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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **The 2021 Census homelessness data tells us it's time to make children and young people a priority**

**The Census 2021 data on homelessness released today shows that nearly a quarter (23%) of people experiencing homelessness across Australia on Census night were children and young people aged 12–24 years.**

**The highest rate of homelessness in 2021 was for those in the age group 19–24 years (91 people per 10,000). The rate of homelessness per 10,000 people has also increased for those aged 12–18 years, compared to 2016 Census numbers.**

“This data confirms what we have been saying, that children and young people continue to make up a significant proportion of our homeless population and there’s been a distinct and disappointing lack of progress in reducing these numbers. These numbers reflect an increase in this extremely vulnerable cohort who experience some of the most dangerous and insidious forms of homelessness. However, these statistics do not tell the whole story.” said Trish Connolly, CEO of Yfoundations.

The ABS has previously identified that youth homelessness is underestimated in the Census due to the difficulties of counting those who are couch surfing, a dominant form of homelessness for young people (ABS 2012).

The data also reveals that just over half (50.6%) of the children and young people aged 12–24 years experiencing homelessness were in severely overcrowded dwellings. Research has shown that overcrowding can have negative impacts on children and young people’s physical and mental health, development and education outcomes (AIHW 2022).

“We often hear about children and young people as the hidden homeless who are often couch-surfing or living in severely overcrowded dwellings. They are extremely resilient and resourceful, but unfortunately this means they are often harder to capture in the homelessness numbers.

“The experiences and vulnerabilities of children and young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness are complex and distinct from those of adults and traditional measurements like the Census do not help us understand the extent of the issue.

“These numbers alone indicate that children and young people should be made a national priority in responding to homelessness. However, they only scratch the surface.” said Trish Connolly.

This latest Census data release reinforces Yfoundations' position that now is the time for Australia to take the lead in developing and implementing an integrated whole-of-government and whole-of-community response to the diversity and complexity of children and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Yfoundations is calling on the Australian Government to demonstrate national leadership in responding to child and youth homelessness through the development of a standalone Child and Youth Homelessness and Housing Strategy. Such a strategy is the only effective way to ensure all the issues that escalate children and young people into homelessness are identified and addressed.

### About Yfoundations

For over 40 years, Yfoundations has served as the NSW peak body advocating for children and young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness, and the services that support them. Our members and board comprise highly experienced youth specialist homelessness services (SHS) providers who have direct knowledge of and experience with the issues children and young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness face. We are also the only peak body representing this cohort nationally.

### References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). Australia's children, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 22 March 2023.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012). Information Paper – A Statistical Definition of Homelessness, ABS, Australian Government, accessed 22 March 2023.

**For further information, contact Trish Connolly at Yfoundations on 02 8306 7901.**