

MEDIA RELEASE**Wednesday 11 September 2024****QShelter and PeakCare**

Call to Action – targeted support for youth homelessness

Brisbane, Queensland Providing safe, secure and stable housing as a priority to all children and families enables access to other key services and supports as an early intervention to close the pipeline into disadvantage, risk of entering the child safety system and/ or the justice system

Investing in upstream and prevention-focused programs and system improvements prevent children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) associated with poverty, complex homelessness, and other adverse outcomes later in life.

PeakCare and Q Shelter call on all political parties to prioritise system and service integration across government and non-government agencies, such as housing, domestic and family violence, youth justice, child safety, health, and education, to prevent young people from exiting care into homelessness.

The cost of homelessness on additional services such as health, child protection and justice as opposed to housing young people is represented by over **\$13,000** per young person per year saving to the community (*Source: Prof. Cameron Parsells Research Fellow University of Queensland*)

Call to Action:

1. Establish targets for ending homelessness for young people ahead of the 2032 Games.
2. Develop a 'Housing First' strategy with targeted investments in safe and secure social housing for young people between 12-24 years of age.
 - a. Develop a policy for housing unaccompanied 12-15 yr old young people
 - b. Fund additional therapeutic housing models for young people
 - c. Set targets to deliver social and affordable housing options for young people.
3. Fund and support the development of rainbow houses. Crisis accommodation that is queer-led and peer-supported to ensure safe and appropriate housing for vulnerable LGBTIQ+ young people.

Quotes attributable to:**Fiona Caniglia CEO QShelter:**

Q Shelter welcomes the release of the Putting Queensland Kids First strategy earlier in the year, which clearly focuses on prevention and early intervention. The Plan reflects interconnected initiatives highlighting the importance of universal services while investing in specialised support.

If implemented, with bipartisan support, it will help reduce and prevent poverty, which drives many entrenched social challenges in our system. We have advocated for these types of measures for a long time because we know that when children and young people are exposed to adverse childhood experiences, they are more likely to experience complex homelessness later in life.

These measures are welcomed by housing and homelessness services in Queensland because we are struggling with the consequences of crisis-driven approaches without adequate prevention.

Tom Allsop CEO PeakCare:

The 2023 Australian Child Maltreatment Study has shown that children are less safe than we thought.

We know there are also more impacts for young people who identify diversely and accessing appropriate supports for these young people is critical.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission Growing up in Queensland Report 2024 identified over 5,500 young people aged 15-24 years have accessed specialist homelessness services due to experiencing homelessness.

Of the young people who responded to the QFCC's report, 11% were worried about having a safe place to stay and over 6% had experienced not having a fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional accommodation.

Both sides of politics need to commit to focussing on youth homelessness and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in our community.

Rachel Hinds, CEO Open Doors:

In the past 12 months, Open Doors Youth Service has supported more than 500 queer and gender-diverse young people, with over 300 seeking help for housing or the underlying causes of homelessness. This mirrors national research showing that queer and gender-diverse youth are twice as likely to experience homelessness, driven by higher rates of domestic and family violence, discrimination, harassment, and a lack of employment opportunities. Trans and gender-diverse young people are particularly at risk, with 1 in 5 experiencing homelessness with increased barriers due to the highly gendered nature of crisis accommodation, meaning they often fall through the cracks.

We are calling on all governments to commit to the development of rainbow houses. Crisis accommodation that is queer-led and peer-supported to ensure safety. With trans and gender diverse young people facing suicide rates fifteen times higher than their cisgendered peers, developing rainbow houses isn't just about housing—it's about saving lives.

Pam Barker CEO Brisbane Youth Service:

Homelessness endangers children and young people, making early intervention crucial to prevent it from becoming entrenched due to support from Brisbane Youth Service, young people living in unsafe housing decreases by 95%.

By prioritising housing for young people, adopting a housing-first approach, and providing appropriate support, we can assist more young people and young families to move out of crisis and thrive in the community. We must ensure that every young Queenslanders has a safe and stable place to call home.

This is not merely a priority—it's a necessity and the crucial first step towards creating pathways to stability and success for young people and their children.

James Belvin, CEO of Footprints:

In every corner of our service offering, Youturn witnesses the impact the lack of community and affordable housing is having. When accommodation costs are too high, we see people having to sacrifice key needs such as doctor visits, healthy food options and childcare.

We implore decision-makers to address housing supply so that young people and families have the secure foundation they need to find meaningful employment, raise families and interact with their communities.”

Christopher John, CEO of YFS:

At YFS, we know that young people are among the hardest hit by the housing crisis, with 41% of young people across our services in the last financial year presenting as either homeless or at risk.

Without stable, accessible and affordable housing, it’s difficult for young people to focus on essentials like education, employment, mental wellbeing, and community connections.

Stephen Vines, QLD State Director – Mission Australia:

Nearly one in 10 young people from Queensland aged 15 to 19, who responded to Mission Australia’s Youth Survey 2023, experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months

It should be unacceptable for any young person on the cusp of adulthood to be forced to experience homelessness in Australia

Ending youth homelessness is possible. It requires a comprehensive approach, including concrete solutions such as investing in housing supply, ensuring adequate rental subsidies, implementing prevention measures and expanding youth housing options like Youth Foyers.

ENDS

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