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# **SOCIAL HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW**

Youth Action Policy Paper





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### **About Youth Action**

Youth Action is the peak organisation representing young people and youth services in NSW. Our work helps build the capacity of young people, youth workers and youth services, and we advocate for positive change on issues affecting these groups.

It is the role of Youth Action to:

1. Respond to social and political agendas relating to young people and the youth service sector.
2. Provide proactive leadership and advocacy to shape the agenda on issues affecting young people and youth services.
3. Collaborate on issues that affect young people and youth workers.
4. Promote a positive profile in the media and the community of young people and youth services.
5. Build capacity for young people to speak out and take action on issues that affect them.
6. Enhance the capacity of the youth services sector to provide high quality services.
7. Ensure Youth Action's organisational development, efficiency, effectiveness and good governance.

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## Introduction

*States parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.*

- UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, Article 27, 1.<sup>1</sup>

*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being ... including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of ... lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, 1.<sup>2</sup>

Housing is important to meet the physical, social, cultural, economic and developmental needs of young people.<sup>3</sup> Stable and appropriate accommodation enables young people to thrive. However, many young people are experiencing poor housing outcomes, and are one of the most at risk groups of homelessness.

For young people in NSW, the situation is vastly different than for past generations. The housing context for young people today is characterised by declining homeownership rates, decreasing housing and rental affordability, a decline in the availability of social housing, and rising youth homelessness.

High rental costs, low incomes, insecure share housing, and the lack of affordable housing and social housing stock all make independent living a challenge for many young people.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 1959, *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, United Nations.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 1948, *Universal declaration of Human Rights*, United Nations.  
<<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>>

<sup>3</sup> YFoundations, 2015, *Youth Health and Wellness*.

<[http://yfoundations.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Youth-Health-and-Wellness\\_April2015\\_FINAL2.pdf](http://yfoundations.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Youth-Health-and-Wellness_April2015_FINAL2.pdf)>

While some young people are staying at home for longer, for others this simply isn't an option. This has increased the pressure across the housing spectrum.

Young people must have access to a range of housing options and products that are both affordable and appropriate to their needs. For some young people social housing is a very appropriate option. Youth Action also recognises many young people who are part of a household in social housing or seeking access to social housing will not wish to remain in this circumstance, nor would this be a good outcome for them, but it is a key part of ensuring young people can engage in education, employment, and community.

Despite high need for stable longer-term housing, and a higher risk of homelessness than other segments of the population, the housing system is difficult for young people to gain access to. Figures from 2009 show that 19.4% of household members in social housing were aged 12-24 while 1.9% of lease-holders in public housing and 6.3% in community housing are between 16 and 24.<sup>4</sup> In 2012-2013, over 1 in 3 individuals were under the age of 25; 4,000 were the household head, and 9% of young people aged 18 – 24 were public housing residents. This could suggest young people find it much harder to access social housing in their own right, with only a small number of tenancies granted.<sup>5</sup> This data is evidenced anecdotally by the sector supporting young people.

Support for young people in social housing also needs to be improved - a welcome addition in *Future Directions in Social Housing* (herein *Future Directions*). There is an opportunity to increase access for young people who need it, ensure that the gaps in housing needs are met, as well as ensure pathways out of social housing are available.

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<sup>4</sup>Housing NSW, 2010 *Youth Action Plan 2010 – 2014*, Accessed on 24/02/2014, <<http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/4F1D1B1B-E4D1-4251-B5E3-EE4F1630FFA7/0/HousingNSWYouthActionPlan201014.pdf>>, pg. 4

<sup>5</sup> Family and Community Services [FACS], 2013, *Social Housing in NSW: a discussion paper for input and comment*, Family and Community Services, NSW, p. 54 <[http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/file/0009/303030/Social-Housing-in-NSW\\_Discussion-Paper.pdf](http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0009/303030/Social-Housing-in-NSW_Discussion-Paper.pdf)>

## Defining social housing

Youth Action uses a definition of social housing as a form of rental accommodation at a significantly subsidised rate.<sup>6</sup> There are two main categories: public housing, which is owned by a government entity (in NSW it is the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC)), and community housing, which is provided by community housing providers (CHPs).<sup>7</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may qualify to receive specialist housing from either public or community housing in the form of the State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH) or from Indigenous Community Housing (ICH).<sup>8</sup> Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) refer to all the government and non-government services funded by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) that offer support to people experiencing homelessness.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 1. Summary of Types of Social Housing**

Manager	Name	Description
Government	Public Housing	Government owned subsidised rental housing. Currently rental prices are set at 25% of tenant household income. Access is gained via the <i>Housing Pathways</i> wait list. Prior to 2006 tenancies were continuous, however since 2006 all new tenants enter on two, five or 10 year leases.
CHP	Social Housing	Properties may be owned and managed by CHPs, or owned by government and managed by CHPs on

<sup>6</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014, *Housing Assistance in Australia 2014*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Land and Housing Act 2001*, no. 52. *Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Act 2012*, no. 59.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Housing NSW, 2016, *Housing NSW- Specialist Homelessness Services*, Government of NSW, <<http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/help-with-housing/specialist-homelessness-services>>

		government's behalf. May be accessible by <i>Housing Pathways</i> or may choose to have own forms of access or referral. Rents are typically set at 25% of household income, however Social Housing tenants may further subsidise this with the Commonwealth Rental Allowance. Varying lease length.
CHP, possibly in partnership with a specialist homelessness service (SHS)	Transitional accommodation	Properties are typically owned by CHPs, or set up in partnership with government. CHPs may create agreements with other services (typically, SHS) in order to offer support to tenants. Tend to service specific groups, such as young people or survivors of Domestic Violence (DV)/Family Violence (FV). Access is through referral or contact with a SHS. Leases typically last 3-18 months.
Government	SOMIH	Government owned and run housing specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Similar to public housing. May have different eligibility requirements than public housing.
CHP	ICH	Similar to social housing, however run by CHPs specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Social housing and young people

By many accounts, social housing is currently failing to provide adequate housing for young people. The issue of housing is not just about provision but about housing needs. To meet housing needs is an investment in social capital and outcomes.<sup>10</sup> For young people, this requires consideration of location, environment, design, accessibility, quality, opportunities for support and the surrounding community. It is appropriate when it meets the physical, social, cultural, economic and developmental needs of young people.<sup>11</sup>

The importance of providing young people with stable, long term, appropriate housing tenures is undeniable, as it is linked with long term positive outcomes, such as improving health, educational attainment, and a positive sense of self. Given the current housing climate a holistic and timely policy will not only benefit young people – it is vital for ensuring the future success of NSW, and the place of young people in it.

Stable tenancies are linked to increased physical and mental health as well as educational attainment for young people. Holding a stable tenancy for up to four years can reduce rates of contact with hospitals and mental health services.<sup>12</sup> Unstable housing arrangements result in frequent moves for young people. This is a contributing factor to high stress levels, possible missed school days and, if young people change schools, disrupted education and support networks.<sup>13</sup> This impacts young people's ability to perform well at school. Poor high school performance is a risk factor for lower socio-

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<sup>10</sup> T Williams and S Macken, 2012, *Homes for All: The 40 things we can do to improve supply and affordability*, McKell Institute, p. 16

<sup>11</sup> YFoundations, 2015, *Youth Health and Wellness*, <[http://yfoundations.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Youth-Health-and-Wellness\\_April2015\\_FINAL2.pdf](http://yfoundations.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Youth-Health-and-Wellness_April2015_FINAL2.pdf)>

<sup>12</sup> L Wood, P Flatau, K Zaretsky, S Foster, S Vallesi & D Miscenko, 2016, *What are the health, social and economic benefits of providing public housing and support to formerly homeless people?*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

<sup>13</sup> P Phibbs & P Young, 2005, *Housing assistance and non-shelter outcomes*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

economic outcomes in adult life.<sup>14</sup> Stable, long term tenures near good schools and communities provide young people with the support and resources they need to excel in education.

Good mental and physical health contributes to higher levels of educational attainment. A study conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations demonstrated the correlation between health and education attainment.<sup>15</sup> This found that young people who reported positive self-rated health outcomes were more likely to complete Year 12, whereas those with lower health ratings were more likely to finish school in Year 10 or earlier. It follows that if stable housing leads to good health, and good health leads to better educational attainment, appropriate housing is a fundamental in creating positive life chances for young people.

Social cohesion has also been linked to improved community and individual resilience.<sup>16</sup> One of the positives observed amongst some social housing residents was the strong sense of community, or social cohesion. This provided young people with support when experiencing life stressors. A study across different accommodation types in Adelaide indicated that, unlike residents in private rental accommodation, social housing residents are likely to report relatively high levels of social connection, involvement and belonging.<sup>17</sup> This is significant as a national study found that suburb disadvantage can be linked to

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<sup>14</sup> J Saunders, R Munford, T Thimasarn-Anwar, 2016, 'Staying on-track despite the odds: factors that assist young people facing adversity to continue with their education', *British Educational Research Journal*, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 56-73.

<sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, *4704.0 - The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Oct 2010*, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/lookup/4704.0Chapter365Oct+2010>>

<sup>16</sup> V Gardeev & M Egan, 2015, 'Social cohesion, neighbourhood resilience, and health: evidence from the New Deal for Communities programme', *Lancet supp. Supplement 2*, vol. 368, p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> A Ziersch & K Arthurson, 2007, 'Social capital & housing tenure in an Adelaide neighbourhood', *Urban Policy and Research*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 409-431.

lower levels of social cohesion.<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that participants in the Adelaide study reported high levels of cohesion within public housing communities yet not across communities of housing residents and wealthier homeowners, despite being a 'mixed' suburb. One reason could be the perceived stigma of public housing in society more broadly.<sup>19</sup> There is a need to consider the social and community aspects of accommodation, utilising service and design approaches that promote social cohesion for young people.

Housing is not just important because it improves economic outcomes and wellbeing, it is important because it contributes to a sense of individual freedom and personal value.<sup>20</sup> Appropriate housing gives tenants a sense of positive self-esteem, a feeling that they have control over their lives.<sup>21</sup> This contributes to their sense of identity and personhood. Having housing is a right enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, consequently housing is deeply connected to the notion of human dignity.<sup>22</sup>

Achieving positive outcomes would require improving the conditions of social housing and increasing housing stock appropriate to young people. This stock should be prioritised in areas that can meet young people's needs for education, employment, community involvement and recreation. Services tailored toward supporting young people should be enmeshed within the social housing to equip and support young people in a holistic manner. This means providing services that take into account the mental, emotional, social, physical, cultural and spiritual needs of the young person, rather than focusing narrowly on housing provision. Young people also feel concerned about the stigma associated with

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<sup>18</sup> P Ward, S Meyer, F Verity, T Gill & T Luong, 2011, 'Complex problems require complex solutions: the utility of social quality theory for addressing the social determinants of health', *BMC Public Health*, vol. 11, pp.630-639.

<sup>19</sup> A Ziersch & K Arthurson, op. cit., p. 425.

<sup>20</sup> D Clapham, 2010, 'Happiness, well-being and housing policy', *The Policy Press*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 253-267.

<sup>21</sup> P Phibbs & P Young, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 1942, op. cit. United Nations General Assembly, 1959, op. cit.

social housing, particularly because of the importance young people place on feeling like they belong.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, efforts to bring the broader community and social housing residents together should be made through community development projects.

## Housing context for young people

### Private market

Private renting is increasingly unviable. Many young people have turned to the private rental market as an alternative to ownership, which is shown by the 14.1% increase in renters aged between 15 and 24 years from 2005 to 2012.<sup>24</sup> In 2012, 77.7% of those aged between 15 and 24 in Australia were renting in the private rental market.<sup>25</sup> However, the rental market is also becoming increasingly unviable for young people due to problems with the affordability and stability of renting in NSW.

'Affordable housing' is housing that requires a tenant or owner to spend equal to or less than 30% of their total household income on housing.<sup>26</sup> According to the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), four out of five 'very low-income' households pay an unaffordable rent.<sup>27</sup> A quarter of these households pay rent in excess of

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<sup>23</sup> L Keevers, H Backhouse & L MacLeod, 2015, 'Young people's perspectives', *Parity*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 25-27.

<sup>24</sup> M Lovering, *Evidence review 058: Marrying later, renting longer*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

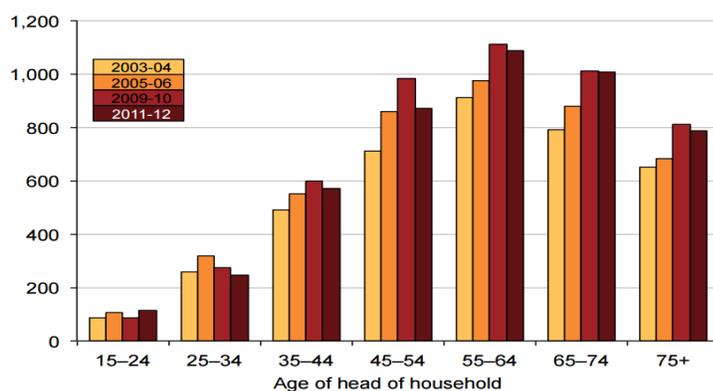
<sup>26</sup> Welfare Rights Centre (NSW) and Shelter NSW, *The impact of rent assistance on housing affordability for low-income renters: New South Wales*, Welfare Rights Centre (NSW) and Shelter NSW, 2014, viewed 28 January 2016, <[https://welfarerightscentre.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/rent-assistance-report\\_0.pdf](https://welfarerightscentre.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/rent-assistance-report_0.pdf)>

<sup>27</sup> AHURI, 2015, *op.cit.*

50% of their total income.<sup>28</sup> In Sydney specifically, there is only one affordable and available rental dwelling for every 15 very low-income households.<sup>29</sup>

Today's generation of young people often fall into this category of very low-income households. According to the Grattan Institute, one of the principal reasons for this trend is that younger generations face increasing stagnation of wealth accumulation, as most household wealth attained by older generations comes from property investment.<sup>30</sup> Due to the limited opportunities to purchase property for investment today, young people face difficulty in accruing capital gains from property investment.

Figure 1: Those over 45 became much richer, while the wealth of younger cohorts stagnated



Average wealth by age of head of household, 2012 \$'000s.

The age cohort over 45 years old captured most of the wealth over the decade, while wealth stagnated for the younger generation across the same timeline. For all ages, wealth was lost between the 2009-10 and 2011-12 period due to the Global Financial Crisis (Grattan Institute, 2014, p. 13).

Young people are also at a point in their lives in which they are employed part-time or casually, in part to enable flexibility for study commitments or to undertake

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> J Daley & D Wood, *The wealth of generations*, Grattan Institute, Victoria, 2014.

apprenticeships. By virtue of their age and stage in life, young people are also less skilled and experienced in the workforce, which accounts for their occupation of lower-paid and lower-level positions. A Universities Australia study, for instance, revealed that 67% of full-time domestic undergraduate students received an annual income of less than \$20,000 in 2012, whilst 21% received less than \$10,000.<sup>31</sup>

Young people often need to live close to transport, work, and educational institutions. This means that they must often move to urban areas where rent is high. This compels young people to cover their living expenses by foregoing other essentials, such as food in the case of an estimated average of 17% of students.<sup>32</sup>

In light of these issues, young people are often eligible recipients of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), a non-taxable income supplement payable to individuals struggling with rental stress. Young people who receive benefits and allowances such as Youth Allowance or Newstart are eligible for CRA.<sup>33</sup> As of September 2015, the maximum payment that a single person without children could receive is \$129.40, provided that their fortnightly rent is more than \$287.53.<sup>34</sup> However, these payments are inadequate: according to Shelter NSW, 40% of CRA recipients continue to experience housing stress even after receiving CRA.<sup>35</sup> In support of this finding, the National Welfare Rights Network reports that almost 75% of young people receiving Rent Assistance still pay unaffordable rent.<sup>36</sup> It is also

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<sup>31</sup> E Bexley, S Daroesman, S Arkoudis & R James, *University Student Finances in 2012: A study of the financial circumstances of domestic and international students in Australia's universities*, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 2013, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Department of Human Services, *Rent Assistance*, Canberra, 2016, viewed 28 January 2016, <<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/rent-assistance>>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Welfare Rights Centre (NSW) and Shelter NSW, *The impact of Rent Assistance on housing affordability for low-income renters: New South Wales*, Welfare Rights Centre (NSW), New South Wales, 2014, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Welfare Rights Centre NSW and the National Welfare Rights Network, *A home on the range or a home out of range?*, report, National Welfare Rights Network, 2013, p. 13.

important to note that the impact of Rent Assistance is lower for Sydney renters relative to other renters in NSW due to the area's higher rents.<sup>37</sup>

*Table 1: Current Rent Assistance rates if you do not have dependent children*

Family situation	Maximum payment per fortnight	No payment if your fortnightly rent is less than	Maximum payment if your fortnightly rent is more than
Single, with no children	\$129.40	\$115.00	\$287.53
Single, with no children, sharer	\$86.27	\$115.00	\$230.02
Couple, with no children	\$121.80	\$186.80	\$349.20
1 of a couple who are separated due to illness, with no children	\$129.40	\$115.00	\$287.53
1 of a couple who are temporarily separated, with no children	\$121.80	\$115.00	\$277.40

*Department of Human Services website <<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/rent-assistance>>*

It is worthwhile noting the earlier review of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (RTA), which did little to address key issues in the private rental sector. There are provisions in the RTA that have made housing issues for young people worse. First, the RTA lacks sufficient protections on excessive rent increases, which has placed young people who rent in further financial stress and at risk of homelessness. The provisions in the RTA regarding long-term tenancies are limited and therefore do not reflect the current housing situation in NSW whereby young people are far more likely to be long-term renters (i.e. less young people moving from renting to homeownership) than past generations. Finally, the RTA allows landlords to evict without grounds, which places young people in further rental stress as they are at risk of eviction even if they are fully compliant with the original rental agreement.

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<sup>37</sup> Welfare Rights Centre (NSW) and Shelter NSW, *The impact of rent assistance on housing affordability for low-income renters: New South Wales*, Welfare Rights Centre (NSW), New South Wales, 2014, p. 8.

These issues add pressure to the already backlogged social housing system. Young people who are fully able to secure and hold private tenancies have no alternative but to rely on the the social housing system.

