that state. The summary report advances basically a housing perspective with claims for more crisis accommodation, another common ground or foyer project, support for 50 lives 50 homes and mentors to support people post-homelessness. Early intervention and prevention are not mentioned at all.

While there is commonality, there is also a disturbing extent of divergence – commitments to early intervention are evident in some State and Territory plans, but barely noted in others where rough sleeping has become a greater focus. The overall national response to homelessness would be hugely strengthened by working to an agreed national strategy as is done in other high priority areas of social policy.



## 2. Affordable housing for young people

There is an affordable housing crisis in Australia. It has become a major concern for the general community and affects young people broadly but particularly disadvantaged young Australians the most.

Following the 2008 White Paper, there was an associated commitment of \$400m to 'increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing for people who would otherwise be homeless'. In response to the Global Financial Crisis, there was an initial investment of \$1.5b to support housing construction and then a second tranche of \$6.6b for social and defence housing. It is difficult to know how much of this combined social housing investment flowed through to young people who experienced homelessness.

Homeless young people on their own are about half (54%) of all single people who seek help from homelessness services, but they are only 2.9 percent of main tenants in social and public housing in Australia. The business model of the community housing sector appears to be exclusive of young people and the prevailing government paradigm is that young people should not have a high level of access to social housing as they would only require short-term transitional housing, not longer-term affordable housing.

Relatively little net progress has been made to increase the supply of youth-specific and youth-appropriate social and affordable housing for young people. However, the formation of the youth-specific social housing provider, My Foundations Youth Housing Co. is a significant innovation and potentially a game-changing strategic initiative but at an early stage of development. The reliance on rental subsidies for low-income independent young people needs to be reviewed, not abandoned, but reset as part of a more strategic approach to addressing youth housing and homelessness. A rethink of broader social housing options for young people is overdue, to accommodate young people's mobility and transition needs rather than as purely long-term welfare housing. Access to social housing by young people has not improved and the assessment is that this remains a major issue on which little progress has been made.



## 3. Refocus service provision on building and resourcing 'communities of services'

This was one of the big new ideas that came out of the 2008 National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness. More young people now seek help from Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) every year since the 2008 White Paper than did in the years prior. The narrow siloed evaluation of Specialist Homelessness Services has tended to be in a policy bubble, program based, ticking boxes and measuring throughput and compliance rather than contributions to broader outcomes. Such evaluation is more 'individual service' focused than 'system' focused.

A failure to implement early intervention in order to 'turn off the tap' was a notable policy failures after the 2008 White Paper. The statistics that monitor disadvantage, most particularly youth homelessness and early school leaving have not significantly been improved, suggesting that the current system of siloed and targeted programs is inadequate and not achieving a reduction in youth homelessness.

If a major problem is understood to be a status quo of largely crisis-oriented service provision and programs, then system change comes down to reframing policy, programs and interventions in a place-based perspective. The 'community of schools and youth services' model of early intervention is an innovative place-based model for supporting vulnerable young people and families to reduce disengagement from education and early school leaving

and to help where family issues are heading towards a crisis and possible homelessness as well as other adverse outcomes. The outcomes achieved by The Geelong Project has demonstrated what a place-based approach is capable of achieving.

The Geelong Project or the 'community of services and schools' (COSS) model of early intervention is a leading exemplar of what is being called 'collective impact' in which key local stakeholders collaborate deeply on a common vision and agenda, with shared data, a new form of governance and operational organisation as well as a backbone staffing for the community collective. A key innovation of the model is population screening for risk and then working efficient and systematically with the entire at-risk cohort through secondary school and beyond until a pathway to employment has been firmly established.

Based on the evidence and experience of The Geelong Project, an early intervention strategy is as much about dealing with incipient homelessness as it is with reducing early school leaving.. The model is being trialled elsewhere in Australia and has been adopted for trial in Canada, the USA and Wales.

The evidence base for how effective a place-based 'collective impact' model such as the COSS Model did not previously exist. The case for reform in 2019 along these lines is now compelling.







## 4. Prevent homelessness by supporting 'at-risk' families

The positive developments around domestic and family violence have major implications for homelessness. It is well established that domestic and family violence is a major driver of families becoming homeless and women becoming homeless (72,000 women and 34,000 children in 2016-17). In May 2008, the Australian Government formed a National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children. The National Council's *Plan of Action* advanced an agenda for change with reforms that could be implemented from 2009-2012. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the Council's plan and devised implementation via four three-year action plans.

