



Yfoundations welcomes new investments but warns that the NSW budget has missed the opportunity to prevent and address youth homelessness

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New South Wales, 17th November 2020: Yfoundations, the peak body for youth homelessness in NSW, welcomes the investments in housing support and youth-focused employment, education and mental health initiatives announced today in the 2020-21 NSW Government budget.

However, we're disappointed that the NSW Government has missed the opportunity to prevent and address the growing issues of youth homelessness, by failing to invest in vital early-intervention and youth-specific supported housing services.

The number of homeless 12 to 24-year-olds in NSW increased by 82% between the 2006 and 2016 census – reaching 9,042.

Yfoundations' CEO Pam Barker warns that this alarming trend will likely surge in the coming years.

“Young people’s income declined over the past decade, and now they’re bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 economic crisis. Those who can live with their parents are doing so for longer. But those who can’t are being forced into informal, precarious and often unsafe living arrangements”.

The NSW budget acknowledges the disproportionate impact of the economic downturn on young people, committing \$318.6 million for low cost or fee-free training places focused on school leavers entering the workforce through the Skilling for Recovery package.

But much more needs to be done to support young people who are being pushed into low-paid, part-time or unstable work and off the job’s ladder altogether, amid a housing affordability crisis.

In the 2020-2021 budget, the NSW Government has committed to invest an additional \$812 million for construction of 1,200 new dwellings, and maintenance and upgrades to over 8,000 social and affordable housing properties.



This funding is valuable but insufficient – given there are almost 60,000 households on the NSW social housing waiting list.

Social housing also isn't an appropriate option for children who can't live at home or young people who need support to transition to independent living.

The NSW Government's commitment of \$29 million to expand the Together Home project, which will be used to secure private rental properties for those sleeping rough, is also welcomed – but will not fill this critical service gap.

“Children as young as 12 are being turned away by refuges who are at capacity. Our vital crisis, 24/7 medium-term and transitional youth accommodation services require an immediate funding top-up, and we need new supported housing options to meet the diverse and often complex needs of homeless children and young people in NSW.”, Barker said.

Yfoundations welcomes the commitment of \$66.2 million to community-based mental health clinicians, including youth mental health services, and \$46.8 million to recruit 100 nurses to provide wellbeing checks in our schools. Such funding is vital, given the rising mental health issues among young Australians.

“It's estimated that 50 to 75 per cent of homeless children and young people have experienced mental illness. Youth homelessness services are currently struggling to meet the complex needs of this extremely vulnerable group”.

However, we're disappointed that the NSW Government has failed to increase funding for early intervention services to support vulnerable families and prevent entries in the child protection and youth homelessness system.

The recent evaluation of the [Homeless Youth Assistance Program](#) highlights the desperate need for these services. The evaluation found that 12 to 15-year-olds presenting alone to homelessness services had received “few, if any” early intervention services.

For media enquires contact: Pam Barker, CEO Yfoundations
ceo@yfoundations.org.au or 0425 228 758

About Yfoundations

Yfoundations is the peak body for youth homelessness in NSW. It represents young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness in NSW, and also represents the services that provide direct support to children and young people.

<http://yfoundations.org.au/>



Since it was founded as the "Youth Refuge Action Group" in 1979, Yfoundations has been supporting young people who are at risk of and experiencing homelessness. Yfoundations works collaboratively with members, NGOs, government departments and community members, to provide policy and structural advocacy, services for young people, health projects, and research and sector development.

Yfoundations believes that with access to mechanisms that support the development and attainment of each foundation, a young person is more likely to enter adulthood with the skills, interests, competencies and healthy behaviours necessary build a productive and bright future.