## Homelessness

In 2011, 24% of the NSW homeless population were young people, although these figures vastly underestimate the actual population.<sup>38</sup> Many homeless young people are 'couch surfers', sleeping overnight at friends' or family's houses, or in overcrowded accommodation.<sup>39</sup> Young people are likely to experience homelessness if they have experienced conflict or family breakdown at home, are disengaged from school or have been in a government institution such as psychiatric care, juvenile justice or out-of-home care (OOHC).<sup>40</sup> There is limited data on homelessness in rural and regional Australia, amongst refugees, and members of the LGBTIQI community. Evidence suggests, however, that these young people have a higher risk of homelessness than the general population.

Homelessness amongst young people costs Australia an estimated \$747 million extra per year in costs to the medical and criminal justice systems. This is in addition to the costs of providing specialist housing services.<sup>41</sup> Providing better pathways into safe and secure long-term housing will not only benefit young people, it will also benefit governments and community in the form of significant cost savings.

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<sup>38</sup> Advocate for Children and Young People, 2016, *The NSW strategic plan for children and young people*, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, *2049.0 – Census of Population and housing: estimating homelessness, 2011*,  
<<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2049.0Main%20Features302011?open=document&tabname=Summary&prodno=2049.0&issue=2011&num=&view=>>

<sup>40</sup> Mission Australia, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> P Flatau, M Thielking, D MacKenzie & A Steen, op. cit.

Some groups of young people in NSW are over represented amongst the homeless population. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people; young people identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and/or Queer (LGBTIQ); young people exiting government institutions (out-of-home-care, psychiatric wards and juvenile justice); young people from refugee backgrounds, and young people in rural and regional NSW. These groups make up the largest percentages of the youth homeless population. Homelessness does not affect every young person equally and particular groups face higher risks. It is therefore essential that housing and homelessness services are culturally appropriate and aware of needs that are specific to particular groups.

There are some groups which will not be the focus of this paper, such as young people with a disability. This is because policy in the disability sector is changing dramatically with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which is outside the scope of this paper. In addition, issues faced by international students will not be discussed due to the complications associated with their temporary status in Australia, however it is worth noting that because of this, international students are unable to apply for social housing through the *Housing Pathways* list. It is recommended that these groups be part of future research.

Some intersections of youth populations at risk are highlighted below.

### **Young people exiting government care (out-of-home care, psychiatric wards, juvenile justice)**

A disproportionate number of young people who have had contact with government institutions become homeless – in particular, young people who have been in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC), juvenile justice institutions, and psychiatric wards. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of young people experiencing homelessness have been placed in some form of OOHC.<sup>42</sup> More than half of homeless young people reported having to leave home because of violence

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<sup>42</sup>P Flatau, M Thielking, D MacKenzie & A Steen, op. cit., p. 8.

between parents and guardians.<sup>43</sup> Research indicates that young people who have spent more than 12 months in juvenile justice are at a much higher risk of homelessness<sup>44</sup>. Many young people experiencing homelessness have been diagnosed with a mental health condition and are more likely to spend time in hospital due to their diagnosis.<sup>45</sup> Although more research needs to be done to identify the precise number of young people that have exited juvenile justice and psychiatric facilities into homelessness, these preliminary findings are concerning. Young people in these situations are reliant on governments to provide them with adequate care, yet they are more likely than the rest of the population to become homeless.

Transitioning into adulthood and independent living is a challenge for all young people, but it is clear that young people exiting from government care require extra support and service provision to ensure this is successful.<sup>46</sup> There is a current requirement in NSW that all young people have a 'leaving care plan' that includes a housing option, but only one third of young people in care were aware of such a transition plan.<sup>47</sup> This suggests that much more needs to be done to ensure that young people leaving the care of government institutions transition into stable, appropriate accommodation.

Governments must ensure that young people leaving their care are capable of independent living and have access to a variety of supports. It is important that young people in psychiatric care are linked to housing services and not discharged into

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> A Bevitt, A Chigavazira, N Herault, G Johnson, J Moschion, R Scutella, YP Tseng, M Wooden & G Kalb, 2015, *Journeys Home Research Report No. 6- Complete findings from waves 1 to 6*, University of Melbourne, <[http://melbourneinstitute.com/journeys\\_home/assets/pubs/2015/Scutella%20et%20al%20Journeys%20Home%20Research%20Report%20W6.pdf](http://melbourneinstitute.com/journeys_home/assets/pubs/2015/Scutella%20et%20al%20Journeys%20Home%20Research%20Report%20W6.pdf)>

<sup>45</sup> P Flatau, M Thielking, D MacKenzie & A Steen, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> J McDowell, 2016, *Go your own way: Create's resource for young people transitioning from care in Australia: an evaluation*, Create Foundation, <[http://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CREATE-Report-Card\\_GYOW-Report.pdf](http://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CREATE-Report-Card_GYOW-Report.pdf)>

<sup>47</sup> J McDowell, 2013, *Create Report Card 2013*, Create Foundation, <[http://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/08.-CREATE-Report-Card\\_Special-Edition-A-National-Study-Young-Person-Report-Card\\_2013.pdf](http://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/08.-CREATE-Report-Card_Special-Edition-A-National-Study-Young-Person-Report-Card_2013.pdf)>

homelessness.<sup>48</sup> Stable housing can also play an important role in reducing re-offending rates.<sup>49</sup>

It is positive to see the Government identify young people in OOHC, people experiencing mental illness, and people leaving prison in the *Foundations for Change* document as needing much more intensive and ongoing support to foster independent living skills. Shifting toward a more integrated and holistic youth service system will also assist in linking young people exiting institutions with appropriate housing providers.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are overrepresented in the youth homelessness population. Of the 48,262 people accessing specialist homeless services in 2014-15, 11,925 were Aboriginal.<sup>50</sup> Aboriginal young people are also over represented among the population of unemployed people, people who lived in OOHC and/or experienced imprisonment than non-Aboriginal young people.<sup>51</sup> Past policies of assimilation mean that the vast majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced some form of child removal either as a parent or child.<sup>52</sup> All have experienced land dispossession and few have been granted land rights or genuine ownership over country. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in OOHC has risen from nearly 12,500 in 2011 to almost 15,500 in 2015.<sup>53</sup> 40% of all Indigenous children in OOHC are in NSW.<sup>54</sup> Services have anecdotally reported that racism among real estate

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<sup>48</sup> FACS 2016a, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>49</sup> C O'Leary, 2013, *The role of stable accommodation in reducing recidivism: what does the evidence tell us*, *Safer Communities*, vol. 12, no.1

<sup>50</sup> Family and Community Services, 2016a, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24

<sup>52</sup> M Wilkie, 1997, *Bringing them home: Report of the national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*, Human rights and equal opportunity commission, p.31.

<sup>53</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016, *Child Protection Australia 2014-15*. Australian Government, pp. 53-4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

agents prevents Indigenous people from accessing the private market. These factors mean stable and appropriate housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not only important for wellbeing, it is essential to reducing inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

It is important to recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people may experience homelessness differently to non-Indigenous young people. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have a deep cultural and spiritual connection to land, country and kin.<sup>55</sup> Cultural and spiritual homelessness can result from where this has been broken or severely undermined.<sup>56</sup> Housing services aimed at addressing Indigenous homelessness need to consider how spiritual and cultural homelessness affects Indigenous people, and incorporate that into housing models.<sup>57</sup> For example, providing extra rooms to accommodate the caring obligations Aboriginal people have to their kin (see Housing Models). Staff need training around the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and ongoing impact of racism. This is particularly important as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders exit public housing at twice the rate of non-Aboriginal households and have shorter average tenancies.<sup>58</sup> This suggests that much more must be done to provide culturally appropriate and adequate housing to support the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Young people identifying as LGBTIQ

There is a lack of data on how many LGBTIQ young people experience homelessness in NSW. However information provided to Youth Action suggests that a considerable

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<sup>55</sup> M Moran, P Memmott, D Nash, C Birdsall-Jones, S Fantin, R Phillips & D Habibis, 2016, *Indigenous lifeworlds, conditionality and housing outcomes*. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

<sup>56</sup> Australian Housing and Research Institute, 2010, 'Indigenous Homelessness', *AHURI Research and Policy Bulletin*, issue 134, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Aboriginal Housing Office, 2016, *Aboriginal cultural competency standards- a self-assessment process for community housing providers*, <<http://communityhousing.org.au/chap/CHAP-Standards-menu.pdf>>

<sup>58</sup> FACS, 2016c, *Foundations for Success- a guide for social housing providers working with Aboriginal people and communities*. NSW Government, p. 8.

proportion of service users in youth SHS identify as LGBTIQ. Studies in the US and UK show that the percentage of homeless young people who identify as LGBTIQ could be as high as a quarter of the homeless youth population.<sup>59</sup> The 2014 General Social Survey found that 34% of gay and lesbian people had reported an experience of homelessness, compared to 13% of the heterosexual respondents.<sup>60</sup> Youth services in Brisbane have found 13% of the young people accessing their homeless services identify as LGBTIQ, though this could be higher as many may not have felt comfortable to disclose.<sup>61</sup> It is very likely that this is similar in NSW because the main cause of homelessness among LGBTIQ young people are higher rates of family and domestic violence, substance abuse, and social exclusion.<sup>62</sup> It is concerning that there is no official NSW-wide data as this implies that LGBTIQ young people are not seen as a key group at risk of homelessness in NSW, despite international and anecdotal evidence to the contrary.

