

## **The FoyerInvest Consortium is working together to grow the reach and impact of Youth Foyers**

We are proud members of FoyerInvest, a national consortium of service providers, community housing organisations, philanthropists, and impact investors committed to expanding the reach and impact of Youth Foyers across Australia.

Together we aim to establish 50 Youth Foyers by 2030, offering more young Australians the transformative opportunity of safe and supported accommodation with integrated education, training, employment, and life skills development.

The Consortium comprises the Foyer Foundation, the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Uniting NSW/ACT, Mission Australia, Wesley Mission Queensland, Launch Housing, Anglicare WA, For Purpose Investment Partners, Hand Heart Pocket, St John's Youth Services, Junction Australia, The Y (YMCA Queensland), and Brisbane Youth Services. Over the past year, many additional organisations have played a crucial role in advancing our shared vision.

An emerging coalition of South Australian organisations, the SA FoyerInvest Working Group, is coming together to advocate for the expansion of Youth Foyers within the state. These organisations include The Foyer Foundation, for purpose Community Service Providers, Peaks, and a range of SA Homelessness Alliances.

## **The impact of domestic and family violence on youth homelessness**

Domestic and family violence is a national crisis that affects not only women and children, but also young people.

National statistics indicate that an estimated 4.2 million people aged 18 years and over (21%) have experienced violence, emotional abuse, or economic abuse by a cohabiting partner since the age of 15<sup>1</sup>. For young people (aged 18-19) the prevalence of domestic and family violence is even higher, with research from *Growing up in Australia* highlighting that approximately 30% of adolescents aged 18–19 reported experiencing intimate partner violence within the previous year<sup>2</sup>.

This experience of domestic and family violence often leads to homelessness for young people.

In South Australia, data from the last nine months reveals that 721 young people (19%) experiencing domestic or family violence were among those seeking help from Specialist Homelessness Services, with over 4,500 individual to the 721 young people for services

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/types-of-violence/intimate-partner-violence#:~>

<sup>2</sup> <https://growingupinaustralia.gov.au/>

provided from July 2023 to April 2024 for "Domestic Violence Victim Support."<sup>3</sup> The Domestic Violence Alliance supported a total of 494 young people during this time.

This is likely to be a significant underreporting of the problem. A longitudinal study of almost 3,000 young people accessing the services of Brisbane Youth Services Specialist Homelessness Services over the past seven years found that around 70% of young people had experienced family violence<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, the recent Melbourne Youth Homelessness Snapshot found that 4 in 5 young people (15-24) surveyed grew up experiencing family violence prior to losing their home<sup>5</sup>.

There is simply not enough safe housing with the right support needed for young people escaping violence. More than 6 in ten young people seeking medium and longer term housing support, often as a result of family violence, are turned away due to lack of options<sup>6</sup>.

It's difficult to escape violence, finish studies, find a job and lay the foundations for an independent life without a safe and stable place to live and the supports to navigate the path to a thriving future.

Crisis and temporary accommodation provides an important part of the response to family violence and associated youth homelessness, but it is not enough to solve homelessness in the longer term.

## Youth Foyers are an evidence-based solution

Youth Foyers provide an effective, evidence-based solution to youth homelessness through place-based approaches in regional, remote, and metropolitan communities.

Each Youth Foyer offers accommodation for young people aged 16 to 24, for up to two years, in self-contained units. In addition to providing a safe and stable home, Foyers offer education, employment, and training opportunities, as well as holistic support, helping young people rebuild their lives.

Youth Foyers are operated by a youth service provider in partnership with a community housing provider (CHP), ensuring a comprehensive support structure.

Independent evaluation has demonstrated that Foyers work: over 80% of residents exit into safe, stable housing, 65% gain secure decent employment, and Foyer residents are 60% less likely to be involved in the justice system. Every dollar invested by governments in

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<sup>3</sup> South Australian Homeless 2 Home data

<sup>4</sup><https://brisyouth.org/research/young-people-and-family-and-intimate-partner-violence-a-7-year-demographic-trend-analysis/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mcm.org.au/news/victorian-youth-homelessness-snapshot>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/clients-services-and-outcomes>

Youth Foyers generates \$6 in benefits, including taxation uplifts and savings in welfare, justice and health<sup>7</sup>.

*“Having people who were actually interested in me and all my ups and downs, to listen to my worries, to be an advisor, a mentor, a cheerleader... to be the person you did not have growing up. Having encouraging and positive mentors who cared changed my whole outlook on myself and my life.” Youth Foyer Alumni*

Currently, there are 16 accredited Youth Foyers across Australia, with 11 more in development or preparing for accreditation.

South Australia has just one accredited Youth Foyer, Foyer Port Adelaide, which has been funded by the Department of Human Services and has been operating since 2011, providing essential support to 264 young people. In comparison, Victoria has 14 Foyers in operation or being built; Queensland has recently announced new funding that will bring the total to 11 once construction is finished; and Tasmania has 5 Foyers in operation or under construction.

### Addressing the Intersection of Needs

Youth homelessness is a complex issue that intersects with various other challenges, including mental health, physical health, and domestic and family violence. For most young people, homelessness is typically the result of many intersecting experiences of domestic and family violence or breakdown, neglect, abuse, poverty, housing stress or involvement with the justice system.

In 2022, data revealed that younger women were more likely to be victims of sexual assault than older women, with 56% of incidents involving victims under the age of 18<sup>8</sup>. This highlights the urgent need for specialised, integrated services like Youth Foyers.

As one former Foyer Port Adelaide resident that had experienced Domestic and Family Violence shared, *“Thank you for everything, I wouldn't have been able to get through this without you. I wouldn't have known about the services out there for me. I wouldn't be able to finish school without Foyer as my family is messed up.”*

### A Call for Action

We call on the Government of South Australia to collaborate with us to extend the Youth Foyer model across the state. Young people need more than a roof over their heads to escape violence, avoid homelessness and be set up for a thriving future. Youth Foyers offer

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<sup>7</sup> For more detailed information, refer to; [Under One Roof: The Social and Economic Impact of Youth Foyers \(2022\)](#). Commissioned by The Foyer Foundation and prepared by Accenture on behalf of FoyerInvest.

<sup>8</sup><https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/young-women#:~>

that, and are a proven solution to youth homelessness as a result of family violence that the young people of South Australians deserve to be able to access.

### **This joint submission is made by St John's Youth Services and The Foyer Foundation**

**St John's Youth Services** works with young people in the Adelaide metro area who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. As well as individuals, we support young couples, families, single mums or dads, and their children. St John's Youth Services not only deliver South Australia's first and only Foyer, Foyer Port Adelaide, we also provide early intervention, crisis accommodation, and individualised outreach to support long term independence.

**The Foyer Foundation** is a national for-purpose organisation that unlocks thriving futures for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The Foyer Foundation upholds the integrity of the Foyer model by fostering a national Community of Practice, administering a National Accreditation Scheme to ensure Foyers consistently meet quality standards that lead to successful outcomes, and overseeing a National Outcomes Framework through which accredited Foyers report on their achievements.

At the heart of the Foyer Foundation's work are young people themselves. Its flagship Youth Ambassador program empowers individuals with lived experience of homelessness and Youth Foyers to make their voices heard, ensuring they influence government responses to the youth housing crisis.