

# CYDA's response to the National Housing and Homelessness Plan



**Content note: Discussion of violence/ abuse/ death**

**Children and Young People with Disability Australia**

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**A note on terminology:**

*Term being used. E.g. Children and young people with disability*

Description of how and why the term is being used. E.g. The disability community has largely recognised and used inclusive language and terminology for decades. Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) uses person-first language, e.g., person with disability. However, CYDA recognises many people with disability choose to use identity-first language, e.g., disabled person.

**Acknowledgements:**

Children and Young People with Disability Australia would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which this report has been written, reviewed and produced, whose cultures and customs have nurtured and continue to nurture this land since the Dreamtime. We pay our respects to their Elders past, and present. This is, was, and always will be First Nations land.



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## Contents

Summary of recommendations .....	3
Introduction .....	5
<b>Statistics on children and young people affected by homelessness .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Main challenges in addressing chronic and repeat homelessness .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The impact of homelessness .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Detailed Recommendations .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Conclusion .....	17
Appendix – CYDA’s Previous work: reports and submissions .....	18

## Summary of recommendations

This submission makes clear that the impact of Australia's housing crisis and experiences of homelessness by children and young people with disability is multi-faceted and profoundly distressing. Children, young people and their families and caregivers face additional vulnerability due to unique experiences of oppression and discrimination that often exacerbate their risk of experiencing homelessness.

CYDA calls for the National Housing and Homelessness Plan ('the Plan') to be equally multi-faceted and to adopt a disability inclusive approach to the design, development, implantation and evaluation.

By taking the below recommendations into consideration we believe that the Plan would be able to make a positive impact in the lives of children and young people with disability.

### **Recommendation 1 – Accessible and affordable housing**

We recommend that the federal and state and territory governments should:

- Increase investment in accessible and affordable social housing.
- Mandate inclusion of children and young people with disability in State Homelessness Plans.
- Align the targets and outcomes of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan closely with the Outcome area 2 (Inclusive homes and communities) of the Australian Disability Strategy.

### **Recommendation 2: Income Support**

Address inadequate income support and ensure young people with disability are not living in poverty. This includes;

- Reviewing, amending, and increasing the rate of payments to a dignified standard of living that factor in the extra living costs that are associated with living with disability.
- Boost the Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 50% allowing more young people to afford suitable living options.
- Ensuring that there is timely and appropriate information and support available for young people to assist them to secure income support payments especially to those who are at risk of homelessness.

### **Recommendation 3: Increased support to children and young people with disability escaping domestic and family violence.**

- As highlighted in the Issues Paper, ensure women and children who escape family and domestic violence have access to safe and secure housing in line with the Action 10 of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.
- The Plan needs to address the intersection of domestic violence and homelessness with a focus on children and young people with disability through a comprehensive disability inclusive approach in collaboration with federal and state governments and all other relevant stakeholders.

#### **Recommendation 4: Collaboration and co-design**

- CYDA recommends using genuine co-design approaches to develop and test all elements of The National Housing and Homelessness Plan, including allowing input from young people with disability into monitoring and evaluation tools, to highlight and prevent problematic framing and approaches.
- Establish a co-design working group to ensure The Plan's short- medium- and long-term goal setting and implementation is carried out in partnership with young people with disability.

#### **Recommendation 5: Address gaps in evidence and data**

The Plan should address data and evidence gaps by:

- Collecting evidence directly from families, children and young people with disability to inform the development of The National Housing and Homelessness Plan.
- Tracking the pathways and outcomes of children through different systems by ensuring better data linkage and the joining of data sets.

## Introduction

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) is the national representative organisation for children and young people with disability aged 0 to 25 years. CYDA has an extensive national membership of more than 5,000 young people with disability, families and caregivers of children with disability, and advocacy and community organisations.