Information provided to Youth Action indicated that services were reluctant to collect data on LGBTIQ young people because of concerns around privacy and confidentiality however, this may inadvertently indicate to young people that services are not LGBTIQ-safe spaces; LGBTIQ young people may choose not to access services if they fear homophobia or transphobia.<sup>63</sup> In addition, LGBTIQ young people can be alienated and excluded from mainstream services in many typical practices. For example, the requirement that service users who do not identify on the gender binary tick a 'male' or 'female' box on intake applications, or housing transgender and gender diverse youth in female or male only

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<sup>59</sup> D Lewis, 2016, *Push to support homeless LGBTI youth after influx at crisis accommodation centres*, ABC, Australia, 31 March 2016, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-31/push-to-support-growing-number-of-lgbti-homeless-youth/7286354>>

<sup>60</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia. 2014*, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4159.0>>

<sup>61</sup> Brisbane Youth Service, 2016, *Queer, Young and Homeless*, <<http://www.brisyouth.org/2016/04/04/queer-young-and-homeless/>>

<sup>62</sup> E Smith, T Jones, R Ward, J Dixon, A Mitchell & L Hillier, 2014, *From blues to rainbows: Mental health and wellbeing of gender diverse and transgender young people in Australia*. The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society.

<sup>63</sup> M Windred, 2016, 'Transgender and gender diverse youth homelessness', *Parity*, vol. 29, no. 3, p.40.

housing despite how they may identify.<sup>64</sup> In some situations being housed with non-LGBTIQ identifying people can lead to violence and harassment.<sup>65</sup> If housing services are not collecting data on LGBTIQ service users then it is impossible to understand how many young people may have “dropped out” of services because of experiencing discrimination.

In addition to collecting data, housing services across NSW need to be trained in how to best offer support to LGBTIQ young people and address issues of homophobia and transphobia within services.<sup>66</sup> This can involve staff training and increasing the number of LGBTIQ-identifying staff at a service.

## **Rural and Regional NSW**

Across Australia, housing stress is greater in rural and regional areas than metropolitan areas.<sup>67</sup> For example, despite having a lower population density, wait times for public housing in regional areas, such as far north NSW, are comparable to those in the Sydney-metropolitan region.<sup>68</sup> This may be partly due to having less properties than the Sydney districts, however it indicates that the demand-supply ratio for public housing in rural areas is comparable to those in metropolitan NSW.

The current wait list and priority criteria prevents the majority of young people from accessing public housing, and young people in rural and regional NSW are more socially excluded than their metropolitan peers – it is therefore possible to argue that young people in rural and regional areas are at particular risk of entering entrenched disadvantage, including chronic homelessness. Young people in rural and regional Australia experience greater rates of social and economic exclusion than their metropolitan

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<sup>64</sup> J Shelton, 2015, 'Transgender youth homelessness: Understanding programmatic barriers through the lens of cisgenderism', *Children and youth services review*, vol. 59, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid*

<sup>66</sup> M Windred, *ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>67</sup> National Rural Health Alliance Inc & ACOSS, 2013, *Joint Report: a snapshot of poverty in rural and regional Australia*, Authors, pp. 9-10.

<sup>68</sup> FACS 2015.

counterparts.<sup>69</sup> This exclusion is caused by several interlocking factors, including overall low unemployment rates within a seasonal/undiversified local economy; geographic distance; transport issues; limited access to health care, human services, and education or training.<sup>70</sup> The wellbeing of young people is heavily influenced by the level of advantage and disadvantage in their local area, however small inland towns are more likely to have multiple of the previously noted factors that cause disadvantage.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, addressing housing issues in rural and regional areas requires a localised response, which should not focus solely on housing; policy makers need to recognise and address the influence of other factors.

Based on information provided to Youth Action, governments must increase the number and locations of specialist accommodation for young people in rural and regional areas. Providing accommodation in only a few locations can create further barriers. Lack of public transport in rural and regional areas means that young people struggle to travel the long distances sometimes required to get from housing to places like schools, jobs, social, and sporting activities,<sup>72</sup> There is also a need to increase staffing levels and service capacity through greater funding. Many organisations experience the challenge of travelling large distances to provide services to clients in their area. This forces agencies to limit the amount of time they can spend in each area as well as their capacity to meet the needs of young people, or be responsive to changes in the community.

## **Young people with refugee backgrounds**

Young people with refugee backgrounds are disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness. It is estimated that the risk of homelessness is six to eight times greater for

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<sup>69</sup> National Rural Health Alliance Inc & ACOSS, loc. cit., p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3. M Alston & J Kent, 2009, 'Generation X-pendable: the social exclusion of rural and remote young people', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 89-107.

<sup>71</sup> M Alston & J Kent, p. 91.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, p. 97.

refugee young people than non-refugees.<sup>73</sup> This risk results from histories of homelessness in refugee young people's countries of origin; racism amongst realtors; lack of rental history, and bad debt from needing to take out loans in order to cope with severe economic disadvantage.<sup>74</sup> Refugee young people are often exposed to the same forms of disadvantage linked to homelessness that other people from lower socio-economic backgrounds have, with the addition of lacking important language skills, knowledge of customs, places, services available and how to access them.<sup>75</sup> This creates barriers from accessing the private rental market. In addition, refugees must apply through the same wait list as the broader population. This is reflected in the small number of refugees who access housing assistance, despite almost half of new arrivals stating that they needed housing assistances in their first two years after arriving in Australia.<sup>76</sup> The majority of refugees engaged in 'couch surfing' with friends or family, often with other people from their country of origin, rather than using services.<sup>77</sup>

Young people with a refugee experience face significant barriers accessing public housing and housing services. This includes language barriers, lack of knowledge about how to access housing assistance, misinformation about housing services, the wait list, difficult application processes, the lack of services with staff from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds or that offer culturally-safe spaces.<sup>78</sup> Young people with refugee backgrounds have spoken about choosing not to access services because they were not culturally appropriate and made them feel unsafe or like they did not belong.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> J Couch, 2011, A new way home: refugee young people and homelessness in Australia, *Journal of Social Inclusion*, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 41

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* J Forrest, K Hermes, R Johnson & M Poulsen, 2012, The housing resettlement experience of refugee immigrants to Australia, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 187-206.

<sup>75</sup> F Fozdar & L Hartley, 2014, Housing and the creation of home for refugees in Western Australia, *Housing, theory and society*, vol. 31, no. 4, p. 153.

<sup>76</sup> J Forrest, K Hermes, R Johnson & M Poulsen, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.* J Couch, 2011, *op. cit.*

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.* F Fozdar & L Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>79</sup> J Couch, *op. cit.*

Some young people have discussed being 'kicked out' of services because they did not understand the rules, due to language difficulties and no interpreter being provided.<sup>80</sup>

Such young people cannot secure long-term stable tenancies in the private rental market.<sup>81</sup> The majority of refugees arrive with little to no assets and even those with tertiary qualifications from their country of origin struggle to find employment.<sup>82</sup> Many refugee young people want to live independently in stable accommodation.<sup>83</sup> As previously noted, however, refugees go on the same wait list as other Australians, despite the compounding barriers they face. Services offered to refugee young people require attention, with a need for more services who utilise culturally appropriate practices and offer support that is sensitive to the histories of torture and trauma that many young people experience.<sup>84</sup> These services should offer interpreters and other forms of language support as well as education, as many refugee young people's schooling has been disrupted.<sup>85</sup> In addition, facilitating the creation of a pool of social housing specifically for refugee and CALD populations would enable refugees to better transition into living in Australia and ease the wait list.<sup>86</sup>

## Social Housing

In 2015 there were 59,035 households on the NSW social housing wait list.<sup>87</sup> There was an estimated wait of 10 years or more for those on the standard wait list, and two to five years

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<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> F Fozdar & L Hartley, *op. cit.*

<sup>82</sup> J Forrest, L Hermes, R Johnson & M Poulsen, *op. cit.*

<sup>83</sup> J Couch, *op. cit.*, p. 49

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> J Forrest, L Hermes, R Johnson & M Poulsen, *op. cit.*

<sup>87</sup> FACS, 2015, *Housing pathways - expected waiting times*, <[http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/332274/2015-EWT-Overview-table.pdf](http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/332274/2015-EWT-Overview-table.pdf)>

for those on the priority wait list in most areas of NSW.<sup>88</sup> Forecasts in 2012 estimated that Australia would need over 250,000 more dwellings by 2042 in order to meet demand.<sup>89</sup> While young people are a large part of households, they cannot access leases in their own right. Young people are over-represented among the homeless population, and find it more difficult than other sections of the community to find and maintain appropriate housing, leading to lessened access to affordable housing.<sup>90</sup>

The history of social housing policy has changed the kinds of tenants in social housing, and the purpose of social housing for its tenants.<sup>91</sup> Originally, public housing was built to house blue collar workers and their families.<sup>92</sup> In order to deal with an ever increasing wait list the policy diversified.<sup>93</sup> Governments introduced measures to encourage low income earners into the private market (most notably Commonwealth Rental Assistance).<sup>94</sup> Over time the funding to public housing decreased and stock began to diminish. However the wait list did not decrease and so a second, 'priority' list was created with the intention of putting people with greater and more immediate needs in housing first.<sup>95</sup> As a result public housing estates now house a large number of people who experience disadvantage, and many housing estates are located in areas that experience locational disadvantage.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> A Beer, R Bentley, E Baker, K Mason, S Mallett, A Kavanagh & T LaMontagne, 2016, 'Neoliberalism, economic restructuring and policy change: precarious housing and precarious employment in Australia', *Urban Studies*, vol. 53, no. 8, p. 1545.

