

# Creating homes and futures for young people

Home Time's Federal Election Platform



**Home Time.**

Fix housing for young people

## Acknowledgment of Country

Home Time acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands we work on. This document was developed on the lands of the Bunurong, Wurundjeri and Woi Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in creating services and support to ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are raised in safe, healthy and culturally rich families and communities and have every opportunity for a bright future.

We recognise the right to self-determination and support submissions made by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations around the specific housing and support needs of First Nations children and young people.



# About Home Time



For most kids, home time is something to look forward to. For others, the end of the day means fear and uncertainty. We don't want this for our own kids or other children in our lives. We do not accept this for any Australian child.

Home Time is a national campaign to unlock Australia's housing system for almost 40,000 children and young people with nowhere to live. We are committed to reducing child and youth homelessness through youth housing investment and reform.

“When I was 16, I found myself sleeping in an emergency hospital bed because I had nowhere else to stay. There are no suitable, long term or safe housing options for young people in Australia.”



Home Time is backed by over 160 organisations, including frontline services, peak bodies, unions, universities, social enterprises and businesses. We have a presence in every state, territory and electorate across Australia.

We are part of a broader movement to give every child and young person a fair chance at a good future, through housing as the foundation for health, education, employment, social connection and happiness.

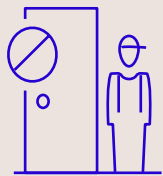
Visit [hometime.org.au](https://hometime.org.au) for more information.

# Overview

Australia's housing and cost of living crises affect different people in different ways.

However, the heaviest burden is experienced by young people without parental support and no safe foundation for their lives.

The cost of essentials like food, clothing, energy, health and education expenses have risen faster than wages while social security payments have stagnated, especially Youth Allowances for those young people unable to live at home with their family.



More than 280,000 people sought assistance from homelessness services in the past year. Around 10,000 are children aged 15-17 and around 30,000 are aged 18-24.

For young people alone with nowhere to live, our twin housing and cost-of-living crises are life and death situations. A housing system that opens its doors to young people and provides the safety and stability they need gives them back the hope and future opportunities that violence and homelessness can take away.





Home is so much more than a roof and a door. Home means health, happiness, education, work, social connection and a chance to follow your aspirations in life.

The benefits of turning homelessness into home are huge for all of us, now and into the future.

The Home Time Youth Housing Coalition comprises over 160 organisations and thousands of community members.

Together, we are advocating for targeted investment and reforms to fix Australia's broken housing system for young people.

Home Time is calling for a national target of 15,000 tenancies with support for young people and action to remove the discriminatory youth housing penalty that currently locks them out of social housing options.

While there is recognition that Australia has a housing crisis, unaccompanied children and young people are still missing as a priority group for national housing and homelessness plans or investments. Most announcements fails to address the specific needs and barriers of this highly vulnerable group.

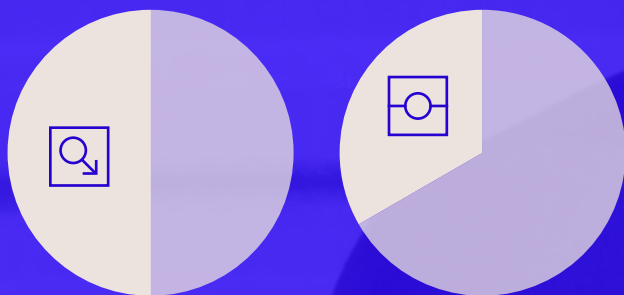
Home Time's Federal Election Platform sets out a targeted approach to investment and reform that would dramatically reduce the number of 16-24 year-old young people who are alone without a safe place to live across Australia.

“I tried to get help from all kinds of services, but a safe home just wasn't an option. I was 18, scared and completely alone.”



# Housing for children and young people is a broken system

There are almost 10,000 unaccompanied children aged 15-17 each year seeking assistance from homelessness services.



More than half of this group are girls. More than one-third are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

# Youth homelessness in Australia

There are around 40,000 young people aged 15-24 who are walking alone into the doors of homelessness services nationally.

