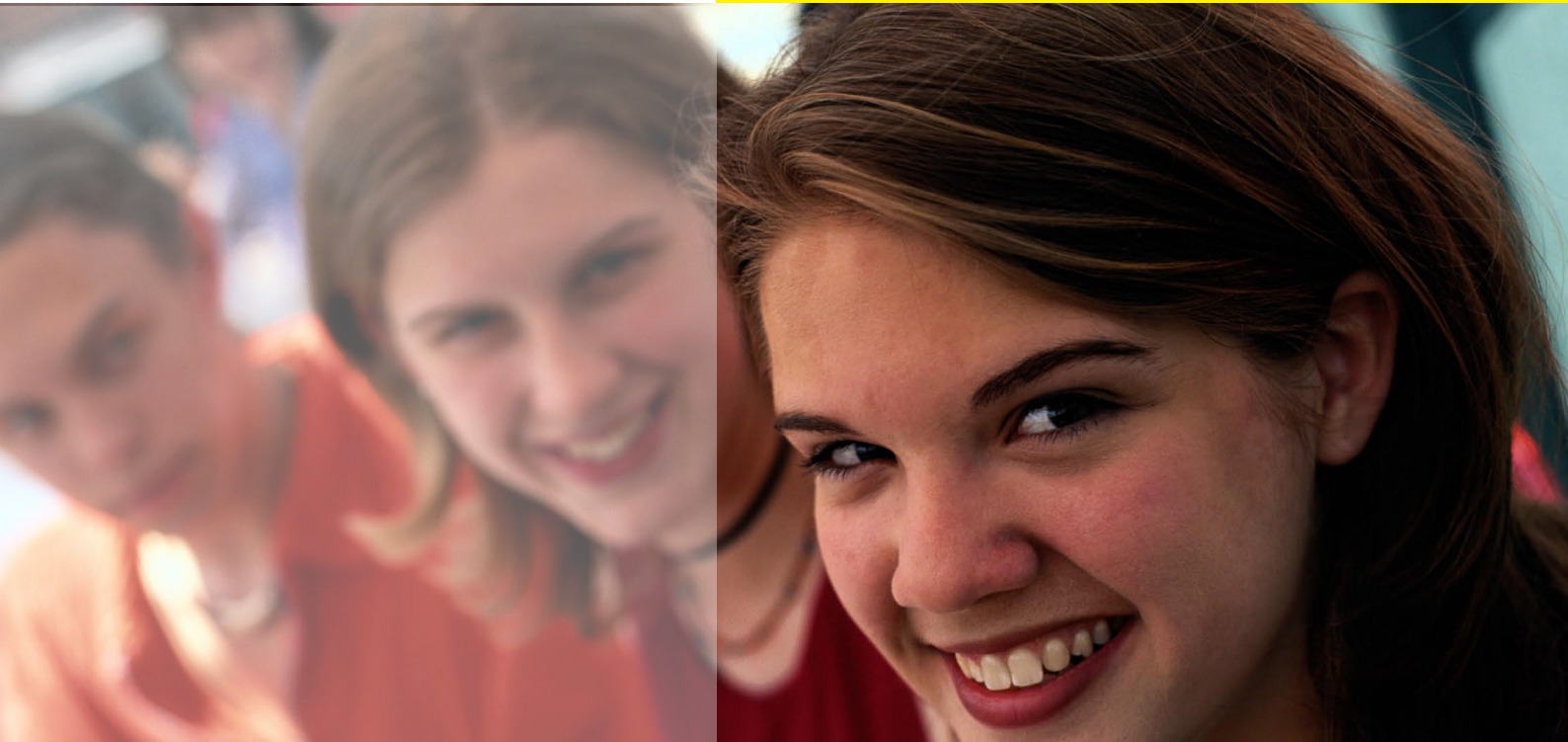




Human Services  
Housing NSW

# About the Housing NSW Youth Action Plan 2010-2014





# **HOUSING NSW**

## ***Youth Action Plan***

### ***2010 – 2014***

*April 2010*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

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The *Housing NSW Youth Action Plan 2010 - 2014* (the Plan) guides Housing NSW in responding to the housing needs of young people. The Plan focuses on persons aged 12 to 24 years living in social housing, needing access to social housing, or requiring other types of housing assistance. The Plan therefore makes provision for people aged 12 to 16 years, who are classified as “children” for the purposes of the NSW Government’s *Keep Them Safe* Action Plan, as well as for young persons aged from 17 to 24 years.