<sup>90</sup> Homelessness Australia, 2014, *Homelessness in New South Wales*, [http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/images/publications/Infographics/NSW\\_-\\_updated\\_Jan\\_2014.pdf](http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/images/publications/Infographics/NSW_-_updated_Jan_2014.pdf)>

<sup>91</sup> S Fitzpatrick & H Pawson, 2014, 'Ending security of tenure for social renters: transitioning to 'ambulance service' social housing?', *Housing Studies*, vol. 29, no. 5, pp.1466-1810.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> K Arthurson, loc. cit.

<sup>94</sup> A Morris, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup> Fitzpatrick & Pawson, op. cit.

<sup>96</sup> A Morris, op. cit.

Young people in NSW mainly have contact with social housing in one of two ways. For a small group, it is where they grew up. For others it is largely unattainable. In 2013, 35% of social housing tenants in NSW were younger than 25, with only 9% aged 18-25 years old.<sup>97</sup> Australia-wide figures indicate that there is a greater number of young people in SOMIH housing than Public Housing.<sup>98</sup> It is not clear how many of these are leaseholders. It is also unclear how many of the total percentage of young people are in public or community housing. It is possible that numbers may be greater in community housing than public housing due to the greater number of CHPs that build housing to service a particular population group, and the partnerships CHPs have with youth services in order to run transitional housing.

Within the current policy, social housing is positioned as problematic for independence and economic participation, yet necessary for groups of people who experience multiple layers of disadvantage.

### A place to grow up?

Some public housing estates have larger proportions of children than others, for example Claymore in the Macarthur region. According to services that work with young people in social housing, the biggest concern for young people in social housing is safety.

Information provided to Youth Action has raised several concerns about the experiences of young people in public housing. This includes being exposed to drug use and criminal behaviour, as well as fear caused by sounds and fights at night time. It is clear that parents were concerned about their children's exposure to risk in social housing. This risk was managed by ensuring young people were home by sundown or out with an adult parents knew and trusted.

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<sup>97</sup> FACS, 2013, op. cit.

<sup>98</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015, *Housing Assistance in Australia 2015*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/housing-assistance/haa/2015/>>

The environment posed a risk to the health of young people. Poor quality housing, lack of ventilation, broken glass in public spaces and overcrowding were common. This not only impacts young people's physical health, it also limits their social wellbeing. Information received by Youth Action stated that young people's friends did not come over because friends parents' were concerned about the wellbeing of their children. The stigma of public housing meant that young people were often socially isolated within their peer group at school. The comments provided to Youth Action were supported by studies conducted with young people who grew up in severe economic disadvantage, many of whom lived in social housing.<sup>99</sup>

Young people in public housing were portrayed as lacking the appropriate supports to progress toward further study and careers in adult life. This was positioned as a barrier to achieving independence. Practical issues, such as a lack of internet connection were also barriers toward attaining an education and employment. Although many young people were able to get jobs in low-skilled roles, for example in the hospitality industry, this did not provide enough income for them to move out of home in the current housing climate. Based on the information given to Youth Action young people found this frustrating as they desired to be independent but were not able to do so. Youth Action affirms the NSW government's plan to offer greater support to young people in social housing wanting to transition to independent living. This needs to ensure that young people have the support to engage in education and employment, addressing underlying issues that may destabilise their participation.

Despite risks and barriers experienced by young people, Youth Action was informed of a strong community identity amongst some people in public housing. Young people who lived together in social housing were able to form a supportive bond due to their common experience. As previously noted, social support is important for health and wellbeing, as

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<sup>99</sup> J Skettebol, P Saunders, G Redmond, M Bedford & B Cass, 2012, *Making a difference: building on young people's experiences of Economic Adversity*, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW.

well as improving economic and social outcomes.<sup>100</sup> Strong communities within social housing require an intentional and ongoing focus to ensure these communities endure even in new housing models.

### Finding a place to call home?

According to information provided to Youth Action, many services prefer to place young people in transitional accommodation rather than public housing. The main reason services did not make applications for social housing was both the length of the wait list, and the lack of appropriate support in social housing – neither of which is conducive to achieving housing outcomes for young people, let alone positive life outcomes. As some observed, if a young person in most metropolitan parts of NSW applies for social housing via *Housing Pathways* when they are 18, it is likely they will no longer be a ‘young person’ by the time they receive accommodation, unless they qualify for the priority list.<sup>101</sup> Ten years is too long to wait for stable accommodation. It was clear that getting a young person into social housing required intense advocacy on behalf of that young person, which many services do not have the resources to carry out.

It was indicated that services’ were concerned with the risk of physical harm and exposure to illicit substances in public housing. There was also some concern among a small number that public housing was causally related to intergenerational poverty. The majority cited the poor quality of the physical environment and criminality within the neighbourhood. It was noted that the perception of criminality within public housing may be greater than the actual rates of criminality and that not all criminal activity comes from residents. Regardless, literature shows that feeling unsafe in a neighbourhood negatively influences the self-rated health outcomes of residents.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> R Viner, E Ozer, S Denny, M Marmot, M Resnick, A Fatusi, C Currie, 2012, ‘Adolescent health 2: adolescence and the social determinants of health’, *Lancet*, vol. 379, pp. 1641-52.

<sup>101</sup> FACS, 2015, op. cit.

<sup>102</sup> F Baum, A Ziersch, G Zhang & K Osborne, 2009, ‘Do perceived neighbourhood cohesion and safety contribute to neighbourhood differences in health?’, *Health & Place*, vol. 15, pp. 925-934.

Support structures are much stronger in transitional housing, compared to social housing. Services offered to support clients in transitional housing vary from case-management through to intensive wrap-around support services that support young people's physical, mental and social needs as well as providing life skills, employment and training opportunities. In all cases the process was designed to build young people's skills and wellbeing in order to help them maintain a tenancy, and independence - in the private market. Services assisted young people in finding private tenancies and a few made a point of continuing support after tenancies were gained to ensure they became long-lasting. This approach is supported by literature on the needs and housing patterns of young people (see 'Housing Models').<sup>103</sup>

## Current Policy: Strengths and Limitations

Social housing has recently been given a larger focus with the release of *Future Directions*, which sets out the general policy direction of social housing in NSW over the next decade. Its focus is:

- To increase and improve social housing stock;
- To improve tenant satisfaction, and
- To transition more people out of social housing and in to the private rental market.

<sup>104</sup>

The NSW Government has committed to increasing resident transitions out of social housing by 5%, and increasing the proportion of young people who move from SHS to long-term accommodation by 10%.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> R Mullins, 2016, 'Social housing for young people: why my foundations youth housing was formed', *Parity*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp.30-31.

<sup>104</sup> FACS, 2016d, *Future Directions for Social Housing*, Government of NSW, Sydney, pp. 5-6.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

The NSW Government plans to achieve this through:

- Increasing the involvement of private capital and investors in redeveloping existing stock, such as is occurring in Waterloo and Miller's Point;
- Greater stock transfer and involvement of CHPs, and
- Increasing the number of wrap-around support services and more subsidies to people accessing the private rental market.<sup>106</sup>

It is important to consider both the potential benefits and challenges that *Future Directions* means for young people across NSW.

The release of *Future Directions* coincides with the NSW Government identifying youth homelessness as a 'Premier's Priority'.<sup>107</sup> This will involve expanding rental subsidies to young people and investing in improving, maintaining and expanding housing stock. In *Future Directions* the NSW Government promises a net increase in the numbers of housing stock, committing to building 23,000 replacement social and affordable dwellings over the next 10 years.<sup>108</sup> Of these, 3,000 will be new additional housing stock managed by the community-housing sector.<sup>109</sup> This will make some headway in reversing the long-term decline of housing stock and provides much needed redevelopment of existing housing stock.<sup>110</sup> It is encouraging to hear that new developments will look similar to private dwellings and be close to essential services.<sup>111</sup>

This follows development on a federal level with the establishment of the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). The NAHA is an agreement between the

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<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, pp 5-8.

<sup>107</sup> Government of NSW, 2016, *Premier's Priorities*, <<https://www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities>>

<sup>108</sup> FACS 2016d, *op cit.* p. 8

<sup>109</sup> Shelter NSW, 2016, *State Budget 2016-17*, p. 18., <[http://www.shelternsw.org.au/sites/shelternsw.org.au/files/public/documents/mem1607statebudget-update\\_cj.pdf](http://www.shelternsw.org.au/sites/shelternsw.org.au/files/public/documents/mem1607statebudget-update_cj.pdf)>

<sup>110</sup> G Turnbull, 2016, 'Public Housing: On the up and up and up', *Inner Sydney Voice*, issues 129, p. 6

<sup>111</sup> FACS, 2016d, *op cit.*, p. 9.

Commonwealth and State governments. Formed in 2009, it aims to reduce homelessness, increase service provision, increase support to low and moderate income households to access housing, and address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage.<sup>112</sup> *Future Directions* can be conceptualised within the wider federal context as an attempt to achieve some of the outcomes listed in the NAHA.

