

Greater support for young people

What are we asking for?

Increased accommodation options and levels of support available to young people, to help them make a positive start in life and prevent their risk of homelessness.

Being able to afford a home is important for all Tasmanians, but young people are particularly disadvantaged. Many young people live in unsuitable housing or simply can't find a place to live. This lack of housing, along with domestic violence and family breakdown, drives many young people into homelessness.ⁱ The options are particularly limited for teens aged 13 to 15 years who fall outside both the child protection and social housing systems.

Greater investment in early intervention and prevention services would help more families to stay together where appropriate. Increased and more diverse housing options, along with an appropriate level of care and support, will help young people who do leave home to get back on their feet.



1 in 3 people seeking assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services are **under 24** years oldⁱⁱ

Why is this important?

High rental prices are severely obstructing opportunities for many who are trying to make a positive start in life. Without secure, affordable and appropriate housing, it is hard to hold down studies or keep a job. Health and safety also suffer. Rightly, many young people feel there is an injustice within the housing system.

In a 2017 Rental Affordability Snapshot, **only one property** in the entire state of Tasmania was **affordable** for a young person on Youth Allowance or Newstart^v

It is unacceptable that the greatest increase in homelessness is occurring amongst Tasmania's young people: 1 in 3 people seeking assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services are under 24 years of age.ⁱⁱ We allow this to happen even when we know that experiencing homelessness at a young age increases the risk of persistent homelessness in adulthood.ⁱⁱⁱ

Providing appropriate housing and support is an essential investment in the prevention of homelessness. It helps create positive futures for young people, and saves governments significant costs in health, justice and welfare services in the long term.

What is the issue?

To be affordable to a young person receiving the Youth Allowance or Newstart benefit, rents need to be between \$79-\$101 a week.^{iv} Last year's Rental Affordability Snapshot identified one affordable property in the whole of Tasmania affordable for this group.^v

Young people who are able to find a home to rent in the private housing market often endure overcrowded or sub-standard conditions (with windows that don't close, heating that doesn't work or doors that don't lock). Discrimination is common.

The social housing system is also failing our young people. While nearly a third of all applicants on Tasmania's Social Housing Register are under 24 years old, less than 0.5% of public housing tenancies are held by young people.^{vi} Young people are also being inappropriately released into homelessness from institutional care (Out of Home Care and detention centres).

nearly
1 in 3
Tasmanian social housing applicants are **under 24**

less than
1 in 200
Social housing tenancies are held by young people in Tas^{vi}

Many young people find themselves in a 'revolving door' of homeless shelters because there are few housing options for them. Too often when they do find somewhere to live independently, there is not enough support available to help them succeed. Services do what they can, but current resourcing levels do not adequately allow for the levels of care needed, especially for young people with complex issues. The most vulnerable group are teens aged 13 to 15 years. While supported by specialist homelessness services, these young teens fall outside the child protection and social housing systems. Better collaboration is needed across government agencies to close this gap.

The kind of support that young people need is varied. Shelter Tasmania welcomes the initiatives for young people announced by the major parties, but emphasises the importance of consulting with the sector on their design and delivery. Specialist Homelessness Services have extensive experience in working to safely house young people and can help government to ensure programs are well designed. Guaranteed ongoing funding for the operation of all initiatives is also essential.

Experiencing homelessness at a young age increases the risk of homelessness in adulthood. We know that the most effective way to avoid this is to make sure young people have a safe and secure home with appropriate support.

Shelter Tasmania asks all parties to bring together government, community and private sector stakeholders in a Tasmanian Housing Summit, to find ways to work together to solve the housing crisis.



Further Information

Please see Shelter Tasmania's Election Priorities Overview for further information, available online at www.sheltertass.org.au/news/tas-election-2018/

End Notes

- ⁱ Mission Australia (2016). *Home & Away. Child and Youth Homelessness Report*
- ⁱⁱ AIHW Special Homelessness Services 2015-16, Supplementary Tables, Tasmania.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Scutella R, Johnson G, Moschion J, Tseng Y-P, Wooden M (2012). *Journeys Home Research Report No. 1. Wave 1 Findings*
- ^{iv} Defined as \$426.30 per week for a lone person in the 2016 ACOSS Poverty in Australia report; Youth Allowance for single person: \$263-285 depending on rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance; Newstart benefit for a single person \$314-336, depending on rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance
- ^v Anglicare Tasmania, 2017, *Rental Affordability Snapshot: Tasmania.*
- ^{vi} Department of Health and Human Services