Housing NSW undertook a series of consultations with young people, social housing tenants, peak youth bodies, internal staff and other government agencies to inform the development of the Plan.

The intended outcomes of the Plan are to:

- adapt and strengthen current housing responses, products and services to the needs of young people
- strengthen partnerships with government and non-government agencies that deliver support and services to young people in need of housing assistance
- increase awareness of staff in Housing NSW and community housing providers of the housing needs of young people
- support young people who live in social housing to engage with their communities
- increase Housing NSW’s engagement with young people in general.

The Plan outlines Housing NSW’s services and partnerships that will assist young people over the next five years. It is intended as an overarching plan, and short-term initiatives and implementation goals will sit under it.

Section four includes details of the four key priorities for 2010-11. Over the next five years, Housing NSW will provide progress updates as well as details about new priorities and activities that emerge during the life of the Plan.

A plain English summary of the Youth Action Plan will be placed on the Housing NSW website.

Housing NSW is grateful to the Youth Accommodation Association of NSW (YAA) and other organisations who have contributed to the development of the Plan.

## **2. CONTEXT**

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### **2.1 The rights of young people**

Australia is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These provide a framework that includes the rights of all to shelter.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child relates to anyone under the age of 18, and is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations. It states that decisions that affect children should be based on their 'best interests'. As a signatory, Australia is committed to promoting and protecting the rights of children and young people.

### **2.2 Young people in social housing**

Young people between 12 to 24 years of age represent 17.5% of the NSW population or approximately 1,214,000 people<sup>1</sup>

At June 2009, 19.4% of all household members in NSW State Owned Housing<sup>2</sup> (46,983 people) were aged 12-24. Of these 11.4% were Aboriginal.

In community housing at June 2009:

- 34% of household members were under 18 (11,798 people)
- 10% were between 18 to 24 years (3,499 people)<sup>3</sup>

20.3% (or 17,569) of those on the public housing register as at June 2009 were aged 12 to 24 years (including both proposed lease holders and household members). Of these 9.3% were Aboriginal and 22.9% were from CALD backgrounds.

Most young people currently living in social housing are members of a household and are not tenants in their own right (that is, lease holders). In public housing 1.9% of all lease holders were between 16 and 24 years. In community housing 6.3% of all lease holders were between 16 and 24 years.

### **2.3 Young people and homelessness**

2006 Census data for NSW shows that 770 people aged 19 and under and 186 people aged between 20 and 24 were sleeping rough on census night.<sup>4</sup>

Young people comprised the largest single group of Support Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) service users in NSW. For example:

- 22.7% of service users are aged 15-19 years
- 13.7% are aged 20-24 years<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *NSW in Focus*, 2008 (13381DO\_2008)

<sup>2</sup> Housing NSW data: 2009. This includes public housing and housing provided by the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO). All data referring to public housing & AHO is for both rebated and non rebated tenancies.

<sup>3</sup> Housing NSW Data: 2009

<sup>4</sup> ABS, 2006 Census

<sup>5</sup> National Data Collection Annual Report 2007-08 Australia, NSW supplementary tables

## **2.4 What young people are telling us**

Young people consulted during the development of this Plan told us they:

- want to play a positive role in their communities and make a contribution to overcoming social stigma attached to social housing
- value having good relations with family, friends and neighbours and wish to remain connected to their local communities
- want to feel safe and secure in their homes and neighbourhoods
- want to live in areas that have access to:
  - reliable transport
  - enjoyable youth activities
  - good quality learning and employment opportunities
  - youth friendly services
- want access to affordable housing options that reflect their needs and circumstances
- value being involved and contributing through inclusive communication strategies and consultations.

## **2.5 The barriers young people face**

Young people can face a number of barriers and challenges in accessing and sustaining appropriate accommodation.

Young people in NSW often have more limited housing options than the general population. This is due to a range of factors including:

- lower income levels than the general population which creates housing affordability problems<sup>6</sup>
- discrimination against young people in the private rental market
- a shortage of suitable properties that meet their needs, such as being close to transport, education or employment.

Research indicates that:

- of young renters living alone, 66% pay more than one quarter of their income on rent and 45% pay more than 40% of their income on rent<sup>7</sup>
- based on the proportion of income paid on rent, 25% of young people are living in housing related poverty, nearly two times as high as that of the general population<sup>8</sup>.

