

Pre Budget Submission 2026-27

ENDING CHILD & YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

PHASE 1 – PERTH METRO | PHASE 2 – REGIONAL AND REMOTE WA



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and acknowledge their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities in which we live, work and play. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present. We acknowledge that homelessness disproportionately impacts First Nations people as a direct result of colonisation, and are committed to support First Nations-led solutions to homelessness.

FOREWORD

Message from the Sector

Youth homelessness in Western Australia is at a crisis point. Despite recent and welcomed investment, over 700 unaccompanied children and young people experience homelessness daily¹ - in the richest state in Australia.

This submission is the result of an unprecedented effort to gather evidence and collaborate across the sector, with the support of peak bodies and the voices of young people with lived experience of homelessness and housing insecurity.

This work has been driven by the Ending Child and Youth Homelessness initiative - led by Vinnies WA, Indigo Junction and Mission Australia - resulting in a more integrated system and initiatives such as the Youth Rough Sleepers Coordination Group.

While the work to date has created momentum for systemic reform, its focus has been based in the metropolitan region, as Phase 1 of the Project. Phase 2 of the Project will require the collection of data and seeking of solutions for regional and remote WA, noting the unique contexts and challenges across the different parts of the state.

Critically, the disproportionate impact of homelessness on Aboriginal young people, who represent 35% of the homeless population², despite being only 3.3% of the general population, requires an urgent response.³ This crisis is further compounded by the fact that half of Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness are under the age of 24⁴, highlighting the urgent need for culturally safe, youth-focused interventions and support services.

Homelessness and housing insecurity is not just a housing issue. It impacts every aspect of a child and young person's life. When children and young people are simply trying to survive day to day, education, health, and relationships inevitably fall away. Providing safe, stable housing is foundational for their future - it is central to their wellbeing, social inclusion, and sense of belonging.

Without prompt and decisive action, an increasing number of children and young people risk becoming disengaged from education, employment, community life, social networks, and meaningful relationships - resulting in profound consequences for their health and wellbeing, as well as for the broader wellbeing of society.

This submission calls on the WA Government to act immediately and decisively to end child and youth homelessness to guarantee their safety, success, wellbeing, and empowerment. This is achievable through targeted investment in a diverse range of housing models and prevention initiatives, as well as adding much-needed capacity to a sector under significant pressure. These measures will break the cycle of homelessness and support children and young people to thrive.

Signed:

– **The Young People, Service Providers and Peak Bodies representing the Youth Services Accommodation Sector**

SUMMARY OF BUDGET COMMITMENTS SOUGHT

INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION & COMMITMENT SOUGHT	INVESTMENT REQUIRED*
PRIORITY 1 Commit to co-designing a costed housing first for youth (HF4Y) model	Expand WA’s Housing First approach by establishing a high-fidelity HF4Y model through a youth-led co-design process.	\$150,000
PRIORITY 2 Invest in a variety of accommodation and housing models for unaccompanied children and young people	Including - Direct Access Crisis Housing; - Expand Youth Foyers, with 26/27 commitment to a pipeline of three more Youth Foyers; - More social and affordable housing with a target of 5000 each year.	Direct access housing cost to be confirmed as part of a service design process Albany Youth Foyer \$10.57 million 26/27 cost for 5000 social housing properties cost - n/a
PRIORITY 3 Strengthen prevention and early intervention initiatives	- Establish a WA Homelessness Prevention and Early Intervention Fund, with funding for pilot projects based on the Geelong and Washington programs; - Increase Place-Based Youth Service Hubs so that there’s always a safe place for unaccompanied children and young people to go; - Support Safe Space services for young people to provide a non-accommodation solution in Joondalup and Fremantle; - Remove No Grounds Evictions from the Residential Tenancies Act as a complementary measure; - Invest in community-led programs that work with families to foster acceptance and understanding of LGBTQI+ identities. Fund initiatives that provide early support to young people at risk of rejection, including peer mentoring, family mediation, and education campaigns aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination. These efforts are essential to preventing homelessness before it begins and ensuring all young people have the right to safety, belonging, and support at home.	\$100 million
PRIORITY 4 Increase the capacity of the youth homelessness sector by funding a youth advance to zero project	A Youth Zero Project, supported by operational (backbone) resources, would lead service integration through the By-Name List. This work is essential to delivering a Housing First model, with AtoZ providing the framework and the BNL the key tool for coordinating support and housing for young people.	\$250,000
PRIORITY 5 Invest in the value of lived experience	Funding to continue the Youth Homelessness Advisory Council (YHAC), an independent youth-led advocacy group for young people with lived experience of homelessness and housing insecurity.	\$285,000

*excl. GST and per annum. Indicative costs provided where available

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE AND IMPACT

TOO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Youth homelessness has reached crisis levels, driven by housing shortages, economic strain, overwhelmed child protection, and adult-focused services. The latest available figures show:

- On census night in 2021, 3,073 children and young people under the age of 25 were experiencing homelessness in Western Australia.⁵
- As of May 2025, 225 young people aged 16-25 are listed on the By Name List, either sleeping rough or in temporary shelter.⁶
- In 2023-24, 620 unaccompanied children aged 15-17 received support from Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) in WA.⁷
- There is a growing number of young people who are employed and homeless – 35% of SHS clients who are working aged 18-24.⁸
- LGBTIQ+ young people are significantly overrepresented in the homelessness system. Between 2021 and 2025, data from Perth Inner City Youth Service (PICYS) shows that 60% of those needing crisis or supported accommodation identified as LGBTIQ+.⁹
- 7 of 10 Perth Engagement Hubs reported increased numbers of young people accessing their service.¹⁰

YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN ARE DYING ON THE STREETS

- Between 2012-13 to 2022-23, approximately 52 children who had received SHS support at any point in their life passed away.¹¹
- Over the past 11 years, 177 children under 14 years old have died while experiencing homelessness in Australia.¹²

- On average, one young person experiencing homelessness dies every six days in Australia.¹³
- Suicide accounted for 39% of deaths among SHS clients aged 0-24 – the highest suicide rate of any age group.¹⁴

THERE IS AN ACUTE LACK OF YOUTH CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

Vinnies WA, Perth Inner City Youth Service (PICYS), the WA Alliance to End Homelessness (WAAEH), Mercy Care, Anglicare WA, Indigo Junction, and Mission Australia collaborated to track data over 60 days in August-September 2024 to assess the current supply, demand, and reasons for service refusals for Crisis Youth Accommodation in the Perth Metro region.