Our vision is that children and young people with disability are valued and living empowered lives with equality of opportunity; and our purpose is to ensure governments, communities, and families are empowering children and young people with disability to fully exercise their rights and aspirations. We do this by:

- Driving inclusion
- Creating equitable life pathways and opportunities
- Leading change in community attitudes and aspirations
- Supporting young people to take control
- Calling out discrimination, abuse, and neglect.

CYDA welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to *The National Housing and Homelessness Plan (the Plan)*.

Due to the intersectional and multifaceted nature of both the causes and impacts of housing issues and homelessness, this submission builds on CYDA's previous work relating to housing, employment and financial security and the reform of the disability support pension (see Appendix). Our work draws on the lived experience of children and young people with disability and highlights how government's early investment in initiatives and strategies that protect children and young people with disability can support them to thrive- both now and as they transition into adulthood, which in turn, will guard against the future risk of entrenched homelessness.

Our submission presents CYDA's response to relevant questions in the Issues Paper. We understand that through this consultation the Australian government aims to find medium- and long-term solutions to address multiple layers of housing and homelessness challenges across seven key focus areas as outlined in the Issues Paper, however for the purposes of this submission, we draw on the evidence from our community—what children, young people and families have said about the issues that most impact them. We therefore respond to the Issues Paper questions, ordered as follows;

1. Short, medium, and long-term actions governments can take to help prevent homelessness or to support people who may be at risk of becoming homeless.
2. How can the homelessness system more effectively respond to those at risk of, or already experiencing homelessness – with a specific focus on children and young people escaping homelessness.
3. Main challenges in addressing chronic and repeat homelessness for children and young people with disability.
4. How can governments encourage delivery and availability of affordable housing.

Safe, secure housing is fundamental to all people's health and wellbeing. Lack of affordable housing puts any person at an increased risk of experiencing housing stress, which can

affect their health, education, employment, and place them at risk of homelessness.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, anyone can be affected by homelessness. However, some groups, such as children and young people with disability, may face additional risk factors, such as limited engagement with the labour market, lack of social support and low income which put them at an increased risk of homelessness. Homelessness can have lasting impacts on children and young people well into their adult lives. It can negatively affect their physical health, mental wellbeing, self-esteem, confidence, and inhibit their physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and behavioural development.<sup>2</sup>

Without targeted actions, homelessness and housing instability can have profound effects on this cohort. Since the Issues Paper does not delve into the specific housing needs of various cohorts, in this submission we aim to highlight the specific housing related challenges faced by children and young people with disability and emphasise the importance of tailoring solutions that cater to their unique circumstances. Furthermore, we invite your attention to a recent submission by CYDA that delves into the pressing issue of the [Worsening rental crisis in Australia](#) and its impact on children and young people with disability, which we believe should inform the development of the National Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Estimating Homelessness: Census [Estimating Homelessness: Census, 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Mission Australia, Homelessness and its lasting impact on children and young people [Homelessness and its lasting impact on children and young people \(missionaustralia.com.au\)](#)

## Statistics on children and young people affected by homelessness

As detailed in the National Housing and Homelessness Issues Paper, research has shown that people with disability have poorer housing outcomes than the Australian population as a whole, with significant differences associated with the type of disability, the way in which the disability was acquired and the severity of disability.<sup>3</sup> About 5% of Australia's homeless population are people with a profound or severe disability.<sup>4</sup> While there is limited contemporary, qualitative data on the experiences of children and young people with disability affected by homelessness in Australia, 2021 census data shows the biggest increases since 2016 in the proportion of people experiencing homelessness in 2021 were children aged less than 12 (up by 11%) and those aged 12 to 18 (up by 14%).<sup>5</sup> Out of the 116,427 Australians experiencing homelessness, nearly a quarter or 27,680 (24%) were young people aged 12-24 years.<sup>6</sup> There were another 17,646 or (14.4%) of under 12 year olds who were affected by homelessness.<sup>7</sup>