Other challenges faced by young people can include:

- having sufficient resources to pay the establishment costs of living independently, for example for rental bonds, utility connection fees and the purchase of home furnishings
- lacking information about the housing options available and how to access them. Many also lack understanding of their responsibilities in securing and then managing

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<sup>6</sup> *Rent Assistance and Young People's Decision-Making* (2002) Burke, T., & Pinkney, S., & Ewing, S., for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) Swinburne-Monash Research Institute. Final Report (p.14)

<sup>7</sup> ABS, 2001 Census, p.14

<sup>8</sup> AIHW, 1994

a successful tenancy. Some may face challenges due to poor independent living skills, such as budgeting and paying bills, cooking and cleaning.

- Without adequate resources or access to affordable housing, some young people find themselves living with family, friends or acquaintances. In some cases, these circumstances are not just inconvenient, but detrimental to their or their child's health and well being, and/or their education or employment prospects. In other cases, these circumstances can place individuals at risk of harm, or vulnerable to crime. In short, the pressures caused by a lack of affordable housing increases the likelihood that housing arrangements might breakdown, leading to periods of transience, housing insecurity and/or homelessness.

For most young people the support they need to develop into stable, independent adults is provided by a mixture of family, friends and other adults who are part of their lives. For some young people, this support is not available or sufficient to enable them to access or maintain a tenancy or live independently in the community. Factors that may create this situation include:

- a troubled home life
- lack of family contact
- substance abuse and/or mental health issues
- history of anti-social or offending behaviour
- homelessness or risk of homelessness.

Certain groups of young people can face further barriers. For example:

- Aboriginal young people are more likely to face increased social and economic disadvantage.
- Young refugees face additional barriers related to their cultural, linguistic and/or religious backgrounds, and experiences of trauma. Young refugees are also often required to contribute financially to their families in their country of origin, which may place additional stress on them.
- Young people with a disability can experience a range of physical and social challenges, as well as discrimination.
- Young carers can experience significant stress due to their caring role, which may impact on their education, their ability to work, their relationships and their ability to connect with the wider community.
- Young people leaving out-of-home care may require additional support to adjust to independent living.
- Young people leaving juvenile justice facilities may require additional support to reintegrate into their communities.
- Young parents may miss out on career and education opportunities. They may also lose friendships and not receive the support they need in their new role as a parent.

Issues of social isolation, prejudice because of sexuality, dual diagnosis or complex needs can also affect young people's wellbeing.

Furthermore, the risk of homelessness is higher for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Family conflict, domestic violence, and childhood abuse or neglect are major causes of youth homelessness and Aboriginal young people, young refugees and new immigrants and young people leaving care are at a higher risk of homelessness.

Young people in the 12 to 15 age range who are not living with a parent, can face similar social and economic barriers to those older than 15, but can experience increased difficulties

because they may not have access to the same range of housing options and services (for example those available through Supported Accommodation Assistance Program services).

Many young people live highly mobile or transient lives, moving regularly and often without adequate forwarding addresses. This transience can pose problems to service providers, as important information is not able to reach them. In the case of Housing NSW, this transience can mean that young people on the housing register may not be reached when a suitable property is located for them.

## **2.6 Responding to the needs of Young People: the Youth Action Plan in Context**

### **Housing NSW**

The *Housing NSW Youth Action Plan 2010 - 2014* complements and builds on current Housing NSW commitments that include:

- the *Housing NSW Corporate Plan 2007-2010*, including its commitments to appropriate and sustainable social housing, access to affordable housing, and to addressing homelessness (see the shaded section below for more details)
- regeneration initiatives which aim to bring about long term sustained social and economic improvement in priority social housing neighbourhoods
- *Disability Action Plan* which identifies how Housing NSW will ensure our products and services meet the needs of people with a disability
- *Aboriginal Service Delivery Commitment and Action Plan* which identifies how Housing NSW will ensure our products and services meet the needs of Aboriginal people
- *Housing NSW Multicultural Framework*, which sets out how Housing NSW enshrines the principles of multiculturalism in our service delivery.

