



## **MEDIA RELEASE: Call to combat youth homelessness, invest in evidence-based solutions**

**Media Release | Wednesday 17 April 2024**

**The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), the peak body for young people aged 12-25 years, has joined with key advocacy groups on National Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD) to urge governments to commit to key actions which will deliver better outcomes for young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.**

Collectively, YNOT, Colony 47, TasCOSS, Anglicare Tasmania, Shelter Tasmania, Karinya Young Women's Service and Youth, Family & Community Connections, lend our support to the national campaign which calls on the Australian Government to develop a standalone, targeted plan to end child and youth homelessness.

YNOT CEO, Ms Tania Hunt, highlighted the critical importance of a dedicated, coordinated strategy to improve outcomes for Tasmania's children and young people, with a startling 39% of Tasmania's homeless population under the age of 25.

"Young Tasmanians need targeted, age-appropriate responses to meet their housing needs across the continuum," Ms Hunt said.

"Examples range from unaccompanied homeless children under the age of 16 who require a care and housing response, to young people accessing specialist homelessness services, through to those who now face homelessness because they are unable to break into the private rental market."

Ms Hunt said young people shared that they felt largely invisible throughout the recent election campaign, with a growing frustration that their needs were not being adequately addressed by the major parties.

"One way we can rectify this is to ensure young people are involved in designing solutions which directly impact their health and wellbeing, and investing in critical areas which are stifling participation for young people, such as the availability of affordable rental stock," she said.

"The only effective way to end youth homelessness is to ensure there is a pathway for all young Tasmanians to be securely housed, supported by a sustainable, coordinated and robust service system.

"Currently, there is not a coordinated or consistent pathway to secure housing across the state and as a result young Tasmanians are suffering."

Colony 47 CEO, Ms Dianne Underwood, said almost a thousand children and young people in Tasmania aged between 15 and 24 have nowhere to live.

"The most important thing to acknowledge on Youth Homelessness Matters Day is that this shameful problem can be fixed. For too long governments have put this issue in the too hard basket or provided unsustainable support at the point of crisis," Ms Underwood said.

"Everyone deserves a safe place to live and sleep at night. Putting a roof over the heads of young people is the key to helping them get back on track, reconnect with education or employment and realise their full social potential.

"We want to see investment in early intervention initiatives for children and young people, which saves money in the long-term and contributes to a stronger community overall.



“We can change the stories of these young lives and turn fear and trauma into hope and opportunity.”

As part of Youth Homelessness Matters Day community partners Colony 47, Youth ARC, City of Hobart and the University of Tasmania Homelessness CoLAB, hosted a ‘couch conversation’ forum in Elizabeth Street Mall, Hobart today.

#### **A Youth Homelessness Snapshot in Tasmania:**

- 39% of Tasmania’s homeless population is under the age of 25 years.<sup>1</sup>
- Children and young people are impacted most by homelessness in our state. Experiencing homelessness early in life increases the risk of homelessness over the course of their life.
- Young people face significant vulnerabilities and are at increased risk of harm, abuse and exploitation when they do not have a safe home.
- Despite recent investment in youth homelessness initiatives, youth homelessness services are at breaking point. Many are overwhelmed by the current demand for services, the increasing complexity of issues experienced by young people accessing services, and the lack of resources and support available for workers and young people.

**ENDS**

#### **For more information or to arrange an interview:**

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing*, Australian Government.