In 2020-21, Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) supported around 41,700 young people aged 15-24 who were at risk of or experiencing homelessness.<sup>8</sup> Most common main reason for young people to seek SHS assistance was housing crisis.<sup>9</sup> Another 1 in 6 SHS clients with disability seek support because of domestic or family violence.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Beer, A. Et al. (2019) *The Relative Risk of Homelessness among Persons with a Disability: New Methods and Policy Insights*. Int J Environ Res Public Health.16(22):4304. DOI [10.3390/ijerph16224304](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16224304)

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22 [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/specialist-homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report-2021-22), [Young people presenting alone - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/specialist-homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report-2021-22/young-people-presenting-alone)

<sup>5</sup> Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) What the 2021 Census data told us about Homelessness [What the 2021 Census data told us about Homelessness | AHURI](https://www.ahuri.org.au/2021-census-data-told-us-about-homelessness)

<sup>6</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Estimating Homelessness: Census [Estimating Homelessness: Census, 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/australian-bureau-of-statistics/census/estimating-homelessness-census-2021)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) People with disability in Australia – Homelessness Services [People with disability in Australia, Homelessness services - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/people-with-disability-in-australia/homelessness-services)

<sup>9</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22 [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/specialist-homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report-2021-22), [Young people presenting alone - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/specialist-homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report-2021-22/young-people-presenting-alone)

<sup>10</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) People with disability in Australia – Homelessness Services [People with disability in Australia, Homelessness services - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/people-with-disability-in-australia/homelessness-services)



## Main challenges in addressing chronic and repeat homelessness

Addressing chronic and repeat homelessness among children and young people with disability is a complex and challenging issue. According to AIHW data SHS clients with disability are also more likely than clients without disability to have more risk factors that increase their likelihood of experiencing homelessness, or that provide additional barriers to exiting homelessness. Some of the main challenges in tackling this problem include:

- **Domestic and family violence:**

Chronic domestic violence and homelessness among children and young people with disability are deeply interconnected issues, as the presence of one can significantly increase the risk of the other. As the issues paper also has highlighted, domestic and family violence can force many children and young people to leave their homes, often with no support and nowhere else to go.<sup>11</sup> According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 35% of young people presenting alone for homelessness services across Australia have experienced domestic and family violence.<sup>12</sup>

Even when these individuals choose to leave abusive homes to escape the violence, this decision can lead to homelessness if they have nowhere else to go or lack the means to secure safe housing. Moreover, children and young people with disability battling homelessness face a double vulnerability, as they are at risk of both domestic violence and the dangers associated with homelessness, including exploitation and abuse on the streets.<sup>13</sup> The trauma of domestic violence and subsequent homelessness can have a severe impact on the mental health and well-being of children and young people with disability, leading to conditions such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Consequently, these issues may affect these individuals' ability to finish their education, find suitable employment pushing them to a vicious circle of living in poverty exposed to violence and discrimination.

- **Housing crisis:**

Young people often experience difficulties securing long-term accommodation and are particularly affected by poverty and the shortage of affordable housing in Australia. When faced with the need to leave their family home, young people often have little option but to end up on the streets.

Accessible and disability-friendly housing options are scarce in the current housing market. In general, people with disability frequently encounter barriers related to mobility, accessibility modifications, and proximity to necessary services and amenities. This scarcity exacerbates their struggle to find safe and suitable living arrangements.

Although Australia has a population of 4.4 million individuals with disability, the accessibility of suitable housing remains a significant issue for many of them. Currently, most housing in Australia does not meet the needs of people with disability with problems including poor

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<sup>11</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies (2015) Children's exposure to domestic and family violence [Children's exposure to domestic and family violence | Australian Institute of Family Studies \(aifs.gov.au\)](https://www.aifs.gov.au/childrens-exposure-to-domestic-and-family-violence)

<sup>12</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing (2022) Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22 [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22, Young people presenting alone - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/publications-reports/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report-2021-22)

<sup>13</sup> Street Smart Australia (2023) We need to end Youth Homelessness [Youth homelessness and our housing crisis - StreetSmart Australia](https://www.street-smart.org.au/youth-homelessness)

access and unsuitable internal layouts, particularly inadequately designed bathrooms.<sup>14</sup> Dwellings may also be poorly located to support community participation.

