



## New Youth Foyers to break the cycle of youth homelessness

November 2024

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### WA is facing a youth homelessness crisis

More than 2,500 young people presented alone to specialist homelessness services in WA in 2022/23. Housing affordability and availability are at record lows, and many young people requesting housing support are being turned away. There is an urgent need to support the medium- and longer-term needs of young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

### Youth Foyers are an evidence-based solution to reduce youth homelessness that enables lifelong independence

There are currently 16 accredited Youth Foyers with an additional 11 undergoing accreditation or under construction in Australia. Youth Foyers across the country offer a safe home and community for young people to live in for up to two years, integrating education, employment and life skill support. This medium-term housing solution fills an important service gap and creates thriving futures. Upon leaving Foyers, more than 80 per cent of young people transition to safe and stable housing, 65 per cent gain secure employment, and the majority report improvements in self-confidence and self-sufficiency.

**“Foyer gives that safety and comfort, knowing that I do not need to worry about if I will be sleeping on a couch or at a friend's place, having my own responsibility is helping me grow, and I know others around me too.”** – Alex, current Foyer resident

**“Youth Foyers provide a unique experience for young people. It allowed me to learn how to be an adult. To have a home. To have a space that was my own. And I didn't have to do it alone.”** – Ash, former Foyer resident and Youth Ambassador

WA has a significant number of young people experiencing homelessness<sup>1</sup>, but only one Youth Foyer.

### WA needs four more Youth Foyers to enable young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to transition to independent, thriving futures

Following the Queensland Government announcement of support for eight new Foyers, the FoyerInvest consortium is calling on the WA Government to ensure young people in WA are not left behind.

FoyerInvest is seeking a commitment of \$116m in initial capital funding and \$9m in operating costs each year to construct and operate four new Foyers in WA, supporting more than 1500 young people over the next 10 years.<sup>2</sup> Exact figures will vary depending on each project's location, number of young people supported, partnerships and contributions.<sup>3</sup>

One location, Albany, is ready for investment. Many more areas in the metropolitan region, and other key regional centres, have high levels of unmet need and experience the social infrastructure and conditions necessary for a Foyer to succeed.

Every \$1 invested in Foyers returns \$6 to the government, half of which goes to the State Government. Cost savings could be reinvested in crisis services to ensure a strong youth homelessness support system.

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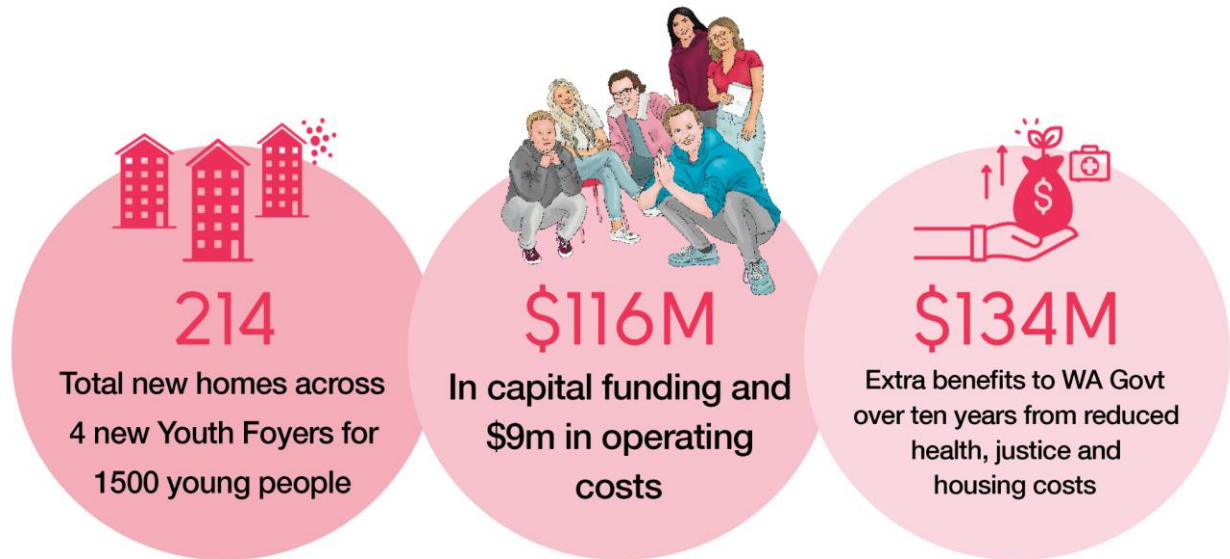
<sup>1</sup> AIHW 2022/23

<sup>2</sup> Estimates based on Albany (\$37m construction, additional \$1.6m operating), Metro 1 - Bayswater (\$29.2m, \$2.5m), Metro 2 (\$20m, \$2m) and Broome (\$30m, \$2.5m).