These young people are vulnerable to serious harm. Data shows that around:

**80%**

who lost their homes had also experienced family violence

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**50%**

had been admitted to hospital for a mental health crisis

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**75%**

are disconnected from school, training and work opportunities

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**35%**

lost their homes as children before the age of 16

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**50%**

reported self-harm, suicide ideation or suicide attempts

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**70%**

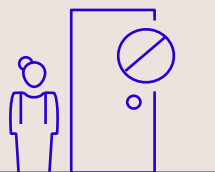
had been homeless for more than two years

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**50%**

were known to child protection

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Young people who are First Nations, LGBTIQ+, from diverse cultural backgrounds, living with disability, or who have had contact with child protection services are over-represented.

Surviving on the streets at an age when you should be worrying about homework and cleaning your room, robs young people of their childhoods and a fair chance in life.

For many, it is the start of a lifetime of poverty and hardship.

# Housing and homelessness services in Australia

Australia's housing and homelessness systems do not provide the safety, care or support that children and young people facing danger and trauma need to recover and build lives of happiness, hope and opportunity.

There are three structural factors driving this:

1. **Lack of appropriate tenancies for young people**, including new social housing properties, existing social housing properties and private rental access programs
2. **Lack of support for young people** to establish and thrive in their tenancies, drawn from existing and new community services funding
3. **Financial barriers preventing young people from accessing social housing tenancies**, known as the youth housing penalty linked to youth payments

No amount of new housing investment will unlock Australia's housing system for unaccompanied children and young people experiencing homelessness without these key reforms.

## The Youth Housing Penalty

The youth housing penalty is one of the factors behind the low rate of social housing tenancies being offered to young people, currently less than 3%.

Despite this low number, almost 40,000 16–24-year-olds are alone and homeless each year, actively seeking homelessness and housing assistance.

Housing providers currently lose 46% of the possible rental income if they choose a young person over an adult on a higher social security payment.

Young people experiencing homelessness don't even qualify for the full rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

This disincentive is locking young people out of safe housing options.



# Home Time's election platform



## Australia can significantly reduce child and youth homelessness with smart action

For children and young people without parental support and a place to live, Australia's housing and cost-of-living crises are life-and-death.

Young people face danger and serious harm each night they are homeless, leading to a high likelihood of a lifetime of poverty and disadvantage.

## Building a youth housing system that creates homes and opportunity requires investment and reform:

1. Develop and maintain a national pool of 15,000 dedicated youth tenancies.
2. Provide linked support services to enable young people to pursue their goals and transition to independence.
3. Remove the Youth Housing Penalty that locks young people out of social housing tenancies

Strong and targeted interventions during a young person's experience of homelessness can change the course of their life, with positive safety, health, education, employment and social outcomes.

The benefits for each young person are huge, but the social and economic benefits for our community and government itself are even greater. It is time to fix our broken housing system.



## Creating new tenancies with support for young people through a national target

Home Time is calling for a national target of 15,000 tenancies with support for young people, drawing on a range of sources for these homes.

Evidence from Australia and overseas shows that the shorter a young person's experience of homelessness the better in terms of reduced harm and trauma. Quick responses that lead to safe housing and support can protect young people from a lifetime of poverty and disadvantage, including chronic homelessness.

Young people will move through social tenancies into other housing options as their situations stabilise and they can pursue their goals in life.

It will take time to reach the target of 15,000 tenancies, which is why we are calling for the target to be established and for yearly reporting to show progress towards meeting it.

This pool of safe and supported homes will provide benefits time and time again. It is one of the smartest investments we can make as a community.

Support services that enable young people to establish their new home, recover and heal from their trauma, and rebuild their lives through education, employment, social connection and improved health are an essential component of these dedicated tenancies for young people.



## Removing the youth housing penalty from our social housing system



The final key to unlocking Australia's housing system for young people is removing the youth housing penalty that actively undermines young people's ability to access tenancies and for youth housing developments to secure new funding.

Research from the University of New South Wales found that the standard formula for calculating social housing rents does not take into account lower rates of social security payments for people under 22. This means that young people miss out on tenancies because they are less financially viable for housing providers.