The introduction of new mandatory accessible housing standards in the National Construction Code (NCC) is a positive development that could alleviate the difficulties faced by people with disability when searching for accessible homes.<sup>15</sup> However, the fact that these standards are not universally mandated across all states, and some states have indicated they will not be adopting the "liveable housing design," means that people with disability will continue to face challenges in finding accessible housing options.<sup>16</sup>

- **Rising housing costs:**

Research shows that people with disability are more likely to experience poverty, are less likely to be in work, and more likely to be socially isolated.<sup>17</sup> Poverty and housing are inextricably linked because housing is the largest fixed cost for most low-income households.<sup>18</sup> Many young people with disability remain disproportionately represented among those experiencing poverty within Australia. This makes it exceedingly difficult for them to afford the ever-increasing rental costs.

Research also shows that income support payments and other associated policies and programs can effectively address poverty.<sup>19</sup> This is particularly relevant to young people with disability as nearly half of this cohort are reliant on income support as their main source of income. Current income payments are inadequate for a dignified standard of living – with young people receiving varying rates of payment on an inequitable basis.<sup>20</sup>

Payments such as the Disability Support Pension (DSP), Youth Allowance, or JobSeeker are intended to ensure young people with disability can meet their basic needs when unable to work or when studying/looking for work. However, the yearly increase in welfare payments does not adequately account for the increases in the cost of living including housing experienced by all Australians. (This is made worse when acknowledging that the cost of living is higher for those with disability).

According to a 2019 survey by the University of Melbourne, 11.2% of Australians with disability were living in unaffordable housing compared to 7.6% of people without disability.<sup>21</sup> Anglicare Australia's 2023 Rental Affordability Snapshot shows that only 66 (0.1%) rentals in the whole of Australia are affordable for people on the DSP.<sup>22</sup> Which means that 99.9% of rental homes are out of reach for this cohort.

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<sup>14</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission (2022) Accessible Housing Project [Accessible Housing Project | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

<sup>15</sup> National Construction Code (2022) New liveable housing design requirements [New liveable housing design requirements | NCC \(abcb.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> Australian Building Codes Board (2022) NCC 2022 state and territory adoption dates [NCC 2022 state and territory adoption dates | ABCB](#)

<sup>17</sup> Kavanagh, A. Et al. (2013) *Time trends in socio-economic inequalities for women and men with disabilities in Australia: evidence of persisting inequalities*. International Journal of Equity in Health, 12:73.

<sup>18</sup> Anglicare Australia (2023) Rental affordability snapshot national report 2023 \ Fourteenth edition, <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Rental-Affordability-Snapshot-National-Report.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> CYDA (2023) Children and Young People with Disability Australia's response to the Senate Inquiry into: The extent and nature of poverty in Australia <https://www.cyda.org.au/search/details/374/cyda-s-submission-to-the-senate-inquiry-into-the-extent-and-nature-of-poverty>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Aitken, Z. Et al. (2019) *Precariously placed: housing affordability, quality and satisfaction of Australians with disabilities*, Disability & Society, 34:1, 121 -142, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2018.1521333](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1521333)

<sup>22</sup> Anglicare Australia (2023) Rental affordability snapshot national report 2023 \ Fourteenth edition, page 7-8 <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Rental-Affordability-Snapshot-National-Report.pdf>

For a single person on JobSeeker or Youth Allowance, payments that most young people with disability who are unable to get the DSP find themselves on, the situation is even worse. The number of affordable rentals for a single person on Jobseeker is 0% (4 rentals) whilst rental affordability is nil for a single person aged over 18 on Youth Allowance.<sup>23</sup>

