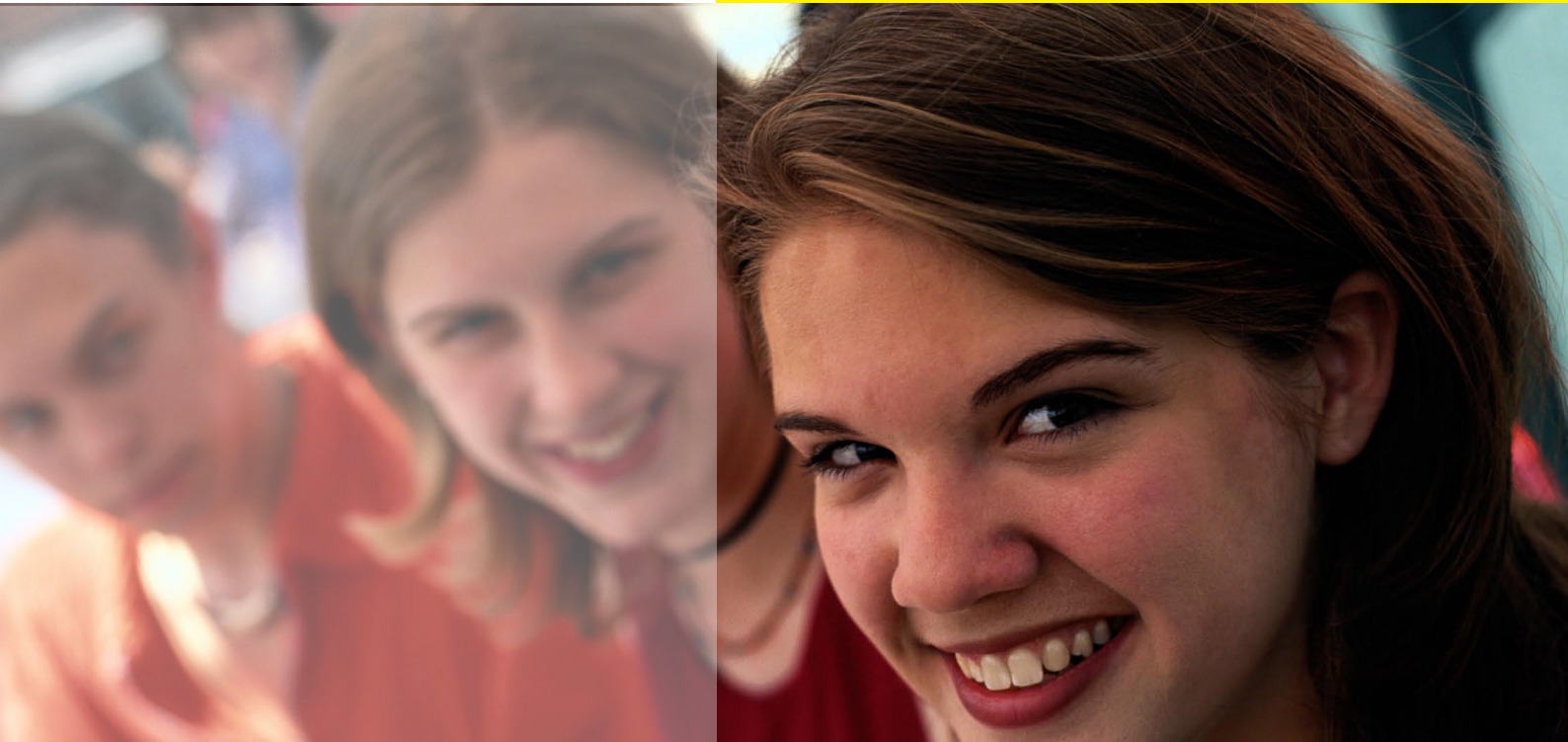




Human Services  
Housing NSW

# Housing NSW Youth Action Plan 2010-2014



Housing NSW has developed a Youth Action Plan 2010–2014 to guide how it responds to the housing needs of young people. The Youth Action Plan focuses on young people aged 12 to 24 years who:

- > live in social housing
- > need access to social housing or
- > need other types of housing help.