It is important that any solution for young people who require social housing involves not only housing but access to appropriate support services, particularly young people experiencing homelessness. This is a key component of the NSW government's commitment to increasing the proportion of young people transitioning out of SHS by 10%. It is encouraging to see this reflected in *Future Directions*, which promises to increase the prevalence of 'wrap around' services in housing.<sup>113</sup> The policy creates a division of two key groups: a 'safety-net' group, people who need support for an extended period of time, and an 'opportunity' group, people who can be transitioned out of housing into the private market and workforce.<sup>114</sup> The wrap around services will include individualised case-management for tenants.<sup>115</sup> It is likely the government will rely on CHPs to achieve this, and will maintain a competitive tendering process that aims to reward providers that can achieve high levels of tenant satisfaction and transition rates.<sup>116</sup>

For young people, it is positive to see the NSW Government committing to increasing housing stock as well as recognising the need to combine housing with support services. As discussed above, stable housing helps to secure young people's wellbeing. However, wellbeing also requires secure relationships with friends and family, physical and mental health, as well as education, employment and safety.<sup>117</sup> Whilst it is positive to see this

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<sup>112</sup> Council of Australian Governments, 2009, *National Affordable Housing Agreement*, author.

<sup>113</sup> FACS, 2016e, *What we heard. A summary of feedback on the Social Housing in NSW Discussion Paper*, author. FACS, 2016d, *op cit.*, p. 6..

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>115</sup> *Future Directions*, *op. cit.*

<sup>116</sup> H Pawson, 2016, *Is Community Housing Set to Feature in the Waterloo Estate Rebuild?*, Inner-Sydney Voice, issue 129, pp. 18-19.

<sup>117</sup> YFoundations, 2015, *op. cit.*

reflected on a policy level, it is important to ensure that this occurs at the 'coalface'. To do this, policy must be implemented in a way that overcomes several challenges, including access (as previously discussed), lack of stable and secure tenures and the need for more youth appropriate housing and service provision.

## **Stability and security of tenure**

Young people need access to a secure and stable tenancy in order to address complex issues in their lives. A study of homelessness assistance packages found that young people are more likely to present to services with four or more 'complex needs'.<sup>118</sup> Many have experienced forms of family or domestic violence.<sup>119</sup> One study found that 53% of young people who have experienced homelessness have been diagnosed with at least one mental health condition.<sup>120</sup> Youth Action commends the NSW Government's commitment to provide wrap around services, yet urges the need to be aware that young people often need mental health support, drug and alcohol counselling, mentoring in life skills as well as secure and stable housing.

For many young people, the main form of housing support accessible is transitional housing. Transitional housing is more effective when offered alongside a variety of other support services such as outreach activities, case management and links to employment and education.<sup>121</sup> Because of its multi-faceted supportive approach Transitional housing enables young people to begin to address challenges in their lives beyond homelessness as well as receiving accommodation.<sup>122</sup> Within NSW, service providers have raised concerns

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<sup>118</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008, *Needs of clients in the supported accommodation assistance program: report on high and complex needs census 2008*, author, p. 9.

<sup>119</sup> J Fildes, 2016, *Home and Away: Child and Youth Homelessness in Australia*, Parity, vol. 29, no. 3, p.6.

<sup>120</sup> P Flatau, M Thielking, D MacKenzie & A Steen, op. cit.

<sup>121</sup> M Coffey & C Stone, 2016, 'Building on the Foundations, Working 'Up Stream' and Opening Pathways', *Parity*, vol. 29, no 3, p. 42.

<sup>122</sup> R Mullins, op. cit., p. 30.

\* Temporary accommodation is a form of crisis relief offered by the NSW Government. Each person is entitled to 28 days in emergency accommodation.

that temporary accommodation\* is often full or unable to take certain clients, for example people under 18 or who are using illicit drugs. This has been noted particularly when speaking with services in rural and regional NSW. In addition, the length of tenancy is not enough time for many young people to find stable tenancies. This can be even harder for young people who have experienced homelessness, who are more likely to experience a mental illness, be victim to trauma and/or abuse, or have contact with the criminal justice system. It is important young people experiencing homelessness are able to access transitional housing in a timely manner in order to have the support and stability to have an independent, full and happy life.

It is important that young people in both social housing and private rental have access to tenants advocates to understand know their rights and be represented. Often young people are forced into homelessness after having tenancies terminated on contestable or false grounds. Tenants advocates and other services can play an important role in saving tenancies in these situations, but young people are often unaware that these services exist.<sup>123</sup>

Stability and security of tenure is an important foundation for young people experiencing homeless. This can be improved through access to more longer-term transitional housing for young people, expanding the numbers of temporary and transitional housing available, revisiting the the serious flaws in the private rental market, and working with services and tenants unions to ensure young people know their rights and responsibilities as tenants.

## **Appropriate housing and service provision**

As previously argued, young people need access to stable and secure housing that is appropriate to them and their needs. For young people already in social housing, many are

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<sup>123</sup> Tenants' Union of NSW, 2015, *Submission on the discussion paper 'social housing in NSW'*, author, pp. 6-8, <<https://tenantsunion.org.au/publications/papers-submissions/147-tu-social-housing-discussion-paper-sub>>

in situations that could be classified as a form of homelessness. For example, Youth Action spoke with young people who described living in overcrowded apartments with poor security and no access to essential services like the Internet. In addition, most of the tenants in social housing come from marginalised backgrounds. This is because as the numbers of social housing stock declined, applicants with more extreme circumstances and complex needs have been given priority.<sup>124</sup> This has resulted in a concentration of disadvantage around particular housing estates.<sup>125</sup> Information from young people that Youth Action received stated that these estates exposed young people to high levels of drug and alcohol use, family and domestic violence, and criminal activity. Young people who live in these social housing estates also discussed feeling stigmatised and discriminated against by other residents. This combination of inadequate funding, tighter targeting and social stigma means that young people living in social housing experience significant disadvantage often based on postcode.

The main policy response to this has been through implementing a social mix model.<sup>126</sup> This involves building social housing and private rental properties either on the same site or together in particular suburbs. It is proposed that a social mix model will reduce stigma and locational disadvantage by attracting investment and services to disadvantaged areas and by providing positive role models within the community.<sup>127</sup> It is argued this will increase the economic and social opportunities of residents and change resident behaviour.<sup>128</sup> Social mix can also refer to the types of social housing tenancies: for example, longer-term tenancies with shorter terms. Under the *Future Directions* plan for estate

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<sup>124</sup> L Groenhart & T Burke, 2014, *Thirty years of public housing supply and consumption: 1981-2011*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Brisbane, QLD.

<sup>125</sup> Tenants' Union of NSW, 2015, loc. cit., p. 16.

<sup>126</sup> K Arthurson, op. cit.

<sup>127</sup> J Eastgate, 2016, *Issues for tenants in public housing renewal projects: literature search findings*, Shelter NSW, p. 31.

<sup>128</sup> R Doney, P McGuirk & K Mee, 2013, 'Social mix and the problematisation of social housing', *Australian Geographer*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 401-418.

renewal the ratio will be 70:30, with 70% allocated to the private market and 30% for social and affordable housing.<sup>129</sup>

The evidence that social mix in itself creates these outcomes is inconclusive.<sup>130</sup> This is because social mix is often seen in isolation from broader structural factors like reduced public housing stock, localised unemployment and stigma from other residents.<sup>131</sup> Accounts of instances where social mix has been implemented in existing housing estates can result in residents experiencing disruption to their sense of place and connection to community.<sup>132</sup> As previously noted, young people in existing housing estates often have existing close community ties. Such community ties act as a form of resilience against disappointments and setbacks in life. These relationships can be disrupted by the extensive redevelopments sometimes involved in social mix projects. Where social mix has achieved better outcomes is when it is delivered alongside increased community support, development and service provision. It is important that as the NSW Government plans to redevelop existing estates that community ties are not disrupted and that funding is allocated towards community development and service provision.

For young people wishing to access longer-term social housing it is important that the housing is suitable to their needs, including both location and type of housing. Young people have distinct needs from housing design that reflect their age and life stage. Family-sized stock will be appropriate for young people that are parents however single young people are more appropriately housed in one or two bedroom properties. This is problematic considering only 56% of public housing in NSW in 2013 were one or two bedroom properties whilst the demand for dwellings this size was much greater, with 67%

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<sup>129</sup> FACS, 2016d, p. 9.

<sup>130</sup> FACS *ibid.* R Doney, P McGuirk & K Mee, *op. cit.* K Arthurson, 2016, 'Social Mix and the challenges in creating it', *Inner Sydney Voice*, issue 129.

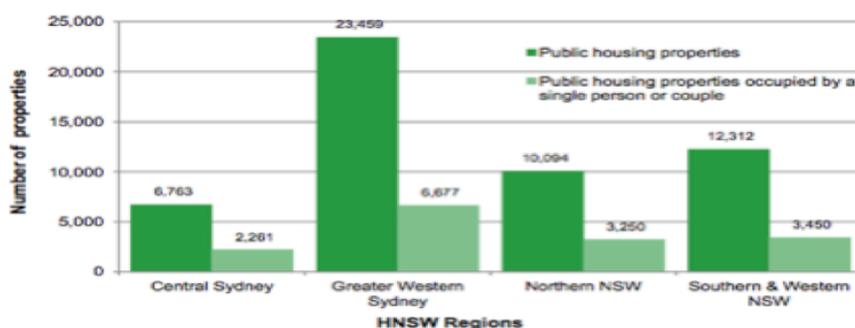
<sup>131</sup> K Arthurson, *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>132</sup> J Eastgate, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

of tenants requiring a one or two bedroom property<sup>133</sup>. Of the 59,500 registered individuals waiting for public housing in June 2012, 44% were identified as singles.<sup>134</sup> This has led to a severe underutilisation of the available housing stock.