The current situation means that many young people with disability have no choice but pay more than they can to afford a place to live. This situation leaves them with no option but to allocate a significant portion of their income to housing, leaving minimal funds for other essential needs like healthcare, education, and transportation. The increasing number of young Australians experiencing homelessness serves as evidence of the unjust and unsustainable nature of such sacrifices.<sup>24</sup>

While these are the main challenges to addressing chronic and repeat homelessness among this cohort, there are some other subsequent barriers which are equally important and need to be addressed to end/reduce homelessness among children and young people. These challenges include:

#### **Limited support services:**

Inadequate support services, including mental health care, rehabilitation, and assistance in navigating social services, can make it challenging for children and young people with disability to break free from homelessness and regain stability. This can particularly affect those children and young people who escape domestic and family violence. Due to their dependency on a parent/carer they may have limited support networks, making it harder for them to seek help and find safe accommodation when leaving an abusive household.

#### **Complex needs:**

Many children and young people with disability have complex health needs that require ongoing medical care, therapy, and support. The lack of accessible healthcare services can exacerbate their homelessness and health problems. Similarly, some may even require specialised accommodations and support services due to complex disabilities that are often unavailable in homeless shelters or temporary housing.

According to 2022 AIHW data, people with disability are more likely than people without disability to experience repeat homelessness.<sup>25</sup> Chronic and repeat homelessness can have long-lasting physical and psychological effects on children and young people, affecting their physical health, mental well-being, self-esteem, and overall development. The impact of homelessness is discussed in more detail below.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Estimating Homelessness: Census [Estimating Homelessness: Census, 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) People with disability in Australia – Homelessness Services [People with disability in Australia, Homelessness services - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

## The impact of homelessness

The consequences of inadequate housing and homelessness for children and young people with disability can be particularly severe. While it can impact multiple layers of the life of a young child with disability, below are a few of the most significant impacts.

- **Educational disruption and barriers to employment:**

Homelessness can significantly disrupt a child's education, leading to learning difficulties and disengagement.<sup>26</sup> This is particularly true for children and young people with disability as homelessness makes it difficult for these individuals to achieve their full potential and break the cycle of poverty.

As an organisation that advocates for inclusive education, CYDA believes that engagement with mainstream education is fundamental to children's ongoing educational development and overall wellbeing and is critical to prevent ongoing social and economic exclusion.<sup>27</sup> However, homelessness can prevent young people from being able to concentrate in class or attend school at all.<sup>28</sup> Young people experiencing homelessness are much more likely to be absent for long periods and fall behind.<sup>29</sup> As a result, this group tend to have poor academic records and few skills which would assist them to obtain even unskilled employment in a competitive labour market.<sup>30</sup> It can also affect how they relate to their school mates, intensifying their feelings of isolation.

- **Physical and mental health:**

Inadequate housing conditions and homelessness can lead to physical health problems, exacerbate existing disabilities, and have a detrimental effect on mental health. Research shows that there is a complex two-way relationship between mental health, housing and homelessness. Significant life events and individual circumstances, such as mental health status, housing engagement, income, and family support, interact in a complex manner and this interaction can lead to a situation where mental ill-health can cause homelessness, and conversely, homelessness may become a trigger for mental ill-health.<sup>31</sup> Research also shows that young people affected by homelessness face a high mortality as a result of multimorbidities from not only mental health problems, but injury, violence, communicable and non-communicable diseases, and substance abuse<sup>32</sup> while limited access to medicine, treatment and basic hygiene exacerbate these challenges.

