

Urgent need for social housing for young people

Young people in New South Wales are facing enormous challenges when it comes to finding safe, secure and affordable housing. They experience [higher rates](#) of unemployment and underemployment than all other age groups. And this has only worsened during COVID-19 - last year, [more than 1 in 3 people](#) who lost employment due to the pandemic were aged 15 – 24. The recent COVID-19 outbreak has affected the areas of Sydney with some of the [highest proportions](#) of young people across the state, [many of whom rely on](#) casual or part-time work to survive. Alongside job loss and instability, young people are having to contend with disrupted education and training, [leading to increased anxiety and stress](#).

For many young people, these economic pressures mean that renting in NSW's skyrocketing private market is near impossible. In April, [Anglicare found](#) that not one rental property throughout Australia was affordable for a single young person on Youth Allowance. In particular, renting in regional NSW is becoming increasingly out of reach, with rents surging by 11% in the past year - [the sharpest annual rise ever](#). Unfortunately, even when young people can afford to rent privately, they still face [high levels of discrimination](#) in the rental market [due to their age](#) and [lack of rental references](#).

The devastating combination of youth unemployment and unaffordable housing is pushing young people into homelessness at disproportionate rates. Last year, [almost 13,700](#) 15 – 24-year-olds presented alone to homelessness services in NSW. This age group accounted for [almost one in three single people](#) accessing homelessness services, despite making up only [one in eight people](#) across the state.

The NSW Government needs to fulfil its responsibility to support young people to secure stable homes. This must involve a commitment to building and acquiring new social housing. Unfortunately, the NSW Government's current social housing strategy is [completely failing to address demand](#). It spends [less than almost every state](#) on social housing, reaching a [five-year expenditure low](#) in 2019-20. This lack of investment has left around [50,000 people](#), including vulnerable children and young people, on the social housing waitlist where they can expect to wait [up to ten years](#) for a home.

Many young people will require some form of social housing on their journey out of homelessness. They need social housing models which can cater to their distinct needs, and include elements such as longer tenure periods, access to case support and flexible rent agreements which allow them to shift between work and study. This is not an unimaginable reality – in fact, some of these models already exist, both in NSW ([Transitional Housing Plus](#) and [Youth Foyer](#)) and internationally ([Housing First for Youth](#)).

Yfoundations calls on the NSW Government to meet its obligations to support young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability through investing in new social housing. Doing so would not only be the right thing for young people in NSW, it would also [provide significant returns](#) to the NSW economy which has been [seriously damaged](#) by the extended lockdown.

Yfoundations recommends that the NSW Government:

1. Commit to building at least 5,000 new social housing properties per year for the next ten years, including new youth-specific social housing which is tailored to meet the needs of young people.
2. Expand and evaluate the Transitional Housing Plus (THP) model so that it has coverage across NSW.
3. Expand the Youth Foyer program across NSW to meet demand and assist at-risk young people to make the transition to adulthood without becoming homeless.
4. Invest in the development of a Housing First for Youth model which can provide unconditional housing for young people with higher needs.