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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2021**

**Most homeless youth hidden from view; pandemic has created more strain on overstretched sector; new podcast gives voice to our young and homeless**

The peak body for youth homelessness in NSW says youth homelessness is a national disgrace and should be a priority in the face of the pandemic.

There were 28,000 children and young people aged 12 to 15 who were homeless on Census night in 2016. This is 24% of the total homeless population, despite children and young people only making up 16% of the total population.

On **Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD)**, CEO of Yfoundations Pam Barker stressed that youth homelessness services are struggling to meet demand.

Last year, around 23,000 children and young people aged 12 to 25 sought help from homelessness services in NSW. Most turned up alone.

Tragically, the overstretched homelessness sector was unable to meet the needs of these vulnerable children and young people. In that same year, 36% of homelessness and housing services across Australia reported that they were rarely or never able to meet demand.

Shockingly, the Australian Government is set to cut funding to some homelessness services by \$50 million from July of this year, when the Equal Remuneration Order supplementation ends. This means some services will have to do more with less.

Equity Economics\* estimates that by June this year, another 9,000 people in NSW will be homeless as a result of the pandemic. The cuts to JobSeeker and Youth Allowance and the end of rent reductions are likely to make this worse.

Ms Baker said “Young people experiencing homelessness have been drastically impacted by the pandemic. Lack of support and resources has been a major cause of stress for this group, with many of them losing casual employment and now having crucial Centrelink support payments cut. More than ever we all need to urge the government to support this vulnerable group.”

Ms Barker said children and young are homeless through no fault of their own.

“Homelessness is a complex issue that needs a holistic solution. All children and young people need a pathway out of homelessness. This means investing in early intervention and prevention, as well as crisis responses.”

“The vast majority of children and young people experiencing homelessness are hidden from view in

refuges, couch-surfing or sleeping in cars. In many instances, this group does not have a home because they are escaping domestic and family violence and experiencing family breakdown. Rising rental prices and unemployment have also made it very difficult to find a home or emergency housing option.”

YHMD aims to bring critical attention to and generate public discussion about youth homelessness across Australia.

“The Government should provide more funding for medium-term and transitional accommodation models, which equip children and young people for independence. There must be sufficient support in all phases for this group to exit out of homelessness.”

“We need to focus on addressing education, job training, housing and social support to empower children and young people to succeed,” she said.

As part of YHMD, Yfoundations has launched its inaugural podcast, **Young and Homeless**, to create more awareness of youth homelessness and share insights from people working in the sector.

The podcast will contain interviews with government workers, service providers, researchers, academics and people with a lived experience of homelessness.

“It will tackle some of the important issues faced by children and young people at risk of or who are experiencing homelessness - and help give them a voice,” Ms Barker explained.

Yfoundations calls on the NSW Government to commit to ending youth homelessness and encourages people to get involved with YHMD in the following ways

- **Follow** Yfoundations on [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) to keep up to date with youth homelessness.
- **Volunteer** for an organisation that helps homeless youth in your local area. [Here](#) is a directory of homelessness organisations accepting volunteers and donations in Sydney.
- **Join** the [Raise The Rate for Good](#) campaign, to push for an increase in the JobSeeker payment to keep people out of poverty
- **Watch** documentaries about homelessness: [Filthy Rich and Homeless](#), [You Can't Ask That: Homeless](#) and [The Oasis and Life After The Oasis](#).
- **Sign** the petition to save homelessness services [here](#)! The Federal Government is set to cut funding to homelessness services by over \$50million.

- ENDS -

[\\*https://homelessnessnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Oct-2020-Equity-Economic-s-Wave-of-Disadvantage-COVID-19.pdf](https://homelessnessnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Oct-2020-Equity-Economic-s-Wave-of-Disadvantage-COVID-19.pdf)

### **About Youth Homelessness Day**

Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD) is a national campaign, held annually since 1990, aimed at raising awareness of youth homelessness amongst decision makers and the wider community. YHMD is a project of the National Youth Coalition for Housing.

YHMD presents an opportunity for everyone, especially those who believe in the power of community, to take action and showcase why youth homelessness matters.

### **About Yfoundations**

For over 40 years, Yfoundations has served as the NSW peak body representing children and young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness, as well as the services that provide direct support to them.

Yfoundations is the peak body for youth homelessness in NSW. It represents young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness and the services that support them.

Working collaboratively with members, NGOs, government departments and community members, Yfoundations provides policy and advocacy and delivers projects to support the sector.

### **About Pam Barker, Chief Executive Officer, Yfoundations**

Pam Barker is the CEO of Yfoundations. She brings extensive experience across the not-for-profit sector. She sits on the board of NYCH: National Youth Coalition for Housing, My Foundations Youth Housing, WayAhead Mental Health Association, and Australian Youth Affairs Coalition: AYAC. Her experience includes youth services, homelessness prevention, mental health programs, and reform.