



Address

4th February 2019

**Re: Investing in housing solutions to help end youth homelessness**

Name,

We are the NSW Youth Communities of Practice (YCoP), one of the communities of practice groups facilitated by the Industry Partnership (Domestic Violence NSW, Yfoundations, and Homelessness NSW). Through YCoP we share our knowledge and expertise to support and develop solutions to respond to the needs of young people at-risk, and experiencing homelessness across NSW.

On the night of the 2016 Census just over 9,000 children and young people (12-24 years old) were homeless in NSW, this is an increase of 45% since the 2011 census. The problem is growing and we need to act now!

Youth Homelessness is a significant social issue across NSW. When stable housing is not available young people are much more likely to experience long-term disadvantage, including disengaging from school, unemployment, health issues, contact with the justice system, and many others. In addition to the social cost, youth homelessness also has a significant financial cost to the individual and the government through reliance on welfare, and increased interactions with justice and health services.

YCoP are calling on all political leaders – local, state, and federal – to be part of ending youth homelessness. To achieve this there must be bipartisan commitment to a range of housing solutions and policies, including:

- **Investment in supported housing models for young people.** Not all housing models suit all children and young people. Diversity of housing options enables young people to find the housing solution that suits their current circumstances. Evidence-based models including; Crisis Accommodation, Medium Term Housing, Youth Foyers, and Common Ground, all play unique but significant roles in providing wrap around services for vulnerable young people in safe and supportive environments.
- **More affordable housing stock.** NSW requires 7,500 additional affordable rental dwellings each year until 2026 to make up the short fall in affordable housing. To make this sustainable, rent should either be set as a discount to the market value, or no more than 25% of the household's income. Furthermore, developers should be compelled to include affordable housing when building new apartments.
- **Make better use of existing housing stock.** We should not only add to our housing stock, but look to make more effective use of existing stock. Currently, many young people are locked out of the rental market due to artificial scarcity of housing. High levels of vacant properties associated with holiday homes and investment properties drive up rental costs, particularly in coastal and regional NSW. On Census night 2016, regional and coastal areas had extremely high rates of vacant properties, for example 26.1% of homes in Shoalhaven were empty. Since January 2018 the Victorian Government has legislated an empty homes tax in response to the lack of housing supply. The vacant property tax requires owners to pay revenue to the government if their property is unoccupied for more than six months a year. YCoP is asking for NSW local and state governments to implement similar taxes, and use this revenue for more affordable housing.

In addition to the three housing solutions listed above we are also asking for a commitment to the 'Make Renting Fair' and 'Everybody's Home' campaigns.