We found:

- On average, **69 young people were competing for just 1.83 available crisis beds in total** (this figure included adult beds) (Fig. 1).
- Every day, **between 63-77 young people needed crisis accommodation**, but on average just **1.1 Youth Crisis Beds were available** (Fig 2).

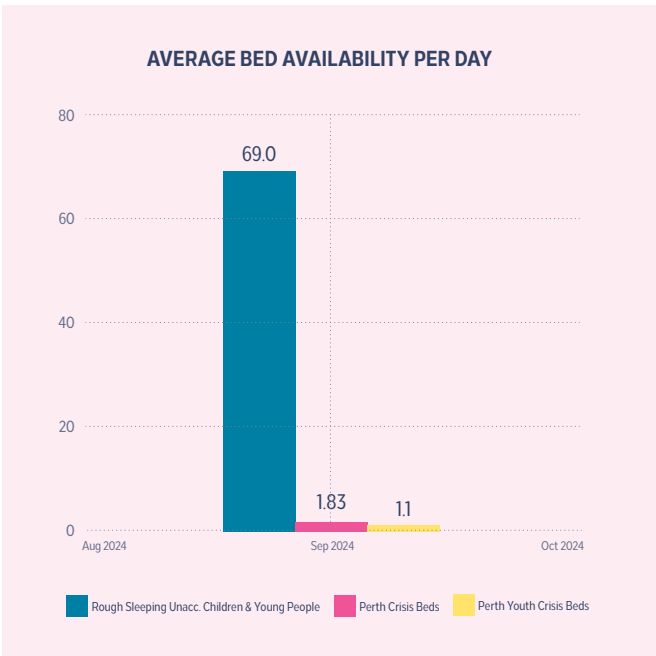


Fig 1: Rough Sleeping Count from Perth-Fremantle By Name List 16-25 years¹⁵

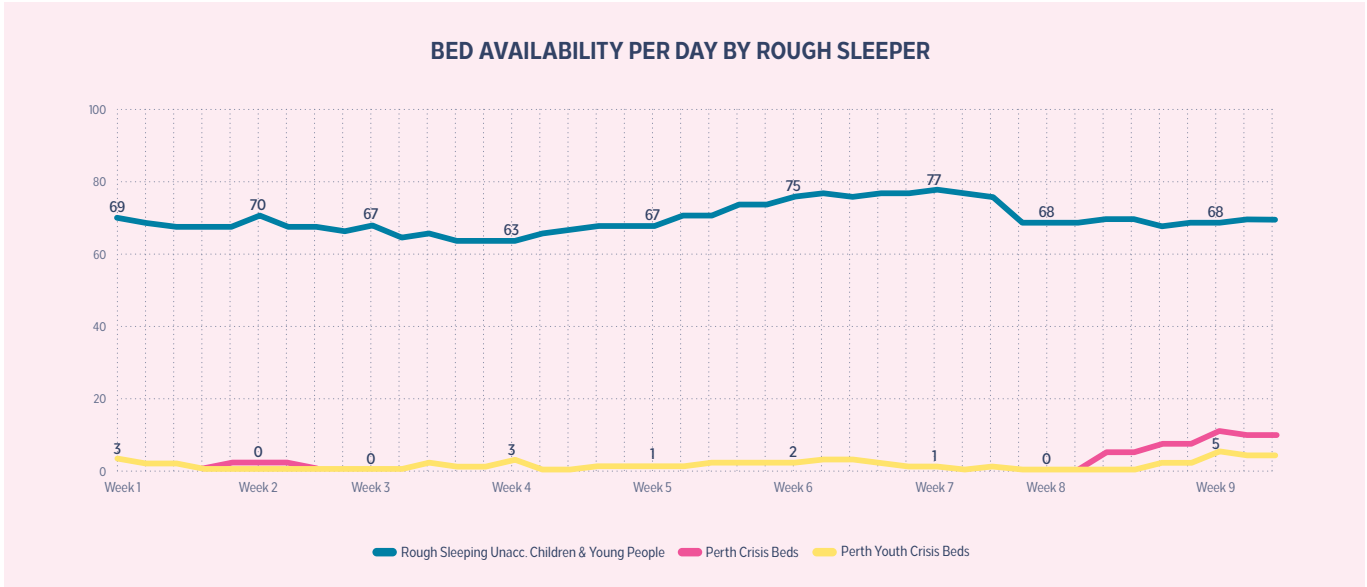


Figure 2: Number of Rough Sleeping Young People compared with crisis beds available between August-October 2024¹⁶

We also found distressing new data on referrals and declined requests for accommodation¹⁷:

- Across 32 separate services, **28 young people were referred a total of 80 times**. 87% were chronically homeless, and 38% of them were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- There was an **83% chance a young person would be declined by the accommodation**, leaving them feeling disheartened. One rough-sleeping young person, unprompted, said:

“I don’t want to do any more of these referrals. I can’t deal with the feeling of rejection. I got my hopes up for nothing and left feeling not good enough.”

- The chance of being declined was even higher if the young person was chronically homeless, at 91%.

In May 2025, 107 unaccompanied children and young people sleeping rough were listed on the By Name List – significantly higher than the average of 69 recorded between August and October 2024.¹⁸

Regardless of vacancies, crisis services have a very limited capacity – just 32 beds. Even if all were available, we would still need more than three times that number to accommodate the unaccompanied children and young people sleeping rough on the By Name List.