In February 2013, a single person or a couple occupied 30 per cent of three or more bedroom public housing properties.<sup>135</sup> It was estimated that only 67.6 per cent of public housing households match the size of the dwelling.<sup>136</sup>

Figure 2: Bedroom properties occupied by a single person or a couple, February 2013



Source: NSW Audit Office (2013) *Making the Best Use of Public Housing: Housing NSW, NSW Auditor-General's report to Parliament*, p. 17

The under-occupancy resulting from current Housing New South Wales policy contributes to the current housing stress experienced by the system. Firstly, there are insufficient dwellings for the number of clients requiring them. Secondly, this under occupancy results in a loss of public housing revenue as average weekly rent is a function of the number of occupants rather than the size of the house. To illustrate, in 2012, a fully occupied four-

<sup>133</sup> Audit Office of New South Wales 2013, *New South Wales Auditor-General's Report Performance Audit: Making the best use of public housing*, Accessed on 14 January 2015, <<http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/performance-audit-reports/2013-reports/making-the-best-use-of-public-housing>, p. 46>

<sup>134</sup> Audit Office of NSW, 2013. *Making the best use of public housing: Housing NSW*. NSW Auditor-General's report to Parliament. [online] NSW Government, p 29.

<sup>135</sup> Audit Office of NSW, 2013, *ibid* pg. 17.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid* pg. 15.

bedroom property would generate \$159/week in rent. If occupied by one or two people only, the weekly rent would reduce to \$128.<sup>137</sup> It is necessary to re-imagine the composition of housing stock in order to more effectively manage existing resources. More effective management requires taking into account the needs of young people.

A vacant bedroom charge was implemented in 2013, intending to reduce under-occupancy. It has likely not had the intended impact. Of the 17,000 underoccupied tenancies, only 250 chose to relocate rather than paying more to stay put.<sup>138</sup> The policy seems to underestimate community ties, as well as overestimate the availability of more appropriate stock.

For some young people, living with others in a share house situation can lead to developing independent living skills and conflict management. However, services have noted that some young people, such as those with a background of trauma, struggle living with others. Services indicated that this was because some other residents may inadvertently remind these young people of their traumatic experience. There needs to be a variety of housing options suitable to the needs and personal histories of individual young people.

While it is positive to see the NSW Government commit to increasing social housing stock, it is not enough to address the 59,035 households already on the waiting list.<sup>139</sup> An increase of 2,000 stock per year, as recommended by Shelter NSW, is an important step towards addressing youth homelessness in NSW as it will increase the capacity of the housing

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<sup>137</sup> Audit Office of NSW, 2013. *Making the best use of public housing: Housing NSW*. NSW Auditor-General's report to Parliament. [online] NSW Government, p.18.

<sup>138</sup> Wood, A. and Van den Broeke, L. 2013, 'NSW Government to introduce new bed tax on public housing tenants with spare bedrooms' *Daily Telegraph*. [online] Available at: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/business/nsw-government-to-introduce-new-bed-tax-on-public-housing-tenants-with-spare-bedrooms/story-fni0cp8j-1226669710419>; Department of Family and Community Services 2014, *Social Housing in NSW: A discussion paper for input and comment*, pg. 31

<sup>139</sup> NSW Council of Social Services, 2016, *Social and Affordable Housing Innovations: People First*, author.

sector to meet the needs of young people.<sup>140</sup> This will help expand the numbers of young people able to access longer term social housing. Coupled with an increase in stock must be a recognition of, and priority access for, more young people.

## Community Housing Providers

The growth of the community housing sector has produced significant increase in housing stock and changed the way services are delivered. CHPs provide much better rates of tenant satisfaction. CHPs are able to provide tailored intervention to particular groups of young people and bring together stable housing and wrap-around-services. This is a process that has been welcomed by government and youth services. *Future Directions* indicates that the NSW Government will continue to facilitate growth in the community housing sector by transferring 35% of current housing stock to CHPs.<sup>141</sup>

The process of transferring public housing to CHPs is part of a wider aim by the NSW government to make social housing more sustainable. It is hoped that CHPs will be able to generate enough capital to both expand and maintain existing properties. Public housing tenants are unable to apply for rent assistance whereas community-housing tenants can. This provides an additional revenue stream for CHPs, bringing many providers closer to drawing even with the cost of providing housing. By increasing the amount of housing stock CHPs own and manage, the NSW Government hopes to create a more cost-efficient system, contributing to the sustainability of social housing overall.

While CHPs have been shown to achieve better outcomes when working with young people experiencing homelessness it is important to note the risks of transferring public stock into a competitive market. Public housing has played an important role historically in providing affordable housing in situations where the market is unable to. Transferring stock away from the public system leaves housing vulnerable to market failure as a result of economic shocks and instability. In these situations, it is important that the government is able to

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<sup>140</sup> Shelter NSW, 2015, *Shelter NSW Submission: Social Housing in NSW*, author.

<sup>141</sup> FACS, 2016d, op. cit.

step in and guarantee housing supply to young people who need it. The relative success of CHPs is compared to a public housing system that has been largely underfunded and undervalued for decades. There should be a caution as to whether transferring public housing stock becomes a substitute for much needed investment and resources into existing public housing. Providing safe, stable and appropriate housing for young people is a key responsibility of government.

## Housing Models

No individual housing model will be the 'silver bullet' for young people's housing needs. Ensuring that all young people have access to safe, secure housing requires a response from many areas, including federal and state government, the education system and employment providers. It will encompass working within an early intervention model with families and schools, addressing overall housing affordability, and ensuring better transitions out of government institutions such as juvenile justice, psychiatric hospital and OOHC.

AHURI has long identified that people under 18 experiencing homelessness is a risk factor for long-term, homelessness, and requires a different set of support systems and services from the standard provided to adults.<sup>142</sup>

Given the importance of adolescence and early adulthood for development, it is vital that intervention into homelessness occur as early as possible. Early intervention, outreach, rapid rehousing and ongoing support will greatly assist young people to transition out of homelessness. This should involve partnering with schools, other educational institutions, the community and youth organisations, to identify young people who are at risk of homelessness early. This would be supported by increasing the understanding of homelessness amongst the general population so that less widely recognised forms of homelessness, such as couch surfing, can be recognised and appropriate referrals made.

Greater consideration needs to be taken for specific groups of young people. For example:

- increasing the number of services who offer head leasing to house young people who are under 18;
- taking a harm minimisation model in housing toward young people who experience drug and alcohol abuse;
- adopting a trauma-informed framework across all youth housing models, and

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<sup>142</sup> AHURI (2010) 'Evidence to inform NSW Homelessness Action Priorities 2009-1' AHURI.

- ensuring housing is a 'safe space' for young people from diverse populations, such as sexually and gender diverse young people, CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Safe spaces are free from discrimination amongst both staff and fellow tenants.

Some specific housing models that have been used with young people are discussed below.

## Supportive housing

Supportive housing is a broad term for “any package of assistance that aims to assist tenants with a broad range of health and other aspects of their lives including access to and sustaining of affordable tenancies.”<sup>143</sup> Unlike the Foyer model (see below), supportive housing was not designed for young people specifically, rather it originated in disability and mental health support.<sup>144</sup> Supportive housing is targeted at tenants who are identified as having particularly complex needs that may impede their ability to move out and in to housing and maintaining a tenancy.<sup>145</sup> Often, these tenants have had a long-term history of homelessness and need to develop the appropriate skills to live in a rental home.<sup>146</sup>

There is no singular form of supportive housing. Some are single-site accommodation with on-site support staff, and others are individual properties in which the individual receives support.<sup>147</sup> Support is typically aimed at increasing tenants skills and independence. The focus is on life skills, maintaining a tenancy and how to be a positive part of the local community. The goal of supportive housing services is to build the capacity of the service

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<sup>143</sup> C Parsell, O Moutou, E Lucio & S Parkinson, 2015, *Supportive housing to address homelessness*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Brisbane, QLD.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

user so they no longer need any support.<sup>148</sup> Individuals may build their capacity to exit supported housing, to sustain a rental tenancy or a social housing tenancy.<sup>149</sup>

Agencies consulted by Youth Action reported an increase in young people entering their service with complex needs. Reports from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) confirm that young people are more likely to report with complex needs (having four or more support needs) than other age demographics.<sup>150</sup> This indicates a need for young people to have access to housing with the same purposes as supportive housing. However, because supportive housing models have not been designed specifically for young people they may not be appropriate for every young person. Services should ensure that if they adopt a supportive housing model they tailor it toward the needs of the young people in their service population.