For children and young people with disability, these challenges can be even more pronounced. The additional physical, cognitive, or emotional needs associated with their disability may require specific accommodations or supports that may not be readily available in unstable housing situations or while experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, the stress

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<sup>26</sup> Launch Housing, Employment and Education [Employment and Education \(launchhousing.org.au\)](https://www.launchhousing.org.au)

<sup>27</sup> Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) Advocating for inclusive education [Advocating for inclusive education - CYDA](#)

<sup>28</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) Australia's children – Homelessness [Australia's children, Homelessness - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au)

<sup>29</sup> Flatuea, P. Et al. (2015) *The cost of youth homelessness in Australia study: snapshot report 1*, Education page 4 [apo-nid53029.pdf](#)

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1989) 'Our Homeless Children' - Report of The National Inquiry into Homeless Children, Chapter 22 Role of the Education System, page 271-281 [Contents.doc \(live.com\)](#)

<sup>31</sup> Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) (2019) Understanding the links between mental health, housing and homelessness [Understanding the links between mental health, housing and homelessness | AHURI](#)

<sup>32</sup> Heerde JA & Patton GC (2020) *The vulnerability of young homeless people*, Lancet 5(6):E302–3 [The vulnerability of young homeless people - The Lancet Public Health](#)

and instability of homelessness can exacerbate existing disabilities or contribute to the development of new ones. This can lead to further disengagement from education, creating a cycle that is difficult to break.

- **Increased vulnerability:**

Children and young people with disability facing homelessness are at a heightened risk of exploitation, abuse, and neglect and social isolation. While the specific data to support this statement is limited, the points discussed above and the evidence of the nature and extent of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability in Australia as we heard through the Disability Royal Commission show that this particular cohort is particularly vulnerable, facing a heightened risk of exploitation, neglect, and physical or emotional abuse due to their unstable living conditions.

## Detailed Recommendations

CYDA welcomes and supports the government's vision to develop a National Housing and Homelessness Plan in close collaboration with state and territory governments to help more Australians access safe and affordable housing. We also welcome that the development of the Plan will consider the housing priorities especially the outcome area 2 of the Australian Disability Strategy - Inclusive homes and communities.

Importantly though, persons with disability are not a uniform group and their pathways into homelessness—potential and experienced—will vary by age, disability type, location and the severity of their disability. It is therefore essential to develop a much stronger understanding of the intersection between disability and homelessness.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, due to the growing number of children and young people who are at risk of homelessness and the multiple layers of barriers that this group face in securing safe, affordable and accessible housing, we urge the Australian government to consider the following fundamental measures.

### **Recommendation 1 – Accessible and affordable housing**

We recommend that the federal and state and territory governments should:

- Increase investment in accessible and affordable social housing.
- Mandate inclusion of children and young people with disability in State Homelessness Plans.
- Align the targets and outcomes of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan closely with the Outcome area 2 (Inclusive homes and communities) of the Australian Disability Strategy.

The federal and state and territory governments must invest more resources to develop and maintain social and affordable housing options. In particular, states and territories should be held to account as they are responsible for providing adequate housing supports whilst also maintaining responsibility for addressing the needs of specific priority cohorts such as children affected by family violence and children and young people.

We recommend, therefore, that states include specific references to children and young people with disability in their state homelessness plans, with a specific focus on accessibility for people with disability. Investing in social and affordable housing helps stabilise rent costs, making it more feasible for young people with disability to afford housing within their limited budgets. This, in turn, reduces the risk of homelessness and financial strain, enabling them to engage in education, employment and increased community participation. Investing in social housing can also lead to long-term cost savings for the government by reducing the demand on emergency services, health system, and social assistance programs that might otherwise be required to address homelessness or inadequate living conditions.

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<sup>33</sup> Beer, A. Et al. (2019) *The Relative Risk of Homelessness among Persons with a Disability: New Methods and Policy Insights*. Int J Environ Res Public Health.16(22):4304. DOI [10.3390/ijerph16224304](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16224304)

## Recommendation 2 – Income Support

**Address inadequate income support and ensure young people with disability are not living in poverty.**

**This includes;**

- Reviewing, amending and increasing the rate of payments to a dignified standard of living that factor in the extra living costs that are associated with living with disability.
- Boost the Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 50% allowing more young people to afford suitable living options.
- Ensuring that there is timely and appropriate information and support available for young people to assist them to secure income support payments especially to those who are at risk of homelessness.