**The Plan contributes to the following *Housing NSW Corporate Plan* strategies:**

1. *Homeless people have access to housing and are able to sustain a tenancy*
  - 1.1 Prevention of homelessness and early intervention
  - 1.3 Easy access to emergency housing advice and assistance
2. *Delivering appropriate and sustainable social housing*
  - 2.1 Housing allocated to those most in need, in particular the elderly, disabled and people with complex needs
  - 2.2 Clients have access to support services they need
  - 2.3 Dwellings are suitable for needs of clients
  - 2.6 Housing assistance system is designed to optimise outcomes
3. *Integration of social housing in communities*
  - 3.1 Improved social and physical amenity in estates
  - 3.3 Improved economic and social participation of social housing tenants
  - 3.4 Communities have access to support services they need
4. *Access to affordable housing*
  - 4.2 Increased supply of affordable housing
  - 4.3 People in need have information and services to access assistance in the housing market
5. *Quality customer service*
  - 5.2 Products and services are matched to client needs

### ***The NSW Government***

The *Housing NSW Youth Action Plan 2010 - 2014* also contributes to a number of key NSW Government commitments to support young people. These include:

- *NSW State Plan* including its commitment to stronger communities, reducing homelessness, strengthening Aboriginal communities, increasing educational and vocational achievements and keeping people safe
- *NSW Youth Action Plan* including its commitments to best practice youth participation and increased engagement with young people across all agencies
- *Keep Them Safe*: the NSW Government's Action Plan to promote the protection and well-being of children (aged up to 16) and young people (aged 16-18). This includes many initiatives to support vulnerable families.
- *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*, which sets out the NSW Government and non-government sectors' priorities for the next five years to prevent and reduce homelessness. The Action Plan incorporates the National Partnership on Homelessness NSW Implementation Plan which includes a number of relevant actions in regard to children and young people (see Section 3.3).

### **3. THEMES FOR FUTURE ACTION**

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Recognising the needs of young people and the barriers they face, the Plan has been developed across five themes:

- 1) CHOICE of appropriate housing products and services
- 2) SUPPORT available when needed
- 3) PATHWAYS to address homelessness
- 4) VOICES of young people in planning
- 5) CONNECTIONS to people and places.

For each of the Plan's themes and directions, Housing NSW has identified what we are currently doing that can be continued, built upon or enhanced. This has informed what we are committed to doing in the next five years to deliver intended outcomes.

#### **3.1 CHOICE of appropriate housing products and services**

##### **What we are currently doing**

###### ***Social housing tenancies***

Housing NSW already offers a broad range of housing products and services for eligible people, including young people. These include subsidised rental housing in public, community or Aboriginal housing. Priority is given to those in greatest need.

In appropriate circumstances, Housing NSW offers tenancies to young people under the age of 18 years. These young people may be offered a tenancy if:

- they are not being cared for by an adult
- Housing NSW is satisfied that they are able to meet the obligations of the tenancy
- Housing NSW, working in conjunction with Community Services and other agencies, determine that this is the best way to meet their needs.

In addition to the direct provision and management of subsidised public housing, Housing NSW provides property and in some cases leasing subsidies to a range of not-for-profit organisations which are independent of Housing NSW. These community housing providers are established with the express purpose of assisting people in housing need. They are constituted as independent organisations under such legislation as the Associations Act (Housing Associations) and the Co-operatives Act (Co-operatives) and others are charities and church organisations. Eligibility for community housing is assessed in the same way as for public housing.

###### ***Private rental assistance***

In addition to subsidised social housing tenancies, Housing NSW has a range of products to assist eligible people, including young people, to access tenancies in the private market.

These include:

- Rentstart which provides assistance with bonds and, in some cases, rent arrears and rent in advance
- the Private Rental Brokerage Service which assists clients with complex needs to establish and sustain private tenancies. The service liaises with support agencies and private landlords or real estates agencies and has been successful in assisting over 200 young people into private tenancies since August 2007

- Tenancy Guarantees which provide a surety to landlords in addition to the rental bond in some instances, for example, if a person has no prior rental history. Since 2007, over 500 young people have been assisted with Tenancy Guarantees.
- Tenancy Facilitation which provides information and guidance for people looking for a private rental tenancy.

