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Children and young women are the face of youth homelessness.

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MEDIA RELEASE

“ The data released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare confirms that children and young women are the face of youth homelessness in NSW ” says Michael Coffey CEO of the Youth Accommodation Association, the peak organisation for youth homelessness services in NSW, “Young women aged 15–19 were the group most likely to receive support from a specialist homelessness agency in 2008–09, with one in every 50 females in this age bracket accessing support. This is a disturbing trend in our society.”

“In the year 2008-2009 youth homeless services in NSW supported 15,000 young people under the age of 25 and another 18,600 children and young people accompanying a parent” says Michael Coffey “Further to this the data tells us 18.1% of the young people who used youth homelessness services identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

““The good news is that there is important work being done right now by existing services. The data shows us that the majority of young people only need homeless services once and case management goals are achieved” says Brett Paradise YAA Co-President “though it is very clear that while youth homelessness services do their part, we still need to have more access to housing for young people, so that they are not forced to use the homelessness system as de-facto social housing.”

The 19% of young people who are homeless every night, in NSW adds up to more than 11,000 children and young people under the age of 24 that are exposed to the harsh realities of family breakdown, family violence, couch surfing, rough sleeping and are in unsafe/unstable environments. Research tells us that those who cannot access services such as couch surfers are at just as much risk as those that are sleeping rough and closer to a pathway of chronic adult homelessness. We have an opportunity to stop this. The youth homelessness crisis we are facing requires action from all levels of government and community.

“Committing to a long term targets and goals will consolidate our efforts to end youth homelessness. It will keep us accountable by showing the impact of what we are doing”, said Michael Coffey “And the evidence tells us that we need to build on the successes of existing services while also broadening our efforts to reach out to young people who are couch surfing or not able to access existing services. We continue to need a broad spectrum of youth housing and supports for these children and young people, ranging from prevention, reconnection, to supported and supportive housing, to income support, links to education and employment and to access to social housing and affordable rents”.

“The current Federal and State governments have given us an historic opportunity to reduce homelessness by 2020. We call on all sides of politics to work together to achieve this”, said Mary Biddle Co-President of YAA.

“Many of the factors that contribute to chronic homelessness in Australia are addressable if communities are resourced to assist young people in maintaining stability and opportunities. We are calling on all sides of government and the community to continue working together on the task of ending youth homelessness in this country ” said Brett Paradise.

For further media comment:

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For more information on Youth Homelessness Matters visit www.yaa.com.au

