

Townsville Youth Foyer a beacon of hope and opportunity for young people

10 July 2024: Today, Queensland celebrates a significant step forward in its commitment to tackling youth homelessness with the official opening of the Townsville Youth Foyer.

The Foyer is located in the Pimlico suburb and is an integrated learning, employment and accommodation approach that supports young people aged 16-25 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. It will house up to 350 young people over the next 10 years. It is the third Youth Foyer to be built in Queensland.

The Townsville Youth Foyer was funded by the Queensland Government and will be operated by Mission Australia.

“Homelessness is always a last resort for a young person — never a choice — and the opening of the Townsville Youth Foyer is a beacon of hope and opportunity for young people in this region,” Foyer Foundation CEO Liz Cameron-Smith said.

“Housing is a fundamental human right but we know young people in Queensland are falling through the cracks. An estimated 4,800 children and young people aged 12 to 24 are sleeping rough, couch surfing, or living in improvised or severely crowded housing in Queensland. At the last census, more than 1200 people in Townsville were homeless, about 20 per cent of which were young people.”

In February the Queensland Government announced it would fund a further eight Youth Foyers across the state, with Cairns, Moreton Bay and Hervey Bay first off the rank. This commitment is a testament to the strength of the FoyerInvest network across Queensland — a group of nine community organisations that have banded together since early 2023 to advocate for more Youth Foyers across the state.

Youth Foyers play a pivotal role in transforming the lives of young individuals who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. They provide more than just shelter — Foyers offer a nurturing environment where young people can flourish, learn and grow to their full potential. Through one-on-one coaching tailored to each young person’s goals in learning and life, Youth Foyers offer integrated support in education, work, housing, connection, health and financial capacity. This holistic approach provides a platform for young people to

break free from cycles of disadvantage, achieve independence and maintain it into adulthood.

For 16-24 year olds who are unable to rely on family support during such a critical developmental stage in their lives, Foyers provide a trusted community of peers and adults, with the care, personalised attention, coaching and access to opportunities they need to set themselves up for thriving, independent futures.

Carefully designed to create a sense of home, not an institution, the Youth Foyers are a welcoming environment with plenty of natural light, communal kitchens and living spaces, and recreational zones for young people to relax in and connect. They also prioritise safety and privacy, ensuring all young people have the individual space they need to focus on their futures.

The Townsville Youth Foyer is an excellent example of this, strengthened by the involvement of local young people and the community in the design of this purpose-built service. It is adjacent to [NRL Cowboys House](#), a culturally safe boarding facility for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women, creating pathways for First Nations school students to transition to the next stage of their education and career journey.

“Mission Australia’s Townsville Youth Foyer will provide vital support and play a big part in addressing youth homelessness in Townsville,” Mission Australia CEO Sharon Callister said.

“This is a safe, secure and affordable place to live and study, where young people are also supported as part of the program to develop their skills, independence and resources needed to achieve their personal goals and step into a brighter future.

“We are grateful for the community and government support and to those who have championed this facility.”

Within two years of living in a Youth Foyer, a young person develops the skills and capabilities they need to achieve long-term stability and independence. More than 80 per cent of Youth Foyer residents exit into safe and stable housing, 65 per cent gain secure and decent employment and they are 60 per cent less likely to be involved in the justice system.

“We’re deeply grateful to the Queensland Government and Mission Australia for their tireless efforts over many years to make the dream of this Youth Foyer a reality for young people living in Townsville and its surrounding regions,” Cameron-Smith said.

“Without their commitment to young people in Townsville, and their belief in the Youth Foyer approach as an evidence-based solution to youth homelessness, none of this would have been possible. We thank Mission Australia for its tireless efforts and for being a steadfast

partner in our goal of unlocking thriving futures for more young people experiencing homelessness across Australia.

“We thank the Queensland Government for committing to an additional eight for young Queenslanders grappling with the cost of living and housing crisis. We look forward to working alongside the government to ensure every Youth Foyer in Queensland is designed, built and operated to the high standards young people need to achieve positive outcomes in housing, education and employment — because they deserve nothing less.”