There are three practical steps to remove this penalty and open up social housing to young people:

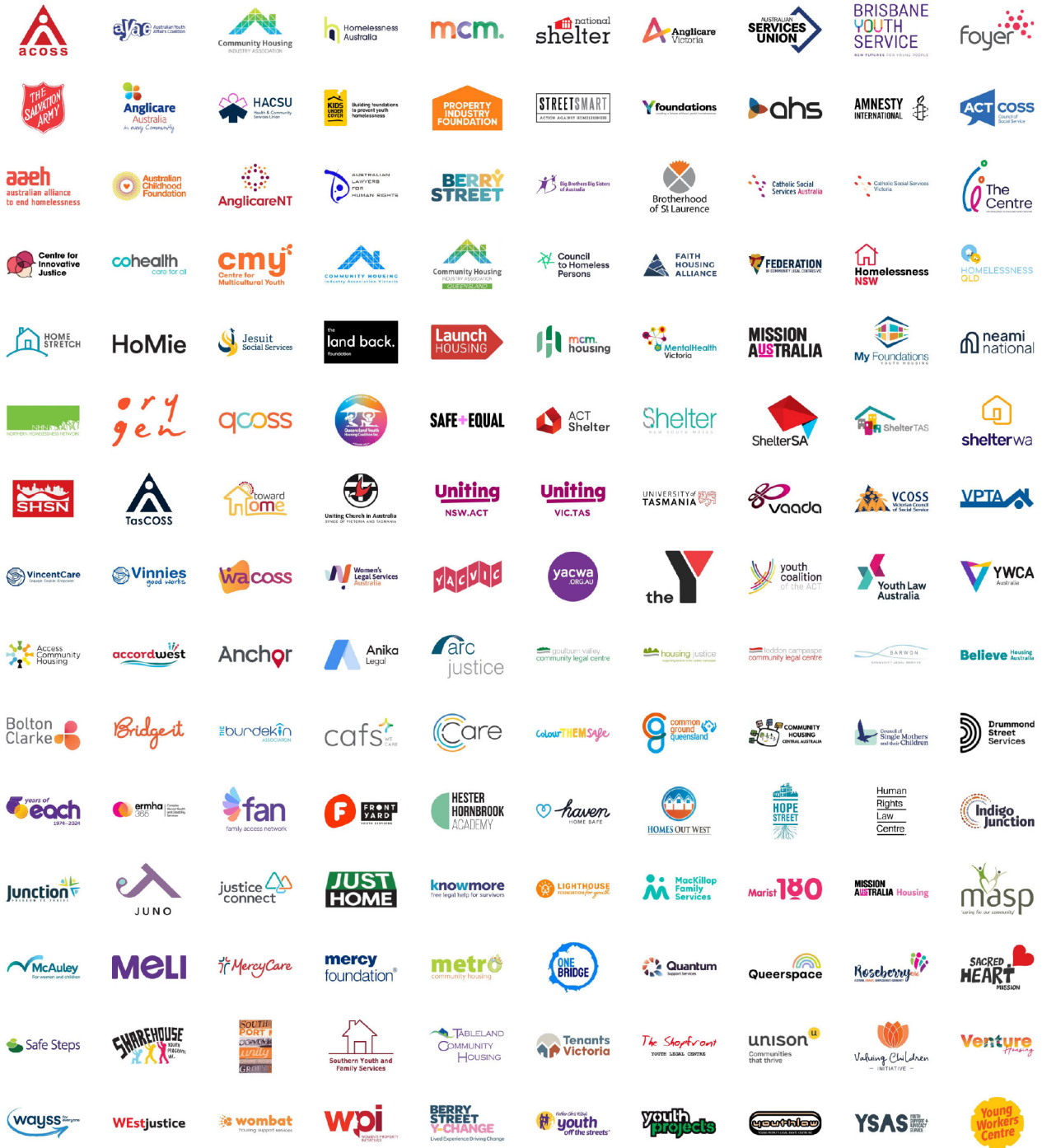
1. Provide a targeted supplement for young people on the Unreasonable to Live At Home Allowance that equalises rents with older people
2. Allow this group to claim the maximum level of Commonwealth Rent Assistance
3. Factor in tenant income in funding assessment and ensure youth housing projects are funded

Together, they would change the course of life for hundreds of thousands of young people and deliver huge social and economic benefits to our community as a whole.

“The most vulnerable young people are going into adult crisis accommodation just hoping they live long enough to find something better - but there is nothing better for us.”



# Supporters



# Home Time.

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Join the campaign [hometime.org.au](http://hometime.org.au)