Housing NSW consulted with young people, social housing tenants, peak youth bodies, internal staff and other government agencies to develop the Youth Action Plan. It will help Housing NSW:

- > better respond to the needs of young people
- > strengthen the partnerships through which it supports young people who need help with housing
- > support young people who live in social housing to engage with their communities
- > increase engagement with young people in general.

The Youth Action Plan outlines the ways Housing NSW's services and partnerships will assist young people over the next five years.

## What young people told us

Young people consulted during the development of the Youth Action 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
- > want to feel safe and secure in their homes and neighbourhoods
- > want to live in areas that have reliable transport, enjoyable youth activities, good-quality learning and employment opportunities and youth-friendly services
- > want access to affordable housing options.

## The barriers young people face

The Youth Action Plan recognises that young people often have limited housing options. There can be many reasons for this and the Youth Action Plan is aimed at improving the situation for young people. Difficulties can include:

- > not having enough money or help to get a property and set it up
- > not having good information about what housing options are available and how to access them
- > not understanding the responsibility of managing a successful tenancy, budgeting and paying bills, cooking and cleaning
- > not finding affordable housing and so living with family, friends or acquaintances – sometimes in circumstances that are damaging to health and well being, and/or their education or employment.

Young people can face additional difficulties if they have had a troubled home life, substance abuse and/or mental health issues, a history of antisocial or offending behaviour, or have been homeless or at risk of homelessness.

## Themes for future action

### **1. CHOICE of appropriate housing products and services**

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
- > housing assistance, such as Rentstart, the Private Rental Brokerage Service, Tenancy Guarantee and Tenancy Facilitation.

In appropriate circumstances, Housing NSW offers tenancies to young people under the age of 18 years.

To improve choices for young people, future actions will include:

- > producing youth-friendly information about housing assistance available for young people
- > as part of implementing the Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing actions, working closely with Community Services to ensure young people leaving care are provided with information and assistance to access appropriate housing assistance
- > monitoring young people's access to private rental assistance products and developing strategies to support their take up by young people, including supporting those preparing to move on from fixed-term public housing tenancies
- > developing strategies to assist eligible young people aged 16 to 18 years to access social housing where appropriate.

### **2. SUPPORT available when needed**

Housing NSW is involved in a large number of programs and partnerships that link housing and support. To increase the level of support available to young people who need additional help, actions will include:

- > reviewing the outcomes of current Housing and Human Service Accord initiatives, specifically those focused on young people leaving out-of-home care and juvenile justice centres and identify options for further expansion
- > identifying opportunities to establish new housing and supporting partnerships focused on specific groups of young people at risk or with complex needs, including working with specialist homelessness services where required
- > as outlined in the Housing NSW Aboriginal Service Delivery Commitment and Action Plan, identifying and implementing strategies to assist young Aboriginal people to access appropriate housing services and support and maintain successful tenancies
- > continuing 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.

### 3. PATHWAYS to address homelessness

The prevention of youth homelessness is a priority for both the Commonwealth and NSW governments. Key actions identified in the NSW Government Homelessness Action Plan include providing support to young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Actions include:

- > supporting young people leaving care and juvenile detention by including the introduction of a *No Exits into Homelessness* strategy
- > helping 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
- > increasing housing assistance to families experiencing domestic violence
- > improving the pathways for young people into long-term, secure housing.

#### Projects preventing homelessness:

- > South West Sydney Youth Hub
- > the Inner City Supportive Housing and Support Project for Young People
- > Juniperina Housing and Support Project
- > Nepean Youth Homelessness Project

### 4. VOICES of young people in planning

Housing NSW values the contribution of young people in planning and wants to strengthen the way we consult with young people. To help us do this we will:

- > ensure that community engagement strategies developed as part of tenant participation and community regeneration initiatives include specific strategies for engaging young people
- > ensure young people are appropriately represented in key consultative groups
- > connect young people in social housing to leadership development opportunities and other local community engagement activities.

### 5. CONNECTIONS to people and places

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

- > continue the Housing NSW Youth Scholarships to support students living in social housing to achieve the HSC
- > 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.

## Priorities for 2010/11

The Youth Action 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**

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 that focusses on young people who need help to transition to independence.

### **Priority Two: Supporting Youth Leadership**

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**

Housing NSW recognises the additional support needs of young people leaving out-of-home care and those exiting juvenile justice centres. In 2010/11 a number of targeted initiatives will seek to address these needs, including:

- > improving 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**

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.





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