Reviewing and amending the social security system is necessary to ensure that young people with disability are not living in poverty. Income supports should be increased to match the upsurge in rent, enabling young people to afford safe and secure housing. This is one of the most significant actions governments can take to tackle poverty and housing insecurity particularly for young people with disability.

We know this approach works because the data shows when the Government doubled income support with the Coronavirus Supplement and JobKeeper in 2020, homelessness dropped by 5% nationally during that financial year.<sup>34</sup>

*People presenting to homelessness services nationally:*

- FY20-21: 278,300
- FY19-20: 290,500<sup>35</sup>

Analysis from Homelessness Australia of AIHW data shows that homelessness plunged when the Coronavirus Supplement was available between April 2020 to August 2020, and increased again as the additional income support was slowly removed. As the Coronavirus Supplement was gradually withdrawn and JobSeeker has been cut back to just \$45 a day, the number of people receiving homelessness services steadily grew, and now exceeds pre-pandemic levels.<sup>36</sup>

CYDA endorses the recommendations of peak bodies like Homelessness Australia and ACOSS for the Federal Government to increase JobSeeker and related payments to at least \$69 a day, and boost Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 50% to ensure people can keep a roof over their head.<sup>37 38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Australian Council of Social Service (2021) Temporary increase in income support led to marked drop in homelessness

[Temporary increase in income support led to marked drop in homelessness - ACOSS](#)

<sup>35</sup> Homelessness Australia (2021) We can, and did, dramatically reduce homelessness with increased income support, new data shows [We can, and did, dramatically reduce homelessness with increased income support, new data shows – Homelessness Australia](#)

<sup>36</sup> Australian Council of Social Service (2021) Temporary increase in income support led to marked drop in homelessness

[Temporary increase in income support led to marked drop in homelessness - ACOSS](#)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Homelessness Australia (2021) We can, and did, dramatically reduce homelessness with increased income support, new data shows [We can, and did, dramatically reduce homelessness with increased income support, new data shows – Homelessness Australia](#)

### **Recommendation 3 – Increased support to children and young people with disability escaping domestic and family violence.**

- As highlighted in the Issues Paper, ensure women and children who escape family and domestic violence have access to safe and secure housing in line with Action 10 of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.
- The Plan needs to address the intersection of domestic violence and homelessness with a focus on children and young people with disability through a comprehensive disability inclusive approach in collaboration with federal and state governments and all other relevant stakeholders.

To effectively address the intertwined issues of chronic domestic and family violence and homelessness among children and young people with disability in Australia, a comprehensive approach is essential. CYDA supports the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.<sup>39</sup>

In a 2019 report Mission Australia also recommends that investment in prevention strategies, integrated services that address the needs of at-risk groups, perpetrator interventions to prevent further violence, therapeutic interventions, crisis and transitional accommodation, and developing a national strategy to end homelessness as an urgent action to prevent and end domestic and family violence and resulting homelessness.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, we recommend implementation of education and awareness campaigns within schools, communities, and healthcare settings to raise awareness about domestic violence and its intersection with disability. This includes teaching children, parents, and caregivers to recognise signs of abuse and providing information on how to seek help.

Addressing the intersection of chronic domestic violence and homelessness among children and young people with disability requires a multifaceted approach that prioritises their safety, well-being, and recovery. Therefore, it is pivotal for the National Housing and Homelessness Plan to have a comprehensive disability inclusive approach that foster collaboration among people with lived experience, federal and state governments, support organisations, and the broader community to ensure that these vulnerable individuals receive the protection and assistance they need.