Data collected by the Project group also found that crisis beds are unevenly distributed, with 71 young people aged 21-25 eligible for just 5 beds, with only one service funded to offer this age-specific support. In contrast, 16-18-year-olds have access to up to 32 beds.

The shortage becomes even clearer when considering total competition for each bed. For example, 71 individuals aged 21-25 are competing with 36 younger people, for the same 5 beds.

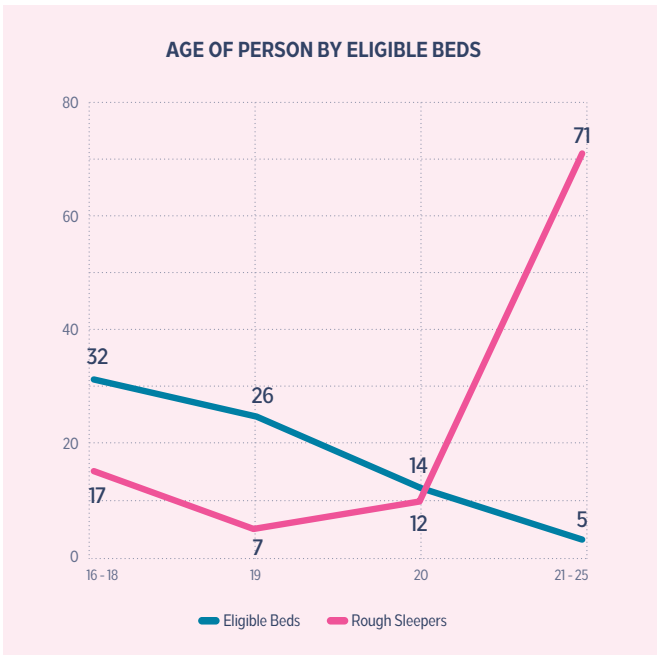


Fig 3: Age of person by eligible beds

The Youth Homelessness Advisory Council (YHAC) advised:

“While many adult homelessness services technically cater to those aged 21 and over, young people in the 21–25 age bracket often find that their developmental and support needs are not well met in adult-oriented systems. This group frequently falls into a service gap—too old for youth services that typically cater up to 18 or 21, yet developmentally and psychosocially distinct from older adults.

“For example, young people have described being passed around like a hot potato, reflecting the instability and emotional toll of navigating services that are not designed with their lived realities in mind.

The Mandurah and Rockingham Rough Sleepers Coordination Groups added:

“Adult homelessness services have been designed with a focus on older individuals... Placing young people in adult crisis accommodation services can expose them to significant risks, including intimidation, exploitation, and re-traumatisation.

THERE IS A LACK OF HOUSING AND HOUSING MODELS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The private rental market is now completely out of reach for young people. According to Anglicare WA's 2025 report, there were **no available rental properties** affordable for a single person over 18 receiving Youth Allowance.¹⁹ Even the lowest-cost option – a room in a shared house – remains unaffordable for many, with weekly rents ranging from **\$200 to \$450**.²⁰

For those who do manage to secure a rental, **Western Australia has some of the weakest tenancy protections in the country**.²¹ Tenants face 'no grounds' evictions, and a lack of enforceable standards for safe, secure, and healthy housing – leaving young people in highly unstable and unaffordable living situations.

Meanwhile, young people experiencing homelessness fall into a critical service gap. They are too old for child protection systems yet often lack the life skills or financial stability of adults. Adult homelessness services were not designed to meet their specific needs, and many systems meant to support them are inaccessible or misaligned with their age, gender, sexuality, or cultural background.

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION ARE CRUCIAL BUT UNDERFUNDED

Evidence shows that **intervention works**, but the window of opportunity is narrow. If a young person has not begun developing self-sufficiency by age 25, their chances of doing so later drop significantly.²²

One major cause of youth homelessness is **family rejection and discrimination**, particularly for LGBTIQ+ young people. For many, coming out or expressing their identity leads to unsafe home environments, emotional abuse, or even being forced out. This trauma often leaves them homeless with little support or safety net. Early intervention must include **targeted strategies** that address these unique vulnerabilities – such as culturally safe, trauma-informed services that acknowledge the role of identity-based discrimination in driving homelessness.

Meanwhile, **late intervention is far more costly**. In 2024, Australians spent an additional \$22.3 billion on late-stage responses in child protection, youth justice, and health crises – funds that could have supported early intervention. This amounts to **\$2,704 per child and young person each year**, representing avoidable spending that strains public systems, reduces productivity, and harms wellbeing.²³

A 2016 study on *The Costs of Youth Homelessness in Australia* found that youth homelessness costs **\$17,868 per person per year** in health and justice services – **\$14,986 more** than the cost of long-term unemployment.²⁴ These figures don't even account for the long-term impact of early school leaving and low engagement with employment.

Western Australia's spending reflects the national pattern: most funding goes to reactive systems like child protection and justice, while **very little is invested in prevention** or in data systems that could strengthen support. This approach is both a **social and economic failure**, trapping young people into cycles of crisis and costing the state more overtime.

The right intervention – **safe housing, wraparound supports, and accessible services** – can be the turning point between chronic homelessness and becoming a resilient, independent adult.²⁵

The *Leave No Young Australian Behind* report by Give Me Shelter found that every **\$1 invested in youth social housing returns \$2.60** to the community through reduced crime, improved health, and increased economic productivity.²⁶ If we fail to act, the cost to Australians will reach \$2.7 billion annually by 2051.²⁷

CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS AND WORKFORCE IMPACTS

Frontline youth workers endure intense emotional and psychological pressure daily as they support unaccompanied children and young people experiencing homelessness.

Sector workers have said:

“Every night we're forced to turn away children, including as young as 12. Youth workers watch them walk away, knowing they face unimaginable dangers alone on the streets,

“Youth workers want(ed) to do something – we are supposed to hold hope for young people but it is so difficult when you see people who are being rejected over and over.