### **What we will do in the future**

To improve choices for young people, Housing NSW will:

1. Map youth related programs and partnerships operating in the community housing sector to inform future planning. This will be undertaken in partnership with the Federation of Housing Associations.
2. Produce youth friendly information about housing assistance available for young people.
3. Provide training and resources to Housing NSW staff to assist them to provide appropriate information on housing assistance options to vulnerable people, including young people.
4. As part of our response to implementing the *Keep Them Safe* recommendations, work closely with Community Services to ensure young people leaving care are provided with information and assistance to access appropriate housing assistance.
5. Monitor young people's access to private rental assistance products including Rentstart, Tenancy Facilitation, Tenancy Guarantees and the Private Rental Brokerage Service.
6. Develop strategies to encourage and support young people to access private rental assistance with a focus on those preparing to move on from fixed term public housing tenancies.
7. Within current service improvement initiatives, review eligibility and assessment criteria of social housing products and services to remove disincentives to workforce participation.
8. Develop strategies to assist eligible young people aged 16-18 year olds to access social housing support where appropriate.
9. Ensure the needs of young people are identified as part of application and assessment processes.

## **3.2 SUPPORT available when needed**

### **What we are currently doing**

Housing NSW is involved in a number of programs aimed at linking housing and support. These occur through formal partnerships with other human service agencies, as well as funding non-government organisations or sponsoring targeted projects. These include:

- partnerships developed under the NSW Housing and Human Services Accord involving the provision of support to tenants by other government agencies, and non-government agencies, including:
  - the Young People Leaving Care partnership in the Hunter, a partnership with Community Services to provide young people leaving care to enter stable housing with support
  - the Juniperina Juvenile Justice pilot, a partnership with Community Services, Justice Health and Juvenile Justice, which assists young women who have offended and/or are at risk of offending or re-offending to enter housing and support

- the Tamworth Partnership for Vulnerable Youth, partnership with Community Services, which assists young people at risk of homelessness to access housing and support .
- the Young People with a Disability Leaving Care project, a partnership with the Disability, Ageing and Home Care, which assists young people who may be at risk of homelessness
- a partnership with Community Services for young parents in the Inner West of Sydney.
- Working in partnership with NSW Health to implement the Kings Cross Youth at Risk Project
- Foyer Models in Miller and Illawarra, which provide supported housing for homeless young people and those at risk of homelessness (under Homelessness Action Plan, these are being expanded – see Section 3.3)
- Learning and Employment Coordinators (LEC) Program. As a significant element of the *Building Stronger Communities Strategy*, outlined in Section 3.5, this program aims to improve the social and economic participation of social housing tenants and increase the number of work-ready tenants moving from welfare to work
- Youth Scholarships Program. This program aims to assist young people living in social housing to complete the Higher School Certificate or TAFE equivalent. Scholarships of \$2,000 can help students with tuition fees and to purchase books, computers and other items that assist their education.

Housing NSW is a lead agency or co-sponsor of various local youth support initiatives. Some examples include:

- Wagga Wagga Youth Support Strategy with a specific focus on indigenous youth
- Youth Alcohol and Other Drugs Forum in the Central Coast
- funding youth workers in various disadvantaged communities such as Springfield and Nowra / Bomaderry
- support to local youth ventures (in partnership with various state government agencies and local councils and community groups) such as:
  - Schools as Community Centres
  - Police and Community Youth Clubs (PCYCs)
  - TAFE programs
  - recreational activities, such as Midnight Basketball.

Housing NSW is also an active partner in a number of multi-agency government initiatives promoting the protection of children and young people. These include:

- the NSW Government action plan on child protection, *Keep Them Safe: a shared approach to child wellbeing*
- Families NSW
- *Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Prevention Plan*
- *Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy*
- a number of initiatives and plans to assist women and their families affected by domestic violence, including Staying Home Leaving Violence and the Domestic Violence Court Intervention pilots.

Partnerships within the community housing sector include:

- a Department of Community Services funded youth worker working with tenants in the North Coast
- Argyle Housing Association partnering with St Vincent de Paul and Burnside to provide support to tenants
- Mid North Coast Housing Association working with support providers to link young tenants to living skills and other outreach programs
- a Housing Trust partnership with Southern Youth and Community Services to provide support services to young people leaving care in Wollongong.