<sup>3</sup> Based on construction and operating costs from Foyer Foundation, *Under One Roof*. Estimates of \$20m construction plus \$2m operating. WA calculations include up to 50% higher construction costs in regional WA.

This additional investment in medium-term youth housing services, alongside well-resourced crisis and transitional homelessness services, is essential to ensure a strong system that supports all young people facing homelessness.

The Foyer Foundation will play a role in ensuring investment delivers outcomes through support for location selection based on need and suitability, Foyer development, outcome measurement and accreditation.





## Four new Youth Foyers to break the cycle of youth homelessness

### WA is facing a youth homelessness crisis

It has never been more difficult for young people in WA to secure an affordable place to live

While the dream of home ownership is becoming less attainable for recent generations, some young people are impacted by the housing crisis more than others. Nearly 40,000 young people are facing housing insecurity and homelessness on their own every year. With no access to “the bank of mum and dad”, these young people are competing in a rental market that is failing adults on double incomes.

The housing crisis impacts young people more than any other age group. A 2024 Rental Affordability Snapshot found that 0 rentals (0%) were affordable for a person on Youth Allowance.

Young people in this situation are forced to bounce between crisis accommodation, couch surfing, sleeping in cars, on the streets and in overcrowded dwellings.

It’s difficult to finish studies, find a job and lay the foundations for an independent life without a safe and stable place to live.

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

More than 2,500 young people (aged 15-24) presented alone to Specialist Homeless Services last year<sup>4</sup>. Almost two thirds of young people experiencing homelessness are First Nations young people and/or exiting the out-of-home care system. About one in three young people who need medium-term specialist housing support (around 825 young people in 2022-23) were turned away due to insufficient funding for and availability of these services<sup>5</sup>.

Homelessness cannot be solved without investment in our service system to include more medium and long-term options alongside crisis response options.

### Youth Foyers are an evidence-based solution to reduce youth homelessness that enables lifelong independence

Youth Foyers are a place-based, integrated solution providing education, employment and accommodation for young people aged 16-24 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness

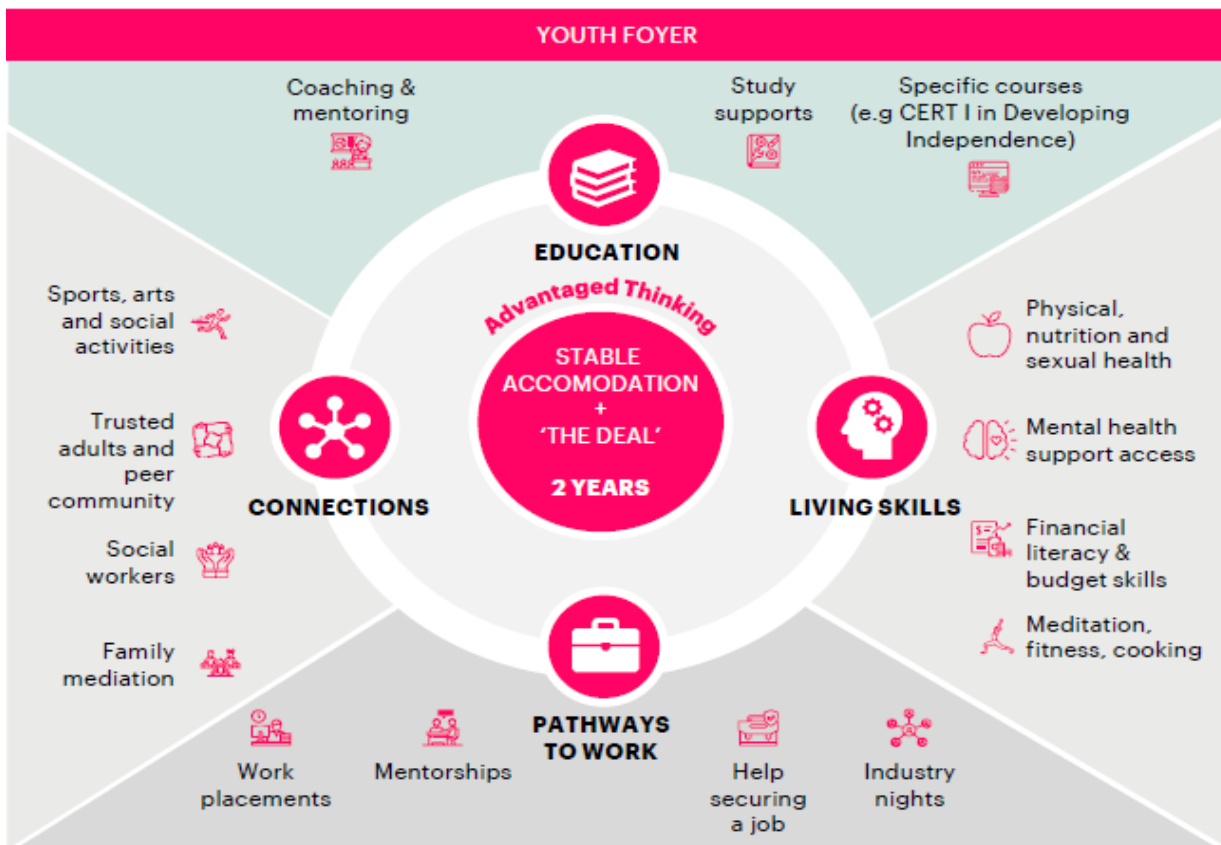
Youth Foyers offer a safe home and community for young people to live in for up to two years, integrating education, employment, and life skill support, all under one roof.