“I feel powerless to provide adequate intervention when a young person is in desperate need of help and I can foresee significant risks of further harm if I'm not able to provide an immediate accommodation option.

In 2024, staff across the Youth Homelessness WA Sector identified accommodation as the most under-resourced service for young people facing homelessness and housing insecurity.²⁸ In a February 2024 survey, sector workers rated the Government's response to youth homelessness at just **2.3 stars out of 5**, reflecting widespread concern about inadequate support.

Frontline staff describe a system that is **biased against children and young people with complex needs**. They witness firsthand how youth support services fail to protect vulnerable individuals. Without the right interventions, many young people experience **severe distress, low self-esteem, depression, mental health challenges, and behavioural issues** – all compounded by unresolved trauma.

The inability to provide **safe and stable housing**, even in cases of urgent need, causes deep **moral distress and vicarious trauma** among workers. They are repeatedly faced with the harsh reality that for many young people, **home is simply not an option**, while the system lacks the resources and capacity to respond.

This daily exposure to **trauma**, combined with the frustration of systemic limitations, takes a cumulative toll of staff wellbeing – **leading to burnout, compassion fatigue**, and long-term threats to **workforce sustainability**.

There is an urgent need to invest in:

- Child and youth-specific models
- Evidence-based prevention and early intervention strategies
- Wraparound supports
- Systems reforms that strengthen the capacity of the youth homelessness sector

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

This Project has focused on challenging existing assumptions, centring the voices of young people alongside leveraging the collective expertise of Peak bodies and organisations to develop more responsive approaches. Significant engagement with lived experience groups, including the Youth Homelessness Advisory Committee and frontline practitioners has ensured the work remained grounded in the realities faced by young people.

Youth Homelessness Advisory Council Members were interviewed in 2024 and shared the following impacts of homelessness.

Young people shared that homelessness feels like “**living on the edge**”, where every day demands an exhausting focus on basic survival.

They called the experience “**dehumanising**,” “**unfair**,” “**alienating**,” “**shameful**,” and “**humiliating**.” Despite this, they feel society continues to **blame them for their circumstances**.

They expressed deep frustration at falling behind their peers – in education, relationships, career pathways, financial security, and housing stability. The extreme stress of homelessness often leads to **coping behaviours** they wouldn’t otherwise engage in, including **alcohol and drug use**, and in some cases, **offending behavior**.

Importantly, young people asked that **youth homelessness not be seen as “lesser” than adult homelessness**, simply because it is less visible or widely understood. They called for action to **reduce stigma** and for greater recognition of their **specific needs**.

They emphasised the importance of early intervention, urging that teachers and other “first-to-know” adults be trained to recognise the signs of homelessness and respond appropriately. They also called for school education to begin with an understanding of **family and domestic violence**, and what **respectful family relationships** look like – not just peer relationships. Additionally, they asked that **general practitioners and schools be resourced** with clear information and pathways to youth homelessness services.

Several young people shared that they were pressured to return to **unsafe home environments** – either because they weren’t believed or had to go to extreme lengths to “prove” they weren’t choosing homelessness. They identified the main drivers of their homelessness as:

- Family breakdown
- Violence and abuse
- Safety concerns
- Parental alcohol and drug use
- Mental health issues
- Extreme poverty and financial stress

YOUNG PEOPLE SHARED THAT HOMELESSNESS FEELS LIKE “LIVING ON THE EDGE”, WHERE EVERY DAY DEMANDS AN EXHAUSTING FOCUS ON BASIC SURVIVAL.

THEY CALLED THE EXPERIENCE “DEHUMANISING,” “UNFAIR,” “ALIENATING,” “SHAMEFUL,” AND “HUMILIATING.” DESPITE THIS, THEY FEEL SOCIETY CONTINUES TO BLAME THEM FOR THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES.

SOLUTIONS

Based on the evidence and priorities described above, four priorities are put forward for adoption in the 2026-27 State Budget.

PRIORITY 1

Commit to Co-designing a Costed Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) Model

With youth homelessness rising significantly in Western Australia, there is an urgent need for targeted, evidence-based housing approaches that reflect the unique developmental needs and lived experiences of young people. These approaches must be trauma-informed, flexible, and designed to mirror the housing options available to their peers.

HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH

The highest priority identified by young people and the youth homelessness sector is the implementation of a **Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) model** to ensure young people have access to long-term supportive housing. A HF4Y approach prioritises safe, stable housing without preconditions, alongside tailored support from youth-specialist services. HF4Y builds on the core principles of the broader Housing First model – such as unconditional housing and self-determination – but adapts them to meet the psychosocial, educational, and developmental needs of young people. It recognises that youth homelessness is often shaped by distinct socioeconomic barriers and proximity to childhood trauma or disrupted family environments. A high-fidelity HF4Y model would complement existing youth homelessness services by offering low-barrier, low-threshold housing and support to young people who may not be reached by current systems. Interlocking with Housing First for Youth, is the need to have dedicated backbone organisation funding – this directly relates to **priority 3** as the capacity of the sector needs to be supported.

To develop this model, funding is needed to support a youth-led co-design process that would shape both the HF4Y framework, and the system conditions required for its success. The cost of this process is estimated at \$121,500 excluding GST (\$133,500 including GST). The outcome would be a fully costed HF4Y model ready for government support and implementation.

PRIORITY 2
Invest in a Variety of Accommodation and Housing Models for Young People

With youth homelessness rising significantly in Western Australia, there is an urgent need for targeted, evidence-based housing approaches that reflect the unique developmental needs and lived experiences of young people. These approaches must be trauma-informed, flexible, and designed to mirror the housing options available to their peers.