### **What we will do in the future**

In order to increase the level of support available to young people who require additional assistance, Housing NSW will:

10. Review the outcomes of current Housing and Human Service Accord initiatives, specifically those focused on young people leaving out-of-home care and juvenile justice and identify options for further expansion.
11. Identify opportunities to establish new partnerships focused on specific groups of young people at risk or with complex needs, including working with specialist homelessness services where required.
12. Continue to work with other agencies to enhance the opportunities and supports available to young people living in the locations which have been supported by the *Building Stronger Communities* and other regeneration strategies.
13. As outlined in the *Housing NSW Commitment to Improving Service Delivery to Aboriginal People and Action Plan*, identify and implement strategies to assist Aboriginal people, including young Aboriginal people to access appropriate housing services and support, and maintain successful tenancies. This will include working in partnership with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the *Two Ways Together* strategy.
14. Continue to participate in whole-of-government initiatives to meet State Plan commitments related to: addressing Aboriginal disadvantage, improved education and employment outcomes for young people, reductions in anti-social behaviour and promoting prevention and early intervention in services which support young people's wellbeing.
15. Participate in the implementation of the NSW Government action plan on child protection *Keep them safe: a shared approach to child wellbeing*, including the implementation of actions relating to families affected by domestic violence, families who have multiple issues requiring interagency coordination, and improving inter-agency collaboration in delivering services to vulnerable young people.
16. Continue to work with the Commonwealth Government and other human service agencies to improve assistance to refugees and other vulnerable recent arrivals to access housing services and support.
17. Continue to work with NSW Government agencies as part of the Interagency Steering Committee on Young Carers, to implement agreed actions

## **3.3 PATHWAYS to address homelessness**

### **What we are currently doing**

Housing NSW is the lead agency for implementing the NSW Government's response to homelessness. We are currently working in partnership with the Commonwealth Government to implement the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* and are also overseeing the implementation of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* (which incorporates the National Partnership Implementation Plan), which outlines the key priorities of the NSW Government in addressing and preventing homelessness.

The prevention of youth homelessness is a priority of both the Commonwealth and NSW Governments and key actions include:

- children and young people are identified as a key target group for interventions
- a focus on providing assistance to young people leaving care and juvenile detention to access and maintain stable, affordable housing – including the introduction of a *No Exits Into Homelessness* strategy as part of the Homelessness Action Plan
- support to public and private tenants to sustain their tenancies
- support to assist young people aged 12 to 18 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to re-engage with their family where it is safe to do so, maintain sustainable accommodation and engage with education and employment
- establishment of Foyer models
- various initiatives to assist families experiencing domestic violence
- assistance for homeless people, including families with children, to stabilise their situation and to achieve sustainable housing.

Housing NSW already provides specific services for homeless people, including young people, such as:

- the Temporary Accommodation Line, which is a telephone service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The service provides assistance in securing temporary accommodation to those aged 16 years and over
- the Crisis Accommodation Program, which provides capital funding for the purchase of housing for services under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. As at 30 June 2008, a total of 1,272 capital and 230 leasehold crisis accommodation properties were managed by non-government organisations in NSW. The program assisted nearly 40,000 people during 2007/08<sup>9</sup>.

Housing NSW is also involved in a number of initiatives specifically targeted at homeless young people. These include:

- the Homelessness Intervention Project (HIP), which includes the Nepean Youth Homelessness Project and aims to provide social housing and intensive support to young people in the Nepean area with high needs to prevent them from sleeping rough. The Project brokers a range of interventions to address issues for young people at risk of homelessness. Housing NSW is the lead agency for this project
- a number of partnerships under the Housing and Human Services Accord aimed at preventing youth homelessness, as outlined in Section 3.2.

Responding to homelessness requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-community partnership approach. Young people at risk often need specialist support from a range of agencies. Housing NSW is committed to strengthening existing partnerships and, where appropriate, developing new partnerships as it contributes to this response.

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<sup>9</sup> 2009 Data for the Crisis Accommodation Program was not yet available at the time of drafting this Plan.

## What we will do in the future

In order to further address the challenges of homelessness for young people, Housing NSW will:

18. Implement the policies and initiatives targeted at young people under the Homelessness Action Plan – these include: incorporation of the Foyer Model at Miller into the expanded South West Sydney Youth Hub; implement the Inner City Supportive Housing and Support Project for young people; Foyer model in Illawarra; work with Juvenile Justice to review and continue the Juniperina Shared Access pilot and expand the Joint Tenancy Assistance program; work with other agencies to develop discharge plans for young people leaving care and detention; and work with Community Services to expand the Nepean Youth Homelessness Project to assist young people sleeping rough.
19. Improve the pathways for young people into long term, secure housing via better planning with Supported Accommodation Assistance Program services.
20. Implement *Start Safely*, a private rental subsidy program, for women with children escaping domestic violence, including young women

## 3.4 VOICES of young people in planning

### What we are currently doing

Across Housing NSW there are currently a number of initiatives designed to engage young people and assist them to participate in planning processes. For example, the Tenant Participation Program provides a range of opportunities for young social housing tenants to participate in community activities and ensure their views are heard by Housing NSW. A core element of this program includes Housing NSW's funding of nine Regional Tenant Participation Resource Services, ten Housing Communities Program projects and biennial grants to tenants and community groups through the Community Development Resourcing Grants.