Youth Foyers are a place-based solution with strong partnerships with the local education and employment service providers, and clear support and locational links to TAFE. Some cater to young parents, while others focus on those exiting from the out-of-home care systems. The common aim for anyone living in a Youth Foyer is independence and the opportunity to access education, employment and secure housing.



<sup>4</sup> AIHW 2022-23.

<sup>5</sup> AIHW 2022-23. Estimate based on number of First Nations young people presenting alone plus non-Indigenous care leavers (Table 43). Estimate based on 33% of need for medium term housing not met in WA all clients (Table 24) and 58% nationally for young people (Table Young 2).



There are currently 16 accredited Youth Foyers with an additional 11 undergoing accreditation or under construction in Australia. WA has a significant number of young people experiencing homelessness<sup>6</sup>, but only one of the Youth Foyers in Australia – Foyer Oxford, which provides accommodation for 96 young people at risk of homelessness.

Youth Foyers are delivered by a network of service providers across Australia, big and small. Many of these providers also deliver crisis accommodation, refuges, and other solutions in parallel with their Youth Foyers.

Youth Foyers are an important youth housing solution, suitable for some young people needing medium-term housing support and ready for education or employment, within a comprehensive and strong system of specialist homelessness services, that provides a stepping stone to independence.

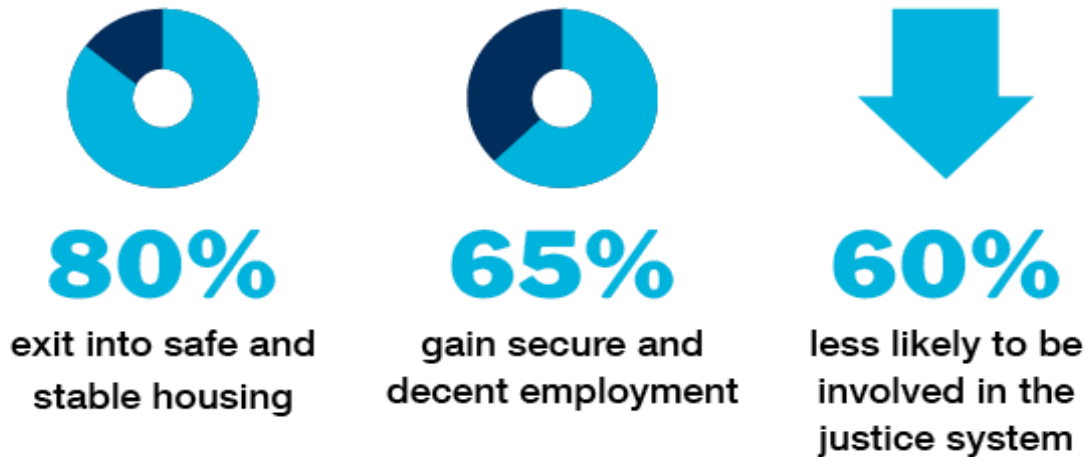
Foyers create thriving futures for young people

**"I think for me one of the biggest differences is that I'm now hopeful for the future and can see a future for myself. I also feel like the person I entered through Foyer and the person I will exit through Foyer will be like almost two completely different people as I'm now a lot more confident and sure of myself."** - Ava, current Foyer Oxford resident

<sup>6</sup> AIHW 2022/23

Analysis by Accenture Economic Insights demonstrated that Youth Foyers prevent homelessness and provide pathways out of homelessness for 16 to 24-year-olds.