DIRECT ACCESS CRISIS HOUSING

There is an urgent need to expand **Direct Access Crisis Housing** for young people across the Perth metro area. This includes age-appropriate crisis and respite accommodation to meet immediate needs. For example, **respite night services** could be developed to ensure no child under 18 is left without shelter. A remodeled version of the ARYA service, based on the Tom Fisher model, could provide immediate accommodation while increasing access to longer-term housing options. Additionally, there is a need for **low threshold 24/7 accommodation**, such as Indigo Junction Youth House, with a focus on prioritising young people aged 21-25 in the immediate term to address current gaps in service provision.

While not an accommodation service, **Place-Based Youth Service Hubs** are essential to ensure continuity of care and enable young people to more stable accommodation after their stay in respite services (see Priority 2).

WA CASE STUDY: TOM FISHER HOUSE (VINNIES WA)

The service provides support to adults facing complex challenges which may prevent them from accessing other programs. They provide free overnight accommodation with few barriers to entry and a place of engagement in which an individual's life impacting issues can be identified and supported.

On any given night they accommodate up to 12 adults (singles and couples) and pets. The service provides up to 7 nights stay and is open between 5:30pm and 8:30am every night of the year.

Projected costings of Tom Fisher House for this FY is \$1,599,676.00

WA CASE STUDY: JUNCTION YAAKINY ("STANDING TALL") YOUTH ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT

Since 2015, Indigo Junction has been a recognised provider of low barrier accommodation services with an intentional focus on particularly complex young people, individuals, and families. Yaakiny is a purpose built Housing First for Youth accommodation and intensive support service. Many of them have experienced trauma that influences how they engage with services, which can lead to difficulties in accessing or maintaining mainstream accommodation. Indigo Junction takes a "come as you are" approach, with no immediate expectations for young people to be linked to Centrelink, support services, education/employment or any other requirements. The Yaakiny facility and service model is trauma informed and has been co-designed alongside young people with lived experience and the local Aboriginal community

Indigo Junction is in advanced building stages of the expansion of the existing youth accommodation service from 14 beds to a total of 45 youth beds. Service expansion will include:

- Supported, supervised accommodation for young people requiring the most intensive support – 16 beds
- Independent, yet supported, accommodation units with 24/7 supervision – 20 units
- Scattered, community based independent units, with support/monitoring – 9 beds

WA CASE STUDY: HORIZON HOUSE²⁹

Horizon House supports young people aged 16-22 who are at risk of homelessness by providing safe, stable housing and tailored support. Beyond shelter, the program connects young people to community-based services and clinical care to help them build the life they want. Across seven sites, Horizon House provides nightly accommodation for 35 young people, with an additional 35-40 young people supported to live independently through ongoing outreach.

YOUTH FOYERS

In support of the *Youth Foyers 26/67 Pre-Budget Submission*, there is a clear need to provide both capital and operational funding for new Youth Foyers – particularly in areas where models are already being developed and there is strong momentum and community support.

Youth Foyers offer young people safe, stable accommodation for up to two years, while integrating housing with education, employment, health, wellbeing, coaching, and mentoring supports. This holistic model enables young people to transition more safely into independent adult life, significantly reducing the risk of returning to homelessness.

With over 30 years of global success, the Youth Foyer model is backed by strong evidence and has demonstrated a substantial return on investment. It not only improves outcomes for young people but also delivers savings to the state government through reduced welfare dependency, lower justice system involvement, and improved health outcomes. Committing to a pipeline of three more Youth Foyers across Albany, Bayswater, and Broome will unlock positive housing, employment, and education outcomes for more than 1800 young people, including up to 900 First Nations young people, over the next decade.

While Youth Foyers may not suit every young person, they are highly effective for those ready to engage in education, training, or

employment but who need stable housing and structured support to do so. The model provides a strengths-based environment with proven results. According to the *Under One Roof* Report, every \$1 invested in Youth Foyers generates \$6 in return – driven by reduced public service cost.³³

WA CASE STUDY: FOYER OXFORD

Anglicare WA has been an active partner of the Youth Foyer movement since 2014 and has operated Foyer Oxford in WA for 11 years.

During the first 10 years,

- Foyer Oxford accommodated 790 young people, including 89 children under 5, with their parents
- 96 percent of surveyed residents have exited into safe, sustainable accommodation, including six who purchased their own property
- 86 percent were engaged in employment, education, and/or training at exit.

Capital and operation cost estimates for new Youth Foyers can be sourced through the **Foyer Invest Consortium**. For example, the **Albany Youth Foyer (Great Southern Youth Foyer)** has provided detailed costings for a proposed facility that includes a 10-bed youth refuge co-located with a 50-bed accommodation site. This model would offer stable housing and wraparound support for young people aged 16-24.

The estimated **construction cost** for this facility is **\$43.6 million**, with an additional **\$1.87 million in annual operational costs**. It is anticipated that federal funding will cover approximately 70% of the construction expenses, making this a viable and scalable model for replication in other regions.

MORE SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING WITH A TARGET OF 5,000 EACH YEAR

To address Western Australia's acute housing crisis, the government should adopt and fund Shelter WA's evidence-based target of delivering **5,000 new social and affordable homes annually**. Achieving this target will

require a multifaceted approach, including **doubling current investment in social housing**, setting clear targets for **affordable rental supply**, reforming **short-term accommodation regulations** (such as Airbnb’s), and implementing policy mechanisms such as **inclusionary zoning** across all new developments.

This expansion must include housing that is **appropriate for young people** across both metropolitan and regional WA, in line with advocacy from the Home Time Campaign.³⁰ Examples include **affordable share-housing models** managed by community housing providers. To make these tenancies viable, the government should **directly subsidise and incentivise providers** to support young people – ensuring that youth-specific housing is not only available but sustainable.

PRIORITY 3
Strengthen Prevention and Early Intervention Initiatives

Western Australia’s homelessness service system is currently geared toward crisis responses, primarily intervening only after homelessness has occurred. However, this system is already underfunded and overstretched. To truly address the root causes of homelessness and reduce long-term demand on crisis services, new, targeted funding is urgently needed to support programs, initiatives, and sector reforms that aim to prevent homelessness before it begins.