Tenant groups have sponsored various innovative youth initiatives including Art Through the Ages (Hunter); youth engagement programs (North Gosford); links and support to the Dubbo Youth Foundation to increase youth access to sport and recreational activities and establishment of the Oaks Active Kids Group 12 – 18 years (Casino) to relieve boredom and prevent anti-social behaviour.

Housing NSW's Community Greening partnership with the Botanic Gardens Trust produced Youth Community Greening, a new initiative launched in 2008 to increase young people's access to greening and environmental educational activities in NSW.

Housing NSW also supports a wide range of other formal and informal participation models, such as Neighbourhood Advisory Boards (NAB) that operate at a regional or local level to provide guidance on how services could be improved. They also recommend where Housing NSW might undertake major improvement work and/ or sponsor local community development activities. For example, youth-specific consultations were conducted during the Bonnyrigg redevelopment project, and an emphasis on a partnership approach has led to the establishment of advisory groups including the Bonnyrigg Community Reference Group and the Bonnyrigg Network.

Young people and non-government organisations representing the views of young people also participate on the following Housing NSW key consultative groups:

- Social Housing Tenants Advisory Committee

- NGO Housing Partners Reference Group.

Housing NSW's *Building Stronger Communities Strategy* includes a specific focus on representative community engagement.

Tenant engagement within the community housing sector is facilitated through the Community Housing Tenants Network.

### **What we will do in the future**

In order to strengthen consultations with young people, and to enhance their capacity to influence decisions that affect their lives, Housing NSW will:

21. Ensure that community engagement strategies developed as part of tenant participation and community regeneration initiatives include specific strategies for engaging young people and monitoring their participation. This includes working with Tenancy Participation Resource Services.
22. Ensure that young people are appropriately represented in key consultative groups, both existing and new including:
  - NGO Housing Partners Reference Group
  - Social Housing Tenants Advisory Committee
  - Community Housing Tenant's Network
  - Various regional groups.
23. Connect young people in social housing to leadership development opportunities and other local community engagement activities.

## **3.5 CONNECTIONS to people and places**

### **What we are currently doing**

Housing NSW works with a range of other agencies to improve local communities and to enhance the safety and security of areas. Housing NSW staff participate in numerous location based initiatives that deliver a range of projects aimed to enhance educational and employment opportunities for young people, including young tenants and occupants. For example:

- The Housing Communities Program (HCP) is a place-based program that includes a strong youth agenda. It is currently operating in 10 communities across NSW - Casino, Cranebrook, Dubbo, Minto, Mt Druitt, Redfern/Waterloo, Riverwood, Rosemeadow, Wagga Wagga, and Warrawong.

Through the HCP Program, Housing NSW funds local councils or non-government organisations to undertake a range of community development and community engagement strategies aimed at overcoming disadvantage, enhancing social inclusion, and improving tenant and community participation.

- The Federation of Housing Associations is developing resources for community engagement and economic development, to be used by housing associations at the local level, with specific communities.
- Over many years Housing NSW has recognised the contributions young people make to their communities. In recent years this recognition has resulted in the creation of the Housing NSW Youth Achievement Awards.

- Under the *Building Stronger Communities Strategy*, Housing NSW has undertaken major investments in seven priority communities across NSW - Macquarie Fields, Mt Druitt, Claymore, Orange/Bathurst, Dubbo and Killarney Vale/Bateau Bay/ Tumbi Umbi, and Wagga Wagga. A number of regeneration initiatives continue in these and other areas, many of which have a direct impact upon young people in the local community.

Other Housing NSW initiatives that aim to create safer communities include the following:

- The *Good Neighbour Policy* aims to ensure a suitable mix of tenants is housed in a locality with the aim of preventing potential conflict.

When conflict arises, complaints are followed up quickly and referrals are made to support agencies, if required.