Within two years, young people have what they need to change their future trajectory: more than 80 per cent transition to safe and stable housing, 65 per cent gain secure employment, and the majority report improvements in self-confidence and self-sufficiency. Young people living in Youth Foyers are 60 per cent less likely to engage with the justice system than young people without this medium-term support<sup>7</sup>.

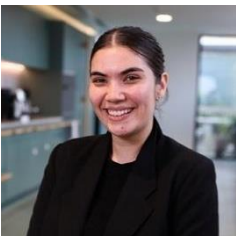


This data is reinforced by the stories and voices of young people who live or have lived in Youth Foyers.



**“It has been five years since I moved out of Foyer. My life right now sees me as a husband, homeowner, parent to fur-babies, youth ambassador, youth advisory council member and a recent social work graduate. After working hard for many years I’m now focused on building my career, with the hopes of one day becoming a leader within the Foyer world.”**

– Ash, former Foyer resident and Youth Ambassador

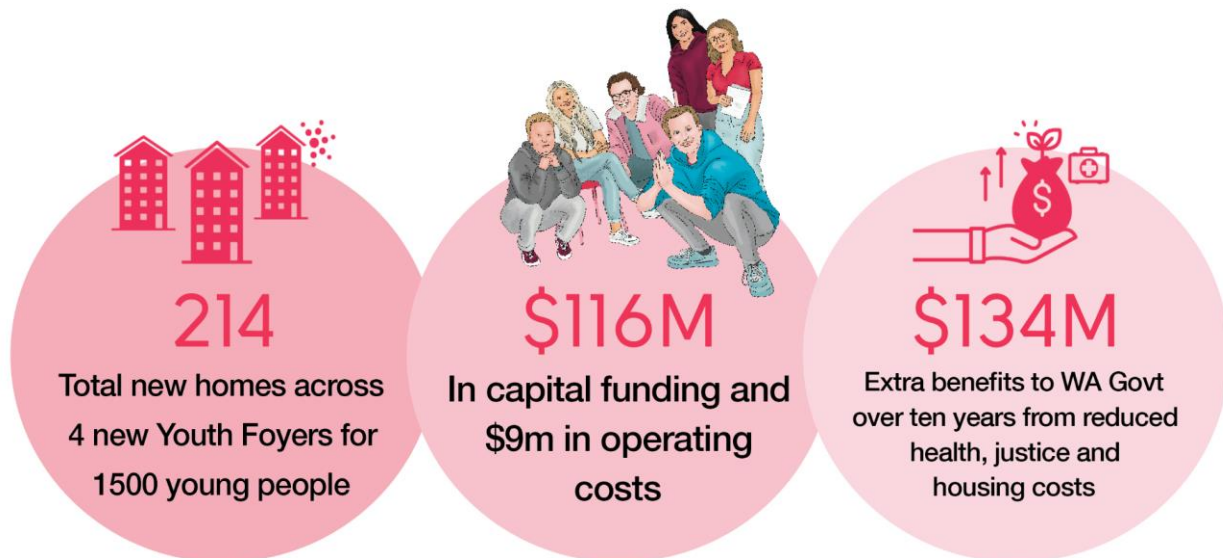


**“Foyer has been so life-changing for me as it’s not only supported me with finding employment but it’s also supported me in achieving my goals, particularly around education. Since leaving Foyer last year, I have been able to hold close the connections I made with the YDC’s, Young people and staff. I will forever have a community around me”**

– Tyrah, former Foyer Resident and Youth Ambassador

<sup>7</sup> Accenture, Under One Roof, 2022

## WA needs investment in four Youth Foyers to enable young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to transition to independent, thriving futures



FoyerInvest is seeking \$116m in capital funding and \$9m in operating costs each year for four new Foyers in WA

These costs are based on estimates from individual projects, such as those in Albany, the metro area (Bayswater) and regional (Broome). The additional metro location is based on the average cost to build an average size (forty-unit) Foyer at \$20 million for metro locations. Costs will vary for each site based on location, size and ability to utilise existing buildings. Operating costs of 40-bed Foyers are on average \$2 million each year, and then vary according to scale and location. These indicative costs include staffing, client brokerage, organisational costs, building operations, maintenance, tenancy management and electricity and youth rental subsidies.