ESTABLISH A WA HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION FUND

Create a dedicated mechanism to fund programs that prevent homelessness before crisis occurs.

A dedicated Homelessness Prevention and Early Intervention Fund would enable investment in evidence-based programs that target young people at risk. Two strong examples of such initiatives include:

- **The Geelong Project (Victoria, Australia)** This early intervention program identifies children and young people at risk of homelessness

through **screening surveys in schools**. It provides **case work and support** to address a wide range of issues, including family conflict and school engagement. Evaluations of the program have shown a **40% reduction in adolescent homelessness** and a **20% reduction in early school leaving** in the original three pilot schools. In recognition of its success, the Victorian government committed **\$2.8 million over four years** in 2018 to expand the program from three to seven schools.³¹

- **“A Way Home Washinton Centralised Diversion Fund (AWHWA CDF) (Washington State, USA)** provides **flexible brokerage funding** that support workers can access in collaboration with young people experiencing homelessness. The funds can be used for a wide range of needs essential to securing housing – such as obtaining ID, completing job applications, paying rent arrears or utility bills, covering bond payments, or travelling to stay with extended family or friends. Program evaluations found that **96% of young people assisted did not return to homelessness within three months**, and **92% were successfully diverted from homelessness**.³²

WA CASE STUDY: RUBY’S

Parkerville’s Ruby’s Program³⁴ is a youth homelessness prevention and early intervention initiative launched as a pilot in 2024. It supports young people aged 12-17 and their parents or caregivers to resolve conflict and strengthen relationships. The program offers a safe place to stay, family counselling, 24-hour therapeutic support, and tailored services designed to meet each family’s needs.

INCREASE PLACE-BASED YOUTH SERVICE HUBS TO ENSURE SAFE ACCESS POINTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

To ensure that young people always have a safe place to go, funding is needed to expand the number of **Place-Based Youth Service Hubs** across Western Australia. This includes establishing new hubs in high-need areas and

developing hubs within existing services. These **community-led hubs** offer wraparound support – including mental health care, education assistance, and housing services – while also providing essential amenities such as meals, showers, and a welcoming space to connect with support.

Proven models like **Passages** demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach and could be scaled up across Perth and beyond. By embedding early intervention into accessible, youth-friendly environments, these hubs create stronger pathways for young people to transition out of crisis and move toward long-term stability and wellbeing.

WA CASE STUDY: PASSAGES YOUTH ENGAGEMENT HUBS

Passages Youth Engagement Hubs provide marginalised and at-risk young people with a safe and positive environment to access essential support. Based in Perth and Mandurah, the Hubs offer:

- Access to food, showers, clothing, and other immediate needs.
- Intensive support, case management, advocacy, and referral to specialist services.
- Visiting health, mental health, AOD, financial, legal and housing support services.
- Programs, workshops, and outreach to build skills, resilience, and pathways to independence

SUPPORT SAFE SPACE SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

To strengthen early intervention efforts, funding should be directed toward expanding **Safe Space services** – non-accommodation solutions that offer immediate, low-barrier support to young people and their families. These services provide a welcoming, youth-friendly environment where young people can access help without needing to enter crisis accommodation. Safe Spaces play a vital role in **de-escalating risk, building trust, and connecting young people to appropriate support** before homelessness occurs. They are a critical component of a preventative, community-based response to youth housing insecurity.

The *At Risk Youth Strategy 2022–2027* aims to strengthen coordinated responses for young people aged 10–24 who are experiencing significant vulnerability and are at risk of contact with child protection, justice, mental health, or other crisis systems. The strategy also acknowledges the additional barriers faced by Aboriginal young people, including intergenerational trauma, systemic disadvantages, and the challenges of living in regional and remote communities.

As part of this strategy, the Department of Communities is undertaking an engagement process followed by a commissioning process to redesign youth services across Western Australia. The goal is to deliver more **responsive, place-based, and culturally safe supports** that are tailored to local needs.

Importantly, this strategy represents a **key funding source for Safe Spaces for young people at night** – providing non-accommodation, early intervention support in environments that are welcoming, accessible, and designed to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable youth.

WA CASE STUDY: YOUTHBEAT/ HOME SAFE IN PERTH AND NORTHBRIDGE

Mission Australia and Nyoongar Outreach Service, in partnership with WA Police, Communities, Education, and the Public Transport Authority, deliver street-based outreach in Northbridge and Perth on weekend nights under the State Government’s Youth at Risk Strategy. Through patrols, Home Safe transport, and the YouthBeat facility, they provide safe spaces, immediate support, and short-term or case management assistance for children and young people at risk.

REMOVE NO GROUNDS EVICTIONS FROM THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT

Western Australia’s rental market is among the **least secure and least affordable in the country**. Under current legislation, renters in both social and private housing can be **evicted without reason**, a power that is not only unnecessary but deeply

harmful. This legal loophole leaves thousands of young renters afraid to request basic maintenance or repairs, fearing it could lead to eviction.

All other states – except WA and the Northern Territory – have either **removed or are in the process of removing no grounds evictions**. We urge the Cook Government to **urgently progress this reform** as a meaningful step toward making renting more secure and reducing the risk of homelessness among young people.

Removing no grounds evictions from the Residential Tenancies Act would be a complementary measure to broader housing reforms, ensuring that young renters are protected from arbitrary displacement and can live with dignity, stability, and confidence in their tenancy.

PRIORITY 4

Increase the Capacity of the Youth Homelessness Sector by funding for a Youth Advance to Zero Project

Currently, coordination across Western Australia's youth homelessness system is **fragmented**. While many providers deliver high-quality programs, the absence of dedicated, youth-specific **coordination roles** and **backbone support** leads to duplication of effort and persistent gaps in service delivery. Without a centralised structure to align services, data, and government engagement, opportunities for collaboration are missed and young people may fall through the cracks.