In the past five years, there has been an intensified effort to address domestic and family violence. An example of this effort is the Victorian Government's Royal Commission into Family Violence which opened the way to a major policy and service focus on addressing prevention, early intervention and crisis responses, exemplified by the subsequent Plan

for Change. The fourth National Action Plan (2019-2022) to reduce domestic and family violence has recently been released by the Australian Government accompanied by a commitment of \$328 million with much of that funding going towards safe houses and frontline services

There appears to be a policy and service focus confluence across jurisdictions centered around three core areas: preventing violence before it starts through education and social and cultural change across the whole community; early intervention to stop family violence from recurring or escalating and crisis responses.

It is too early to assess the impact of the major effort around addressing domestic and family violence but sufficiently and effectively implemented, the impact on homelessness is potentially huge.



## 5. Resource early intervention for 'at-risk' young people

Prevention and early intervention were referenced in the 2008 White Paper, *The Road Home* as 'turning off the tap'. The Reconnect program was highlighted as a key initiative for achieving early intervention for young people. Reconnect was launched in 1997, and since 2003, despite positive evaluation reports, has been maintained but not increased in capacity. Governments have talked about increasing funding to Reconnect, but have failed to act.

The failure to seriously implement a significant complement of early intervention measures to stem the flow of young people as well as other groups into homelessness is the single greatest under-achievement of the 2008 White Paper agenda.

Over the past decade, different State and Territory homelessness strategy documents and plans have referred to 'early intervention' but little investment has been made and little done to reduce the flow of young people into homelessness. One notable example of this

lack of investment has been the slowness in the various jurisdictions of extending support for young people leaving state care to the age of 21 years thereby 'turning off the tap' of young people exiting this care into homelessness.

In 2008, the case for advancing 'early intervention' relied on expanding the Reconnect program. A decade on, a more critical perspective asks what could lie beyond Reconnect? Could 'early intervention' be done more effectively? Are there reforms in the way schools and agencies interact that should be pursued?

An overall assessment must be that little has been done to implement early intervention for vulnerable young people over the past decade although with the caveat that a bolder place-based collective impact system change approach should be supported to happen in a limited number of pioneering communities and then progressively scaled up.



## 6. A new national approach for the care and protection of children in all states and territories

Parents have the primary responsibility for raising their children and providing support. However, as noted in the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, where the home environment is not safe enough for children they are placed in the care of the state - in out-of-home care. The out-of-home care system predominately comprises homebased care including kinship care, foster care and residential care.

As at 30 June 2016, 94 percent of children in out-of-home care in Australia were placed in foster care, kinship care or other types of home-based care. On average nationally, less than 6 percent of children or young people are in residential care. It is estimated that currently there are 47,000 children in out-of-home care, nationally.

Every year across Australia approximately 3,000 young people in out-of-home-care are legally designated as independent when they turn 18, with their care terminated, they are required to leave their foster, kinship or other accommodation arrangements.

For far too long young people with a care background have been over-represented in the youth homeless population. Many care leavers exit directly into homelessness or endure ongoing housing instability. A Swinburne University national homelessness survey in 2015 found that 63% of homeless youth have a state care history.

While state and territory governments provide a variety of transition and post-care supports, they are discretionary and are not a substitute for continuing care.

The mandating of independence at 18 years is in contrast to the prevailing trend internationally and is out of sync with community expectations.

Research from a number of countries shows that when care is extended, the state will halve the homelessness rates of this cohort and double their education and employment engagement.

Based on this experience, the option to remain with a foster family or other care arrangement with support until a young person is 21 years of age would directly benefit a significant cohort of Australia's most vulnerable young people.

Recent developments have seen the West Australian Government commit to a six-month trial of extended care; the South Australian Government continues foster and kinship reimbursements to 21 years; the Tasmanian Government is currently working on a Home Stretch policy; and the Victorian Government is the latest jurisdiction to commit to providing extended care to 21 years of age for 250 young people over a five-year period.

Whilst some Australian states have agreed to provide extended care for some young people, the Australian Government needs to lead the effort to lift all states to a single uniform extended care approach

Real action on this issue would have a significant impact on reducing youth homelessness nationally.



## 7. Ensure supported accommodation is accessible in all communities

One of the three strategic directions in the 2008 White Paper was about ‘improving and expanding services’ and this formed a significant part of the initial \$400m of investment by the Australian Government ten years ago. Historically about one third of homelessness services were youth services.