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<sup>39</sup> Department of Social Services, The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 [The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>40</sup> Mission Australia (2019) Out of the Shadows – Domestic and Family Violence: a leading of homelessness in Australia [Out of the Shadows final 28 05 2020 reduced.pdf](#)



#### **Recommendation 4 - Collaboration and co-design**

- CYDA recommends using genuine co-design approaches to develop and test all elements of The National Housing and Homelessness Plan, including allowing input from young people with disability into the monitoring and evaluation tools, to highlight and prevent problematic framing and approaches.
- Establish a co-design working group to ensure The Plan's short- medium- and long-term goal setting and implementation is carried out in partnership with young people with disability.

Based on ongoing consultation with children and young people with disability and their families, CYDA advocates for genuine co-design as best practice for inclusion in all disability related policy and program work. Therefore, we recommend co-design as an integral component to ensure that The Plan achieves its purpose to be an effective road map for guiding national housing and homelessness policies and programs across the Commonwealth.

Through CYDA's consultations with young people about the development of other strategies such as The Guide to The Australian Disability Strategy (ADS) and Good Practice Guidelines for Engagement of People with Disability, co-design was considered crucial to the development of policy, strategy, and services that impact children and young people's lives.

The design of the National Housing and Homelessness plan should be no different.

Building on this evidence from the CYDA community, we recommend early engagement with families, children and young people with disability to inform future drafts of The Plan.

The co-design approach was reflected in our consultation with young people regarding the guide to the ADS. For instance, one young person shared a comment via written feedback that encapsulated the experience of 'othering' that people can feel when consulted in inauthentic ways:

*"It's important that you place [people with disability] in a position to run and be part of making/writing up the evaluation report and not just placing us to be the subjects of it".* — Young person with disability, Australia's Disability Strategy consultation, 2022

As this young person suggests, understanding what the goal is from the beginning of the process is an important part of co-design. CYDA recommends children and young people with disability be a part of defining what success looks like in the context of the vision for The National Housing and Homelessness Plan. Views about success may differ between cohorts, so it is important to recognise this and seek to understand those perspectives.

## **Recommendation 5 – Address gaps in evidence and data**

### **The Plan should address data and evidence gaps by:**

- Collecting evidence directly from families, children and young people with disability to inform the development of The National Housing and Homelessness Plan.
- Tracking the pathways and outcomes of children through different systems by ensuring better data linkage and the joining of data sets.

Invest in both qualitative and quantitative research to better understand the unique needs and challenges faced by this population and collect data on disability-related homelessness specifically on children and young people to inform evidence-based policy decisions.

Improve linkages between mainstream family and children's services and disability services: Mainstream services such as family and children services have regular contact with children and young people with disability, who are at risk of homelessness. We recommend that mainstream services should collaborate with disability-specific services to develop early intervention strategies – in consultation with children and young people with disability and their families to safe-guard against homelessness.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is imperative that the Australian government and all relevant stakeholders including state and territory governments take targeted and decisive action to address the pressing issue of housing and homelessness, particularly in the context of children and young people with disability. Their unique vulnerabilities and the adverse effects of homelessness require a comprehensive approach that encompasses investment in affordable and accessible housing, increased income support, a national data and research strategy and a collaborative co-design approach. By working together and heeding the voices of those affected, we can ensure that the Plan truly prioritises the needs and aspirations of our youth, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society.

## Appendix – CYDA’s Previous work: reports and submissions

### **CYDA’s work housing, rental crisis**

- [Response](#) to the inquiry into the worsening rental crisis

### **CYDA’s work on rights, recognition and attitudes**

- CYDA’s [2021-22 Pre-Budget submission](#): Drive inclusion and equity for children and young people with disability
- [Response](#) to the Disability Royal Commission Rights and Attitudes issues paper
- [Submission](#) into the Inquiry into the purpose, intent and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension

### **CYDA’s work on poverty, employment and financial security**

- [Response](#) to the Senate Inquiry into: The extent and nature of poverty in Australia
- ‘What young people said’ [Policy paper](#) - Financial security and employment
- [Submission](#) to the Senate Select Committee on Job Security Young people with disability and job insecurity