## The Foyer Model

Foyers and foyer-like models provide accommodation for six to 18 months with the aim of supporting young people into education, employment or training.<sup>151</sup> The Foyer Model became well-known in the UK before being implemented in Australia in the late 2000s. The Foyer Model is different from other supportive housing models in that it enmeshes housing with employment support.<sup>152</sup> This may involve participation in training or education or assistance seeking and retaining a job. When young people enter the Foyer service they are required to sign a contract in which they agree to participate in training, education and employment programs. In turn the Foyer offers various forms of support to facilitate young people's success and well-being.<sup>153</sup> The important element is that education and

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<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>150</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>151</sup> A Steen & D Mackenzie, 2013, *Financial analysis of Foyer and Foyer-like youth housing models*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, ACT, p. 11.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> S Hillman, 2010, 'The Foyer Federation: aiming to transform the institutions and policies that currently help young people', *Criminal Justice Matters*, vol. 80, no. 1, pp. 40-41.

employment remain the focus of the service and the accommodation helps to support that.<sup>154</sup>

Although the focus is on employment, Foyer models take a holistic approach to supporting young people. This includes staff mentors, developing life skills, facilitating recreation and social activities and supporting young people to get accommodation as they transition out of the Foyer.<sup>155</sup> The support may vary in intensity depending on the individual young person's needs. Often less support will be given over time as young people become more independent.<sup>156</sup>

Although the service user outcomes of Foyers in Australia have not been fully evaluated yet they do offer a series of advantages. Because the accommodation is typically owned by the service provider they can accommodate young people under 18 without needing to head lease properties. This means services do not need to maintain tricky relationships with realtors in a competitive rental market. The onsite support workers mean that young people can receive support in a timely manner, allowing a flexible approach, which is more effective with young people.<sup>157</sup>

One of the challenges of Foyer models in Australia is limited funding. Unlike Foyers in the UK, which receive a mix of funding, Australian models rely on either smaller funding packages or forming partnerships with other organisations.<sup>158</sup> The other disadvantage is the limited time afforded to young people to 'get their lives together'. Many young people who are eligible to access supported accommodation have experienced trauma, report mental health diagnosis and drug and alcohol abuse. Services report that six to 18 months

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<sup>154</sup> A Steen & D Mackenzie, p. 12.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>156</sup> Mission Australia, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> A Steen & D Mackenzie, *op. cit.*

is too short a period of time for many young people to no longer require considerable supports.<sup>159</sup>

## **My Foundations (Transitional Housing Plus)**

My Foundations is a specific organisation that endeavours to improve on the deficiencies identified above in both the Foyer Model and Supported Housing.<sup>160</sup> They are the first organisation to offer the Transitional Housing Plus (Youth) Model.<sup>161</sup> My Foundations is a CHP that offers young people accommodation for up to five years in the form of renewable six-month fixed-term leases, giving young people the ability leave prior to the maximum five years.<sup>162</sup> My Foundations uses a 'tapered' rent model in which rent increases gradually over the course of five years, acting an incentive for young people to increase their financial capacity.<sup>163</sup>

Like the Foyer models, My Foundations requires young people to sign a contract agreeing to participate in education, training or employment. As an alternative to Foyer models, some believed the contract should be more flexible, such as an agreement to work towards being able to study or work.

My Foundations partners with 'specialist support agencies' in order to meet the support needs with individual young people, rather than providing the services on site.<sup>164</sup> This enables My Foundations to acquire more properties, as they are more flexible in regards to the features the properties requires.

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<sup>159</sup> R Mullins, op. cit.

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.* Family and Community Services, 2014, *Policy guidance note: transitional housing plus*, Government of NSW, Sydney, NSW.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*, p. 30.

My Foundations has not been operating long enough to be formally evaluated, however it is already providing 75 new community housing properties for young people.<sup>165</sup> A full evaluation of this program is forthcoming, which should determine outcomes before further implementation.

## **Housing Models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people**

Appropriate housing is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because their cultural and spiritual identity is deeply connected to geographic places. Due to intergenerational trauma, ongoing discrimination and racism experiences by Australia's First Peoples, it is particularly important that housing be culturally appropriate.

Research suggests the following measures be taken;<sup>166</sup>

- Services establish working partnerships with local Aboriginal communities and elders;
- Services incorporate Aboriginal people into every layer of agency governance;
- Services employ Aboriginal staff for service delivery;
- Services encourage and facilitate cultural reconnection;
- All staff undergo cultural safety training;
- Services continue to research and evaluate their practices from the perspective of culturally safe practice, and
- Adequate and equitable funding be given to housing providers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## **Conclusion**

Young people need appropriate housing to ensure healthy development, a successful life and a personal sense of value. The conditions of social housing are not of a high enough

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<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> H Jones & B Wallace, 2016, YFoundations, correspondence with authors.

quality to promote these aspects in the lives of young people. This needs to be addressed. The quality of current social housing stock – particularly public housing – needs to be improved. More transitional accommodation needs to be offered to help young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to transition into the private rental market. These transitional accommodation services need to include wrap-around support based on models that are designed for and proven to work with young people.

## Appendix I

### Policy History

#### Social housing policy

When Social Housing policy began it was intended to house low-income earners and their families.<sup>167</sup> Housing supply had receded during the Depression in Australia has changed dramatically since its inception in 1945.<sup>168</sup> There has been a shift away from housing low-income earners toward housing for those with very complex needs and who experience disadvantage.<sup>169</sup> The policy of social housing can be broken into three eras: Home for Workers, Neo-Liberal Residualisation, and Diversification and Renewal.

#### Home for Workers (1945 to late 1980s)

After the war population increased rapidly as ex-servicemen returned.<sup>170</sup> Government responded by building large estates of high quality homes in order to meet demand.<sup>171</sup> Consequently the majority of estates housed heterosexual coupled families with one full-time worker multi-bedroom suburban homes.<sup>172</sup> Public housing residents were considered part of the broader community and were able to draw on those connections in times of need.

#### Neo-Liberal Residualisation (1980s to 2000s)

Over the preceding decades the wait list for public housing expanded rapidly. In 1984, over 140,500 people were on the waiting list, an amount that almost doubled over the next

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<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>168</sup> L Groenhart & N Gurran, 'Home security: marketisation and the changing face of housing assistance in Australia', in G Meagher & S Goodwin, *Markets, rights and power in Australian social policy*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 2015, p. 232. K Arthurson, 'Australian housing and the diverse histories of social mix', *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2008, p. 485.

<sup>169</sup> A Morris, 'Public housing in Australia: a case of advanced urban marginality?', *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2013, p. 80-96.

<sup>170</sup> K Arthurson, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> A Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

decade reaching 232,208.<sup>173</sup> Although the Hawke-Keating Government made a concerted effort to increase public housing stock, housing policy for low-income earners began to move away from public housing over this period. Emphasis was put on incentivising low-income earners to enter the private market by expanding rental assistance and homeownership subsidies.<sup>174</sup> Funding and eligibility for private rental assistance and purchase subsidies increased, and public housing residents were assisted by Government to purchase their properties.<sup>175</sup> Inevitably the better quality, more dispersed public houses were purchased.<sup>176</sup> Continuing this pattern, the coalition significantly reduced funding of Public Housing in the early 2000s.<sup>177</sup> As a result, public housing stock has dropped from making up 8% of the total housing stock to in the 1960s to 4.5% in 2008 and has continued to fall overall.<sup>178</sup> Public housing became a 'safety net'.<sup>179</sup>

A triage system was established to prioritise applicants experiencing complex disadvantage, such as those with a disability, full-time carers and single parents, or people experiencing homelessness or without a safe place to stay.<sup>180</sup> The demand for public housing has continued to outstrip supply despite rental assistance and homeownership subsidies. This resulted in housing estates with large groups of people experiencing layers of systemic marginalisation.<sup>181</sup> Gradually, things like lack of transport, poor education and

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<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, p. 82. K Aurthurson, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

<sup>176</sup> K Arthurson, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

<sup>177</sup> A Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>178</sup> K Aurthurson, *op. cit.*, p. 485. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Housing Assistance in Australia 2015*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015, <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/housing-assistance/haa/2015/>>

<sup>179</sup> S Fitzpatrick & H Pawson, 'Ending security of tenure for social renters: transitioning to 'ambulance service' social housing?', *Housing Studies*, vol. 29, no. 5, 2014, pp.1466-1810.

<sup>180</sup> FACS, 2016f, *Housing Pathways - eligibility for social housing*, NSW Government, <<http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/additional-information/policies/social-housing-eligibility-and-allocations-policy-supplement#efphuhn>>

<sup>181</sup> R Doney, P McGuirk & K Mee, 2013, 'Social mix and the problematisation of social housing', *Australian Geographer*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 401-418.

employment opportunities created locational disadvantage, compounding the disadvantage that many residents experienced initially.<sup>182</sup>

### Diversification and Renewal (Late 1990s to now)

Decreased spending on public housing not only slowed the production of new stock, it also led to poor upkeep of existing properties. By the late 1990s the once good quality post-war houses had become dilapidated. This led to a series of new initiatives to improve the quality of public housing.

The government began offering contracts to non-government, not-for-profit, and for-profit organisation CHPs to offer subsidised rental housing. Community housing models have been found to have greater flexibility and higher tenant satisfaction ratings.<sup>183</sup> Many of them build support services into their accommodation as well as providing newer, better quality housing.<sup>184</sup>

Policy focus turned to addressing the disadvantage public housing residents experience, particularly 'multigenerational' poverty. For example, there is anecdotal evidence that young people who grow up in public housing struggle to get into tertiary-level training and education, making it difficult to compete in a degree-saturated job market. Policy makers attempted to address generational disadvantage by redeveloping public housing estates following the 'social mix' model; where public housing is situated on the same site as private rental.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> A Morris, op. cit.

<sup>183</sup> H Pawson, V Milligan, I Wiesel, K Hulse, *Public housing transfers: past, present and prospective*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne VIC, 2013.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> A Ziersch & K Arthurson, 'Social capital & housing tenure in an Adelaide neighbourhood', *Urban Policy and Research*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2007, p. 412.