Unlike the broader **Advance to Zero** initiative³⁵ – which has benefited from funded backbone support – the youth sector lacks a **funded central driver** to unify efforts around a shared **Youth Advance to Zero vision**. Establishing this leadership and infrastructure is essential to build a coordinated, data-informed, and outcomes-focused system that can effectively prevent and end youth homelessness. Investment in a Youth Advance to Zero project would provide a crucial framework for other youth homelessness initiatives, such as the co-design and delivery of a high-impact HF4Y model.

WA has successfully demonstrated the value of By-Name Lists for adult homelessness populations, enabling real-time data on who is homeless, their needs, and whether the system is housing people faster than they enter it. However, **youth-specific data is currently underrepresented**. The Cost of Late Intervention report further outlines recommendations, including wrap-around support and investing in data.³⁶ Unaccompanied children and young people face different drivers of homelessness (e.g. family breakdown, out-of-home care transitions, school disengagement), and without tailored data, system responses risk being misaligned.

We are seeking funding for a Youth Zero Project, supported with operational (backbone) resources, that will work with the WA Advance to Zero/By Name List project and:

- **Lead the Youth-Specific Improvement Working Group:** Bringing together specialist youth homelessness services, local government, education providers, and mental health supports to identify gaps and solutions.
- **Coordinate Service Integration:** Act as a bridge between housing providers, youth services, and health/education to ensure young people receive wrap-around support alongside housing and lead the Youth-specific service coordination.
- **Policy Alignment and Advocacy:** Work with WA Government, and peak bodies (such as YACWA) to align youth housing and support responses with state homelessness, child protection, and mental health strategies.
- **Capacity Building:** Support youth services to embed Housing First approaches, data collection, and trauma-informed tenancy practices.
- **Sector Voice:** Ensure young people with lived experience of homelessness are represented and directly involved in system reform efforts as per priority 5.

Estimated Costings: The estimated costings of a five year Youth-specific Zero Project are \$1,250,000 (*five year costing is approximately \$250,000*).

WA CASE STUDY: YOUTH ROUGH SLEEPER COORDINATION GROUP

WA Case Study: Youth Rough Sleeper Coordination Group

The Youth Rough Sleeper Coordination Group (YRSCG) is a sector-driven initiative that prioritises finding safe accommodation for children and young people experiencing homelessness. Created in April 2025, the group's initial focus has been housing 16-17 year olds on the Perth By Name List.

Between April- October 2025, the YRSCG has helped to safely accommodate 15 young people, including one young person who had been sleeping rough since they were 14. This person was also supported to reconnect with family and graduate from high school.

Through the YRSCG the sector has also seen an increase in use of the By Name List and improved co-case management. Workers have also seen improvement in information sharing across the mental health, AOD and FDV sectors, helping to identify trends and intervene earlier with tailored supports.

PRIORITY 5

Invest in the value of lived experience

Funding to continue the Youth Homelessness Advisory Council (YHAC), an independent youth-led advocacy group for young people with lived experience of homelessness and housing insecurity.

The Youth Homelessness Advisory Council (YHAC) is a youth-led advocacy group that employs young people with lived and living experience of homelessness and housing insecurity to create change for vulnerable young people in Western Australia. Through platforming the voices of young people, YHAC contributes to policy and sector development, advocacy efforts, service design, and community education to support the prevention and effective response to youth homelessness.

“It's extremely difficult to get the voices of young people who have been directly impacted by the services in which serve them, because nearly all the time in which services are working with young people, they're in a current state of crisis with historical trauma - YHAC participant.

“The value of [YHAC] is that capacity for young people to be able to amplify their own voices and participate in advocacy. I think experiencing homelessness as a young person is extremely challenging and there's a lot of barriers and negative impacts that come from that. And I feel like being a part of YHAC, I've been able to see young people have a part of their healing journey through YHAC. And that's been quite profound to be able to be a part of that. - YHAC participant.

“I wish we had more power. And the government would take us more seriously. My biggest hope for the future of YHAC would be that we aren't forgotten; all the impacts we've made isn't lost.

“[The gap YHAC fills is] the voice for young people who have experienced homelessness. Without YHAC, it's silent. No one talks about it. – YHAC participant.

YHAC has been successfully delivered by the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) since 2019, enabling the Council to easily connect with the broader youth sector. YACWA's support to the Committee is informed by the Youth Work Code of Ethics and a Lived Experience Framework, which prioritise and centre the wellbeing of each Committee Member. YACWA offers flexibility of engagement for each Committee Member dependent on their changing capacity, which is critical to sustaining long-term participation.

This trauma-informed approach supports meaningful engagement of young people in the Committee and reduces barriers to participation. YHAC specifically engages young people from diverse backgrounds and

experiences - many of whom are unlikely to be reached through traditional consultation methods such as schools, universities, or local youth reference groups.

YHAC's delivery by the youth sector's peak body ensures that the voices of young people with lived and living experience of homelessness are shared independently. YACWA has deep trust with young people, particularly those who are marginalised or have had negative past experiences of systems, and creates safe, youth-friendly spaces where they feel comfortable speaking openly. This trust allows YACWA to gather candid insights and lived experience in a way that is safe and supportive for young people, while also providing the Government with independent, credible advice that is genuinely reflective of young peoples' experiences.

The work of YHAC not only contributes to but actively strengthens the combined efforts of government and the community sector to end youth homelessness. By embedding the voices of young people with lived experience into policy, service design and advocacy, YHAC ensures these efforts are grounded in the realities of those most affected. This approach directly aligns with the Western Australian Government's All Paths Lead to a Home: WA's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030 and enhances the Strategy's impact by ensuring it is informed by authentic, independent youth perspectives.³⁷

YHAC offers the Department of Communities an established mechanism through which to increase the inclusion of the voices of young people with lived experience of homelessness in government decision making. By working with YACWA over the following 5 years to deliver the YHAC program, the Government can strengthen its impact on young people's wellbeing and futures. The investment required to ensure young people with lived experience are supported to contribute their experiences to the shaping of policy and service delivery is **\$285 000 excl. GST, per annum** or indicative costs for five years is **\$1,425,000**.