This investment will create 214 new homes for young people, dedicated to social and affordable housing in perpetuity. Unlike typical social housing investments, the infrastructure costs create benefits for more individuals over time as young people move through the Youth Foyer to independence for up to two years. The four Foyers will support over 1500 young people over the next 10 years.

With youth homelessness rates at such high levels, there is rising demand for Foyers across the state.

## One project is shovel ready

Regional WA’s largest dedicated community housing provider Advance Housing Ltd (AHL) based in Albany and one of regional WA’s leading youth services providers Albany Youth Support Association (AYSA) have been working with the local community to understand the need in the region and develop a suitable offering that meets this need in a sustainable way.

Location	Estimated need <sup>8</sup>	Opportunity
<b>Albany</b>	The Joint Wait List (JWL) held by Advance Housing Ltd and the Department of Communities Housing Authority is a very telling indicator of ongoing unmet demand. As of 7 November 2024, there were 73 eligible tenancies under 25 on the JWL from Albany alone and 93 for the Great Southern region, and this is growing. Homelessness Data Collections events held in Albany during 2023/2024 experienced responses from 171 participants representing 275 people of which 58% or 160 were aged under 29.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48 units providing 50 beds plus a 10-bed crisis refuge</li> <li>• Co-location of AYSA’s other youth services on site as anchor tenant to complement Foyer and refuge activity</li> <li>• Inclusion of commercial office space and cafe to cross subsidise the rental shortfall from tenants on youth allowance meaning that ongoing government funding is limited to operational support for the Foyer and existing youth services.</li> <li>• Concept Design is complete and encapsulates high levels of energy efficiency and resilient construction.</li> <li>• Land has been secured in partnership with the City of Albany.</li> </ul>

## Three more Foyer sites could be identified and ready to build in the next few years

Many more areas across the state have high levels of youth homelessness, high levels of unmet need for medium-term housing solutions and the social infrastructure and conditions necessary for a Foyer to succeed.

These areas, identified by leading service providers, each have significant numbers of young people being turned away from medium-term housing support each year. Some areas have scope to build on existing sites or have identified suitable sites. Specific locations and projects would be developed in partnership with State Government. These areas include:

- Metropolitan 1 - Potential location: Bayswater
- Metropolitan 2 - North Metro
- Regional - Broome or Bunbury

See Appendix A for more information.

<sup>8</sup> AIHW 2022-23. Estimate based on 33% of need for medium term housing not met in WA all clients (Table 24) and 58% nationally for young people (Table Young 2).



This investment will save the WA government more than \$100m

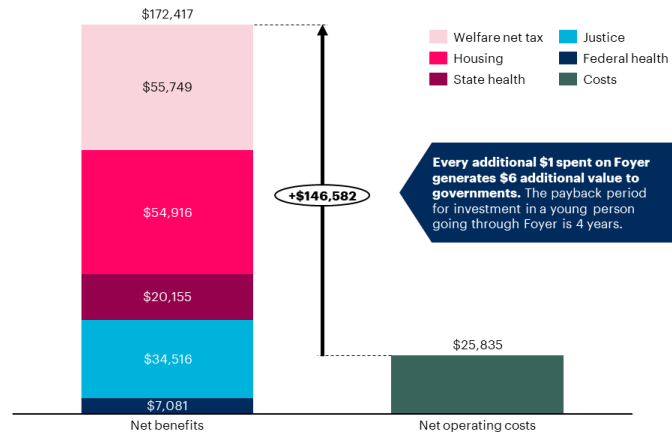
For every additional \$1 of investment, Foyers deliver \$6 in benefits to governments.

Youth Foyers create net benefits by reducing government costs from services across housing, health, welfare and justice over 40 years. Foyers also create individual and societal value.

On average, 52% of the benefits of Foyer go to the state and 48% to the federal government.<sup>9</sup> On a per-person basis, Foyers create \$89,000 in benefits for State governments through the avoided social housing, health and justice costs and \$84,000 in benefits for the Federal government across taxation uplifts, welfare and federal health savings.<sup>10</sup>

## Avoided government costs and incurred operational expenditure per person in Foyer<sup>11</sup>

Per individual, \$AUD, 2021, NPV, 40 years



This additional investment in medium-term youth homelessness services, alongside well-resourced crisis and transitional homelessness services, is essential to ensure a strong system that supports all young people facing homelessness.