For many years leading up to 2007-2008, the number of young people entering the Specialist Homelessness Services [SHS] system (formerly SAAP) was about 32,000, then in 2005 the number of young people seeking help started to rise. After 2008, the number of young people entering the SHS system every year has been about 42,000. The number has not increased at the rate that it did between 2005 and 2009. The flow into youth homelessness seems to have plateaued - but it has not come down. Given that some of the main drivers of homelessness are increasing, there is a risk that the flow of young people into homelessness could continue to rise again in the near future.

The capacity of crisis and transitional services has increased over the past decade from 219,900 men, woman and children in 2009-10 to 288,800 in 2017-18. The period of time that SHS clients require support has

declined over the decade and fewer people are returning to homelessness after supported accommodation (an overall 6% decline over five years from 68% in 2013-14). The availability of the Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA) has meant more SHS clients move into private rental.

Jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the States/Territories, the cost of homelessness Services was \$372.9m in 2007-8 rising to \$817.4m in 2016-17. Many youth homelessness services have become ‘youth and family’ services and many service amalgamations have taken place over the past 10 years as part of a general trend in administrative reform.. In current State plans and strategy documents some new initiatives for young people are present and carry some priority. Notably, NSW has set a high priority on reducing youth homelessness under the Premier’s Youth Initiative. Overall, the capacity for Specialist Homelessness Services to support young people has been increased and some improvements have been implemented over the past decade. However, access to supported accommodation in all communities with integrated community-based service systems still remains to be adequately achieved.





- ★ LITTLE PROGRESS - EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
- ★ LITTLE PROGRESS - DRUG & ALCOHOL SERVICES
- ★★★ ADVANCING - MENTAL HEALTH

## 8. Redevelop employment, D&A and mental health programs for homeless young people

The proposal in 2008 from the NYC highlighted the need for specialist services in the three areas of employment, drug and alcohol services and mental health programs. While there has been significant development over the past decade in mental health services for young people in the areas of employment and Drug and Alcohol services, the results and achievements have been uneven.

The Australian Government invests \$208 million annually into Headspace centres nationally. Launched in 2006, Headspace had 10 centres in 2007 expanding over the decade to 107 centres assisting 55,800 young people directly and another 33,700 through online and telephone counselling. About half these young people were between 12-17 years of age, another quarter (23%) between 18-20 years and about one quarter (26%) were young adults (21-25 years). There are waiting lists and some questions about the access that the most disadvantaged young Australians such as homeless youth get to Headspace services.

Since the development of a National Drug Strategy in the mid-1990s, there has been investment in drug and alcohol services and programs but with complex and insecure sources of funding. Victoria's Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS) stands as the most integrated state-wide response for young people, yet to be adopted in other jurisdictions. However, unmet demand remains high at between 25-50 percent. Regional and rural areas still report problems of access to youth specific drug treatment services due mainly to the distance many clients are from the city and town located health services.

Many young people with comorbidity or even trimorbidity issues suffer from the failure of the primary health, mental health and drug treatment service systems provide an integrated response. This is not a new phenomenon. It is a challenge that has been known by policy makers as well as services for many years, yet little progress has been made to address this challenge.

The overall unemployment rate among young people 15-24 years remains high, at 11.2 percent compared to the overall unemployment rate of 5 percent. This rate is significantly higher for homeless young people.

Work itself is changing. Low-skill jobs in many industries have disappeared and while new high-skill jobs have emerged, many of these new jobs rely on highly specialised skills. Automation, digital platforms, and other innovations are changing the nature of work.

Young people today must compete for a diminishing share of secure employment, in a labour market for which skill needs are rapidly changing. They are subject to industrial relations provisions that pay them less than older adults, and they have been disproportionately affected by cuts to penalty rates. Young people must navigate a complex income support system that involves many rules and conditions in exchange for a meagre allowance that is under the poverty line. The employment services system that is meant to help them find a way out of all this has been found by a 2019 government review to be particularly ineffective for young people.

Whilst the Australian government has funded *Transition to work* and *Empowering YOUTH programs*, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of the targeting or outcomes of these latest programs. The current system of employment support services and Jobactive providers has been widely criticised for its failure to address the needs of the most disadvantaged young people and achieve sustainable employment outcomes. Unless there is a greater investment in supporting these young people to develop the skills and capabilities that they will need to fully participate in the future work environment, and a rethink and reform of the employment services system that young people must deal with, there is a considerable risk that many will experience poverty and multiple disadvantage throughout their lives.

This assessment of specialist services and programs acknowledges that there has been significant development in youth specific mental health services since 2008, but developments in drug and alcohol treatment of young people has been very uneven as have responses to youth employment.