Housing NSW is also involved with a range of location based partnerships with youth services as part of its broader commitment to community development strategies. Some examples of these include:

- A partnership with Spectrum Employment Services in Greater Western Sydney to provide approximately 20 landscaping traineeships for young people in social housing each year.
- Youth Industry Partnership, an initiative to provide local high school students with work experience placements in targeted locations across NSW.
- Other early intervention and prevention partnerships initiatives focused on children, including:
  - Kids Speak Program, based in Redfern-Waterloo. The Program supports families with children aged 5 to 12 years
  - providing support and resources to various area and local Families NSW projects. These projects target vulnerable families with young children. Some examples include parenting and literacy skills programs for social housing tenants in Claymore, Minto and Rosemeadow.

At the local and community level, Housing NSW partners with a range of other agencies, including local government, NSW Sport and Recreation, Department of Education and local high schools and technology centres to provide a range of educational, sport and recreational activities for young people.

At a State-wide level, Housing NSW is a partner in the Crime Prevention Partnerships and the Antisocial Behaviour Pilot Project. These multi-agency intervention strategies are led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and fall under the *NSW Crime Prevention Framework*. The aim of these strategies is to promote coordination and collaboration between government agencies and Local Government to reduce crime rates and develop local solutions to crime.

The Antisocial Behaviour Pilot Project specifically targets youth at risk of entering the criminal justice system and is a core component of the Government's approach to meeting the State Plan goals of reducing levels of anti-social behaviour, reducing rates of violent crime and reducing rates of re-offending.

## **What we will do in the future**

In order to build on and strengthen the connections young people living in social housing have with their neighbourhoods and communities Housing NSW will:

24. Continue the Youth Scholarships to support students living in social housing achieve the HSC.
25. Continue to keep young people as a focus in regeneration initiatives, and implement learning about outcomes for young people from the evaluation of *Building Stronger Communities* initiatives.
26. Continue to build on the success of the Housing Communities Program and identify opportunities where outcomes for young people can be shared with other communities.
27. Continue to work with other government partners to reduce anti-social behaviour in some areas of concentrated public housing.

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## **4. ACTIONING the Youth Action Plan**

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### **4.1 Priorities for 2010-11**

The Plan outlines continuing services and support provided to young people by Housing NSW and its partner organisations. In addition to work already underway, during 2010-11 focus will be given to four key priorities:

#### **Priority One: Improving Access to Housing for Young People at Risk of Homelessness (Actions 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 18, 19)**

In 2010-11 Housing NSW will examine ways to improve access to housing products and services for young people at risk, particularly those at risk of homelessness. A key project and learning opportunity will be the South Western Sydney Youth Hub, an integrated model of housing assistance and support focussing on young people who need help to transition to independence.

#### **Priority Two: Supporting Youth Leadership (Actions 22, 23, 24)**

Through the *Links to Leadership* project Housing NSW sought to develop the already recognised leadership capacity of young achievers living in social housing by increasing skills and self esteem, developing participation in local communities, improving access to education, training and career experience, and assisting young people to achieve their full potential through meaningful roles and satisfying relationships.

Building on this work, Housing NSW will work in partnership with the Youth Accommodation Association of NSW to identify ways to improve leadership development opportunities for young people living in social housing.

#### **Priority Three: Supporting Young People Leaving Care and Custody (Actions 4, 9, 10, 11, 18)**

Housing NSW recognises the additional support needs of young people leaving Out of Home Care and those exiting Juvenile Justice Detention Centres. In 2010-11 a number of targeted initiatives will seek to address these needs, including

- Improve housing support for young people who are refused bail because of homelessness
- Working with Community Services to ensure young people leaving care and their supporters are provided with information to access appropriate housing assistance.

#### **Priority Four: Supporting Young People to Access Housing Products and Services (Actions 2, 3, 6, 7, 13, 16)**

As noted in the Plan, young people at risk often do not know what housing services and assistance may be available to them, or how to access them. Housing NSW will improve information available about housing assistance options and sustaining a tenancy, ensure it is youth-friendly and appropriate for young people from a range of backgrounds including Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and refugees. This will be undertaken in partnership with agencies who work closely with young people.

## **4.2 Monitoring the Plan**

The Housing NSW Youth Action Plan 2010-14 has been developed in consultation with stakeholders. Housing NSW will continue to work with partners in the NGO sector, other NSW Government agencies and the Australian Government, to monitor the progress of the Plan. Regular reports will be provided to:

- The NGO Housing Partners Reference Group
- The Housing and Human Services Senior Officers' Group.

A number of the initiatives have evaluation strategies to monitor the delivery of outcomes. In addition, Housing NSW will continue to consult with stakeholders in the ongoing development of priority actions.