## The Foyer Foundation will support government to achieve outcomes at pace

The Foyer Foundation is a central connector that enables young people, organisations and investors across Australia to work together to grow the reach and impact of Foyers: aligning activities, gathering evidence and insights, ensuring quality services, and driving advocacy efforts.

The Foyer Foundation will play a key role in ensuring this investment delivers outcomes at pace through:

- **Support for location selection based on need and suitability:** Foyers are not a solution for every homeless young person, nor are they suitable for every location. A level of need along with a strong surrounding social infrastructure is essential for success; a thriving labour market, good transport links, availability of education and other support services and a provider with an integrated service offering, strong partnerships and an Advantaged Thinking mindset. The Foundation can support the government to identify suitable locations and providers.
- **Support for Foyer development:** Successful Foyer development requires strong community consultation, expert design, staff development and much more. The Foundation has developed guidelines and supports to ensure successful Foyers able to meet accreditation standards can open.
- **Robust outcome measurement:** An outcome measurement framework supports ongoing assessment of outcomes around education, employment and life skills. This is an important input to the Foundation's payment-by-outcomes innovation lab, piloting models to build the capability for commissioning at scale. The government is invited to be a participant and learning partner in this project.
- **Foyer accreditation:** The Foyer Foundation has developed accreditation standards that each Foyer must meet and undertakes an assessment and inspection process to ensure the high standards that are key to achieving outcomes continue to be met.

<sup>9</sup> Accenture, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Accenture, 2022.

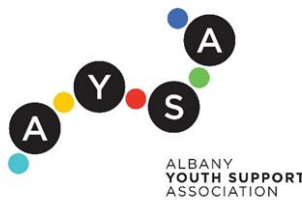
<sup>11</sup> Accenture, 2022.

The Foyer Foundation's ambition of scaling to 50 Foyers by 2030 will unlock life-changing outcomes for 20,000 young people over the next decade across Australia, generating \$2.9 billion in government savings in this period. We invite the WA Government to play its part in meeting the medium-term housing needs of young people facing or at risk of homelessness in WA.

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The Foyer Foundation is making this submission on behalf of the FoyerInvest consortium in WA including Advance Housing Ltd, Albany Youth Support Accommodation, Anglicare WA, Foundation Housing Limited, AccordWest, Shelter WA, and Youth Affairs Council of WA.

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



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**Appendix A – Potential additional Foyer locations**

Location	Need and Opportunity
<p><b>Metro 1</b></p>	<p><b>Bayswater</b>            Inner metro location, 94 units, close to transport, employment and training opportunities. Connected to local support services. Potential site identified. Preliminary discussions with local council. The Foyer Bayswater concept masterplan crafted to address the unique operational and resident needs of a Foyer facility, while also creating an accommodation precinct that is welcoming to both residents and the wider community.</p> <p>The budget accounts for accommodation costs related to both in-situ and prefabricated construction methods. Though the optimal method is still under analysis, per-unit allowances have been estimated to meet the required accommodation standards.</p> <p>Strong preliminary support for the project from philanthropy partners.</p>
<p><b>Metro 2</b></p>	<p>Location to be determined, based on need and feasibility - 40 bed Foyer located close to transport, employment and training opportunities. Connected to local support services.</p>
<p><b>Regional options</b></p>	<p><b>Broome</b>            Broome is well progressed in design and the data at the time of preparing the submission reported an overwhelming demand and need for supported youth accommodation.</p> <p>The delivery of 40 supported young people accommodation units that provides safe and secure accommodation for young people in Broome and the broader east Kimberley region.</p> <p><b>Bunbury and SW Foyers</b>            Accordwest has, since October 2024, been evaluating potential sites across the South West. Over many years, it has received a significant number of requests from young people for social or affordable housing. For the foreseeable future, social housing providers in the South West are unable to meet the housing needs of young people, particularly the most vulnerable.</p> <p>For over 18 months, Accordwest has been considering how the expanded Bunyap House, due to open in December 2025 with eight new transitional housing units accommodating up to 10 young people, adjacent to six existing crisis accommodation bedrooms supported by the Youth Accommodation and Support Service (YASS), might be further developed into a mid-sized youth foyer. It is also updating its operating plan to meet the standards required for Foyer accreditation.</p>