HOW WILL THIS HELP THE GOVERNMENT DELIVER ON ITS COMMITMENTS?

The WA Government's *Our Priorities for Government 2025-2029* booklet identifies a key strategic goal of ensuring every Western Australian has a home.³⁸ This initiative helps the Cook Government deliver this priority by developing more social, community and affordable housing to ensure young people experiencing homelessness have a safe and secure home.

It also supports three existing policies and commitments the government has made, including: *All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030, Action Plan 2020-2025*.³⁹

Priority Action 2.1: Support the development of a Housing First for Youth model, and

Priority 3.1: Develop tailored responses for vulnerable cohorts at risk of homelessness:

- Develop and support low-barrier/low-threshold accommodation options for young people which are inclusive of the needs of vulnerable groups, including culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) and LGBTIQ+ young people.
- Expand targeted support programs for young people aged 18-25 who are transitioning from out-of-home care into independent living.
- Ensure safe, welcoming and culturally responsive services are available for vulnerable cohorts, including young people, CaLD people, LGBTIQ+ people and people living with disability.

AT RISK YOUTH STRATEGY 2022-2027⁴⁰

Priority outcome 2: At risk young people can access early, timely, and targeted interventions to address their priority needs and transition positively into adulthood:

- Develop and implement targeted cultural and trauma-informed responses to meet the priority needs of at risk young people, including diversion from the youth justice system, homelessness, family safety concerns and support to transition from care to independent adulthood.

Priority Outcome 3: At risk young people can access trauma-informed, effective services that have capacity to respond to their diverse needs:

- Communities will undertake a phased approach to strengthening its targeted services for at-risk young people, including reviewing the service mix, service consistency, sector capacity, and best practice across the service types, cultural responsiveness, and ability to respond to emerging areas of service need. The views of young people with lived experience will inform this work.

WA HOUSING STRATEGY 2020-2030⁴¹

- Focus area 4: Access: Provide access to safe and stable homes for people experiencing homelessness as a first priority, to allow access to appropriate support.
- Focus area 5: Housing pathways: Trial initiatives that combine housing assistance and wrap-around support to build household capacity and provide viable pathways and transitions from social housing.

WA YOUTH ACTION PLAN 2024-2027⁴²

Action 1.2: Supporting Youth Advisory Councils and Youth Action Plans:

- The department will provide funding and resources for local governments, not-for-profits, and community groups to establish Youth Advisory Councils and develop local Youth Action Plans.

SUPPORTERS

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We acknowledge the leadership of Indigo Junction, Mission Australia and Vinnies WA who instigated, led and collaborated on the data collection, research, consultation and recommendations in this report.

We also acknowledge the contribution of young people with lived and living experience to this work.



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wa council of social service

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END NOTES

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- 7 Table 2: Children receiving SHS support by client group, sex and age group, states and territories 2019–20 to 2023–24. AIHW at [https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/unaccompanied-children-receiving-shs/#:~:text=Supplementary%20table%201-Age%20and%20sex,all%20children%20\(Figure%202\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/unaccompanied-children-receiving-shs/#:~:text=Supplementary%20table%201-Age%20and%20sex,all%20children%20(Figure%202))
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- 15 **Notes on Figure 1: Rough Sleeping Count:** The value was created through extraction from the Perth-Freo By Name List from August–October 2024. The number excludes 15 year olds or younger due to the inability to track without parental consent. The number only included those that provided written consent, attended an organization that has access to the By Name List in the Perth-Freo area, and that have the resources to update the person on the list to maintain their 'active' status. The number is regularly agreed to be a significant underestimate. **Bed Count numbers:** The average was created by taking daily count figures from the Department of Communities Vacancy Register. All efforts were taken to extract the number as close to 11:00am as possible to ensure accommodations had enough of an opportunity to update their vacancies. Excludes domestic violence refuges due to their specific criteria however did include Kira and Ebenezer House. Rockingham (YSHAC) and Mandurah (Calvary) accommodation were excluded as the Rough Sleeping Count was only for Perth-Freo. Data was not extracted on weekends due to lack of resources and there were some missing days. For more information, please contact the authors of the report.
- 16 **Notes on Figure 2: Rough Sleeping Count:** As per Figure 1 **Bed Count numbers:** As per Figure 1
- 17 Referrals were tracked for the 28 young people using both the Perth and Peel By Name Lists.
- 18 107 unaccompanied children and young people sleeping rough is a point in time extraction and not an average across the month. The number excludes 15 year old's or younger due to the inability to track without parental consent. The number only included those that provided written consent, attended an organization that has access to the By Name List in the Perth-Freo area, and that have the resources to update the person on the list to maintain their 'active' status. The number is regularly agreed to be a significant underestimate.
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- 34 Parkerville | Ruby's. (2025). *Parkerville*. <https://parkerville.org.au/what-we-do/early-intervention-prevention-youth-services/rubys>
- 35 The overarching aim is to prevent, reduce, and ultimately end homelessness. We do this by seeking to ensure that everyone has access to the housing and support they need so that any future incidents of homelessness are rare, brief, and once-off. This is how we define an end to homelessness. Advance to Zero (AtoZ) uses a combination of near real-time data collected through "by-name lists" and service coordination to form a picture of the names and needs of people experiencing homelessness in particular communities. Each AtoZ community aims to reach a milestone called 'functional zero', which is achieved when a community can demonstrate that their system is routinely housing more people than are coming into it. The core focus areas of this work are to:
 - Enable the collection of quality By-Name List data.
 - Support Housing First service coordination (i.e. Housing First Coordination Groups).
 - Drive Housing First systems improvement effort
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