## 9 A new form of youth housing which links housing to education, training and employment programs

Historically the provision of Specialist Homelessness Services (formerly SAAP) has been separate from programs designed to re-engage young people in education, training and/or employment such as the Jobs Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) program. The evaluation of JPET, prior to it being axed, suggested that features of the program were positive.

Approximately one quarter of Australia's 19 year-olds have not completed Year 12 or its equivalent - about 10 percent are students who miss out on every educational milestone from prep to leaving school; some 40 percent are students, mostly Indigenous young Australians, living in remote and very remote parts of Australia; some are young people whose time is occupied caring for others to the detriment of their education; and there are a large number of young people with health issues and disabilities, who struggle to enter the work-force.

Adults aged 25-44 year olds from 2001-2014, who left school without Year 12 or equivalent, and who had not managed to recover their education by the age of 24 years, remain disadvantaged for the rest of their lives. Homeless young people are a particularly vulnerable group. Some six to seven out of every ten Australians who ever need to seek help from Specialist Homelessness Services, left school before completing Year 12 and never recovered their education.

Early school leaving has been and largely still is framed as a school problem while youth homelessness is framed simplistically by many as purely a housing problem. A strategic imperative for youth policy is to recognise that youth homelessness and early school leaving are intimately inter-related.

Support to at-risk or homeless young people needs to address their education, training and/or employment support needs. In 2008, the National Youth Commission into Youth Homelessness explicitly proposed the funding of Foyers, as one promising model for linking education, training and supported pathways to employment with supported accommodation. Over the past decade, foyers have been established in most jurisdictions.

The Foyer model advocated for in the 2008 Roadmap has been substantially picked up by various Australian governments. Over the past decade, 15 Foyers or Foyer-like projects have been developed to support about 500 16-25 year olds at-risk of homelessness or recovering from homelessness. Despite high unit costs, the development of Foyers stands as a positive achievement.



## 10. Post-vention support

One of the three strategic policy positions in the 2008 Government White Paper was ‘breaking the cycle’ or wrap around support that addresses the needs of people who have been chronically homeless after their experience of homelessness has ended. Many experience episodic periods of homelessness. For young people in this state, the argument is even stronger. In policy terms, Australia has come late to this understanding and not readily implemented post-vention support.

Supportive housing combines housing with various support services on the basis that for some people being helped into housing after being homeless have complex issues which if not addressed may well see them cycle back into homelessness. From 1985-2009, The Supported Accommodation and Assistance program (SAAP) provided crisis support and for some transitional supported accommodation but with the expected outcome that individuals would move onto independent living situations. The tacit assumption was that many of the support services and resources are available in the broader mainstream community service and health systems and can be accessed. In 2008, significant funds flowed into building Common Ground housing, which was a form of supportive housing based on a US model. Sacred Heart Mission conducted a unique Australian pilot whereby post-homelessness support services

were provided to a cohort of high-need individuals and with reported positive results. For young people, the development of Youth Foyers potentially provides an important pathway for post-vention support, but provided they intake residents exiting homelessness.

Specialist Homelessness Services do attempt to follow-up clients after they leave their service to provide support but are not funded to do post-vention outreach. In several jurisdictions, the refocusing on rough sleeping does go to this kind of post-homelessness support but possibly to the detriment of a broader homelessness strategy. For young people the issue of post-vention support remains a vacant lot in homelessness and youth policy. On a community basis this might involve funding an outreach position specifically tasked with post-homelessness follow-up and support or revising the staffing in crisis/transitional Specialist Homelessness Services so that post-homeless support can be realistically provided.

In terms of young people, given that little or nothing has been done to develop post-vention, there is a case for piloting a systematic post-vention approach and then expanding systemically on the basis of evidence about the contribution of post-vention to sustainable outcomes after homelessness.









# OVERALL ASSESSMENT

In making an overall assessment of the National Youth Commission's 10-point *Roadmap for Youth Homelessness*, there have been some positive initiatives and advances but whole areas of neglect and under-achievement. The launch of the 2008 White Paper, *The Road Home*, and announcements of increased funding as 'down payments' was celebrated by the homelessness sector. However, the number of young people seeking help from homelessness services in 2019 is significantly higher than for the period prior to 2008.

The past decade began well with some promise. However, the early promises made have only been partially delivered. The failure to progress early intervention to stem the flow of young people into homelessness is one of the biggest policy failures. The slowness and under-investment in implementing a secure system of leaving care support is another area of major under-development. The needs of young people have not been factored into housing strategies and plans for increasing the supply of social and affordable housing.

As a nation, we cannot be satisfied with a less than average response to youth homelessness – at best a two-star rating: 'developing – some progress underway'. The next decade needs to be a very different story.





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