

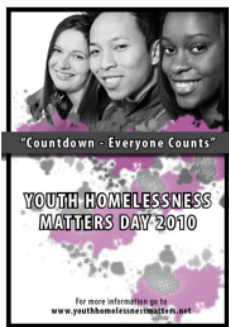


News Alert: 13<sup>th</sup> April 2009, for immediate release.

# Campaign Launch Today

## Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2010

### Countdown: Everyone Counts



The national **Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD)** campaign aims to raise the public's awareness about youth homelessness and to celebrate the resilience of young people who are experiencing homelessness in Australia.

The official launch of the campaign will be held at the **Wesley Centre (Lyceum Room) 220 Pitt St Sydney at noon on the 13th April**, with guest speakers **Federal Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek, NSW Minister for Housing, David Berger and Veronica Penna** who is a consumer rep on the NSW Premiers Council on Homelessness. This year in NSW over 18 YHMD events are running throughout youth week ....

Every night in Australia and in NSW nearly half of people experiencing homeless are under 25 years of age. Recent research also tells us that many chronically older homeless people first entered the homelessness system through the 'youth pathway'.

"In NSW there are over 11,800 homeless young people under 25 years of age" says Michael Coffey CEO of the NSW youth homelessness peak, Youth Accommodation Association, "This is shocking. That there is any young person homeless in our society, is unacceptable."

Mary Biddle Co President of YAA says, "There is great work already being done out there every day by agencies and committed workers supporting and housing young people, but we need to do more. We must do more if we want to reduce youth homelessness in NSW."

As agencies across NSW run community events for on YHMD, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010. This year's theme '**Countdown... Everyone Counts.**' aims to: reflect the fact that youth homelessness affects a range of young people in different circumstances and for different reasons, such as family breakdown, domestic violence, housing crisis .

"They are not just sleeping on the street, they are couch surfing, in makeshift and unsafe living situations and some are supported by a spectrum of specialist homeless and housing services" says Mr Coffey, " Youth homelessness is not just about housing, but it is **always** about housing **and** support. Supporting young people to re-establish their foundations with family or community and achieve equity of opportunity in education and employment."

YHMD 2010 aims to highlight the great work that is also being done both all levels of Government in partnership with non Government agencies and to remind the community that homelessness is 'everyone's responsibility'.

"We commend and continued to be encouraged by the strong commitment and leadership from the Australian Government's and the NSW Government's current commitment to reduce homelessness and increased social housing. We are now starting to see new additional housing, programs and resources roll out as part of Prime Minister Rudd's 'A Road Home' homelessness initiative, the Nation Building Stimulus and the NSW Governments Homelessness Action Plan "

Brett Paradise, Co President of YAA says, "Today we also celebrate the resilience and strength of all young people whom fall into homeless, to let you know that **Youth Homelessness does Matter** and that together with the Governments **we are working to do something about it.**

#### YHMD 2010

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### BACKGROUND FACT SHEET

- An NGO founded in 1979, the **Youth Accommodation Association** is the youth homelessness peak in NSW, working with both NGO and Government agencies for young people in NSW to create a future without youth homelessness.
- Across NSW there are over **171 specialist youth homelessness projects** (funded by Commonwealth and State funds) which are run by both large and small charities and community based NGOs. These projects provide support and accommodation for young at risk or experiencing homelessness, ranging from early intervention, crisis and intensive support, supported accommodation, transitional housing, street to home projects, housing first projects, outreach support .. utilising a variety different models and modes depending on the needs of young people or the resources available.

In NSW about :

Only 13% of the youth homeless population (11,800+) is estimated to be sleeping rough, Only 19% are accommodated in youth homeless services.

The greater majority are couch surfing or in precarious living situations.

- The median commercial rent in Sydney (\$400 for a two bedroom house) is more than the average young person earns per week.
- The independent rate of youth allowance is \$377 per fortnight.
- Young people are often forced to remain in the homelessness system for longer periods when for various reasons they continue to be excluded from employment, education and housing.
- When there is no specific quarantined or targeted housing for young people exiting homelessness, young people are often forced to remain in the homeless system because there are no exits out of homelessness.
- Recent research released in March 2010, found that the 'invisible face' of youth homelessness, that is the 'couch surfers' etc are exposed to the same risks that those who are sleeping rough.
- Most young people become homeless due to family breakdown, domestic and family violence or because of lack of affordable rents/housing.
- Being homeless leads to increased risks with regard to health and wellbeing and exacerbates adolescent 'risk taking'.
- There is a link between children and young people who exit OOHC into youth homelessness and chronic adult homelessness.