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**Q1**

Name of organisation

Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

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**Q2**

Your name

Claudia Carles

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**Q3**

Position

Policy and Advocacy Officer

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## Q10

Describe the experiences of people struggling to access affordable and suitable housing in the context of your organisation's work.

Working with services and young people facing homelessness and housing insecurity, it is apparent that young people's struggles to access affordable and suitable housing is mostly invisible. This was described by a sector worker from our survey of relevant services that youth homelessness is something that is not perceived "the same way you see adult homelessness. It is hidden, at friends and family houses, in parks, in abandoned buildings, in crisis accommodation." (p 15, Youth Action Plan Housing and Homelessness Submission, YACWA 2024).

When young people reveal their struggles with securing safe housing by reaching out for support, their needs are often unmet by youth and accommodation services. Young people in WA have the highest unmet need within the state's Specialist Homelessness System, comprising almost a third of all 'unassisted requests' for services due to current services being at capacity and unable to provide further assistance. While young people make up 20% of the overall homelessness population, only 2.9% of social housing is allocated to young people (My Foundations Youth Housing 2024 Youth Housing Product Overview). Young people on low incomes are simultaneously unable to access affordable housing within the general housing market, as 0% of rental homes in Perth were available or affordable to young people on Youth Allowance (Anglicare 2023 Rental Affordability Snapshot).

We know from working with young people and the Western Australian community services sector that young people who have been disproportionately impacted by family breakdown, poverty, violence, mental health and associated trauma are at increased risk of homelessness, particularly young women, girls and young LGBTIQ+ people.

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## Q11

Describe the flow-on impacts of the housing crisis in the context of your organisation's work.

Negative impact on young people's health and quality of life:

Significant impact on young peoples' sense of belonging, security, safety, stability and ability to focus on their wellbeing: "Homelessness leads to disconnection and exclusion of support systems and community. Young people with complex needs are particularly vulnerable to this isolation, as services are not funded or geared to support them, creating further difficulties in seeking help" (p 14, Youth Action Plan Housing and Homelessness Submission, YACWA 2024).

Housing security impacts mental and physical health, engagement in employment, education and training, community and political engagement and overall trust in government decision making for young people.

Economic cost to Government and community:

"The annual cost of health and justice services alone for homeless youth in Australia is \$747 million - an average of \$17,868 per person per year (refer to source). This exceeds the total cost of providing Specialist Homelessness Services to the 256,000 people (young and old) assisted by the system over the same period. These costs do not include the additional lifetime impact of early school leaving and low engagement with employment" (p 26 – 27, Youth Action Plan Housing and Homelessness Submission, YACWA 2024).

"A 2012 study commissioned as part of the National Homelessness Research Agenda estimated the lifetime service costs for housing, health, community services and justice at between \$1 and \$5 million for a single homeless person" (p 27, Youth Action Plan Housing and Homelessness Submission, YACWA 2024).

## Q12

Describe how current policy settings impact housing affordability and access to housing from your organisation's perspective.

The Western Australian Government's lack of political attention towards youth homelessness contributes to the invisibility of young people's struggle with housing and homelessness, creating a perpetual cycle of policy not reflecting the needs of young people. Adult-centric homelessness services fail to address the specific developmental needs of young people. Current Government data tools and processes are unable to capture youth homelessness accurately due to its invisible nature, reflective of higher rates of couch surfing in comparison to rough sleeping, among young people experiencing homelessness. This means that the true rate of homelessness is exponentially higher than current reported number, and this is increasingly daily due to ongoing surges in FDV, the cost of living crisis and the housing shortage.

Key statistics:

1 in 3 (32%) of people experiencing homelessness are under the age of 25 (ABS 2023, cited on p 23, Youth Action Plan Housing and Homelessness Submission, YACWA 2024).

Policy failures disproportionately impact on young Aboriginal people, as they make up 38% of total youth homelessness population (AIHW 2022, cited on p 24, Youth Action Plan Housing and Homelessness Submission, YACWA 2024).

WA's rate of rough sleeping for young people is 76% higher than the national average (ABS 2021, cited on p 24, Youth Action Plan Housing and Homelessness Submission, YACWA 2024).

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## Q13

Describe what actions your organisation believes should be taken by governments to most improve affordability and access to housing.

YACWA made the following recommendations as part of our joint submission to the WA State Government's Youth Action Plan consultation process, in collaboration with Vinnies WA and the WA Alliance to End Homelessness. Government should:

1.1 Increase the accessibility of the private rental market for young people by utilising a combination of rental caps, subsidies and landlord insurance to recruit ethical landlords and increase housing affordability and access for young people.

1.2 Drastically increase the amount of social housing available to young people in Western Australia by increasing supply and ensuring a designated quota of social and affordable housing is allocated specifically to young people.

2.1 Rollout a grass roots community campaign around homelessness that is co-designed with the Youth Homelessness Advisory Council and other young people with lived experience of homelessness, in order to alter community perceptions of homelessness, dispel stigmatising myths and facilitate a collective community response to housing insecurity and homelessness for young people.

2.2 Target corporate and philanthropic partners to provide support in raising awareness around the issues of housing insecurity and homelessness for young people.

2.3 Following the trial of Home Stretch WA, amend legislation to enshrine the option for young people to extend the age at which they leave care to 21.

2.4 Support the Commissioner for Children and Young People to report on the main drivers of youth homelessness and have oversight over the adequacy of interagency response to these issues.

3.1 Government should establish an ongoing and meaningful relationship with the Youth Homelessness Advisory Council (YHAC).

3.2 The Western Australian Minister for Youth should commit to advocating in Cabinet for secure housing options for all young people in Western Australia.

3.3 Work with Local Government Areas and consult with local communities to develop localised response strategies to housing insecurity and homelessness for young people.

4.1 Build on existing digital tools to develop a mainstream online platform for young people to get information about homelessness services, social and affordable housing, and where best to find immediate safe and secure accommodation.

4.2 Develop and prototype a Youth Data Locker that enables young people to control their personal information and determine when and where it should be shared across the system.

5.1 Advocate for the needs of young people experiencing housing insecurity and/or homelessness by advocating actively in Cabinet for increased and sustainable investment into accommodation services for young people

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## Q14

Is there anything else your organisation would like to share with the Commission?

All answers are based on YACWA's 2024 Joint Submission for the Youth Action Plan, linked here: [1.-YACWA-Youth-Action-Plan-Joint-Submission.pdf](#)

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