Since 2008 the Foyer Foundation has been supporting the growth and development of Youth Foyers across the country. We have supported many thousands of young people in that time.

A crucial part of our work at the Foyer Foundation is embedding standards and quality assurance across the Foyer network to ensure that every dollar invested delivers the outcomes that matter.

There are currently 16 accredited Youth Foyers up and running, with an additional 11 undergoing accreditation or under construction. A further 16 are shovel-ready immediately or within the next two years.

“We are working tirelessly with our supporters to meet a national goal of 50 Foyers by 2030, to transform the lives of 20,000 more young people over the course of a decade,” Cameron-Smith said.

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For more information and to arrange interviews please call Alex Sampson on 0400 065 667 or email alex@89degreeseast.com

About The Foyer Foundation

The Foyer Foundation is a national for-purpose organisation that unlocks thriving futures for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We do this by growing the reach and impact of Youth Foyers. Youth Foyers offer 16-24 year olds a safe and stable place to live for up to two years, integrating housing, education, employment and life skills support all under one roof.

We catalyse momentum towards a national goal of 50 Foyers by 2030 by bringing together young people, community organisations, philanthropists and governments in diverse communities across Australia. We connect and align activities nationally; ensure quality services through accreditation, learning and development; build the evidence base; and advocate with young people and our growing network.

About the FoyerInvest Consortium

FoyerInvest is a national consortium of service providers, community housing providers, philanthropists and impact investors working together to grow the reach and impact of Youth Foyers.

The Foyer model and results

- The first Australian Foyer opened in 2003.
- There are currently 16 accredited Youth Foyers in Australia, with an additional 11 under construction or newly opened. There are more than 33 communities seeking to build a Foyer in response to the urgent needs of young people, with 16 shovel-ready immediately or within the next two years.
- Youth Foyers provide 16 to 24 year olds experiencing, or at risk of homelessness with a safe and stable home, integrated with education, employment and life skills support.
- Youth Foyers are delivered through place-based approaches in regional, remote and metropolitan communities.
- Within two years of living in a Youth Foyer, a young person develops the skills and capabilities they need to achieve long-term stability and independence.
- Independent modelling by Accenture found Youth Foyers significantly reduced the cost to state and federal governments of supporting young people experiencing homelessness.
- The [Under One Roof](#) report found that every dollar invested by governments in a Youth Foyer generated an additional \$6 in benefits. The benefits of a young person supported through a Foyer were \$172,417 in reduced lifetime costs per person.
- The modelling found 65 per cent of young people in a Foyer were in employment on exit, reducing the need for welfare by \$47,330 per person throughout their lifetime.

Key facts about youth homelessness in Australia

- It has never been more difficult for a young person to find stable, affordable housing.
- Across Australia, there are at least 40,000 young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and more than 400,000 living in poverty.
- Forty per cent of all people experiencing homelessness are young people under the age of 24.
- A 2023 Anglicare Survey of rental affordability found that 0 rentals (0%) were affordable for a person on Youth Allowance.
- Only 50% of young people seeking short-term support receive it. 2 in 3 young people seeking medium-term support have unmet needs. 75% of young people experiencing homelessness seeking long-term housing support have unmet needs.
- Homelessness refers not only to visible forms of homelessness, like living on the streets, but also invisible forms of homelessness including couch surfing, living in cars or in overcrowded or unsafe homes.
- One in 10 young people in Australia are not engaged in education, employment or training.
- Too many young people in Australia are exposed to domestic and family violence, neglect and abuse. In fact, the top two reasons for young people presenting alone to specialist homelessness services in 2022-23 were the housing crisis (19%) and family and domestic violence (15%). One of our partners, Brisbane Youth Services, recently released a study of about 3000 young people who used their homelessness support services over a seven-year period. Seventy per cent had experienced past family violence, and 40% had experienced intimate partner violence even at such a young age.
- For these young people who have experienced domestic and family violence, staying in the family home is simply not an option.