

Yfoundations
Annual Report
2025-26

Acknowledgements

In the spirit of reconciliation, Yfoundations acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and thank them for protecting the land and its ecosystems for time immemorial.

We also acknowledge the strength, resilience and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities, and the ongoing impacts of colonisation, dispossession and systemic injustices that continue to drive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people into homelessness at disproportionate rates.

Yfoundations celebrates diversity in all forms, recognises the diversity in the sector workforce, and believes diversity among our staff makes Yfoundations a more effective organisation. We actively promote a prejudice-free and discrimination-free space.

As a proud member of ACON's Welcome Here Project, Yfoundations welcomes and celebrates lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual and other gender or sexuality diverse people (LGBTQIA+). We support the three project commitments:

- We WELCOME and include LGBTQ+ people.
- We CREATE positive change in our local community.
- ^a We CELEBRATE LGBTQ+ diversity.

Yfoundations acknowledges that our efforts towards inclusivity and solidarity must be ongoing and always evolving.

We always welcome feedback from the sector and community members.

Thank you to all the workers striving to create a future without child and youth homelessness.



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About Us

Yfoundations is the NSW peak body advocating for children and young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness, and the services that provide direct support to them. We are proudly a membership-based organisation with a network of around 60 organisations across NSW and the rest of Australia. Yfoundations aims to create a future without child and youth homelessness by advocating for children and young people at risk of or experiencing or who have previously experienced homelessness.

For over 45 years, Yfoundations has been an authority on youth homelessness, working collaboratively with members, NGOs (non-government organisations), our partner peaks, government departments, the private sector and community members to provide advocacy, sector development, policy advice, health training, and research to lead the change to end child and youth homelessness in NSW and throughout Australia.

Yfoundations provides a voice for young people with lived experience of homelessness. Our Youth Homelessness Representative Council is a group of young people (aged 18-25 years) with lived experiences of homelessness and a passion to improve young people's lives. They meet regularly to discuss and act on issues affecting children and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The overall aim of the YHRC is to provide them with a platform to voice concerns and ideas on issues that matter to them from their experiences of homelessness.

Yfoundations advises the government on areas to prioritise, including highlighting funding gaps, leading and promoting projects to gain insights and understanding, consulting with the youth homelessness sector to reflect their concerns and priorities, and filling potential knowledge and service gaps. We also work to keep our members informed and up to date on government policies, evaluations and changes that directly impact the sector.

Our advocacy includes representations to governments and ministers. We continue to call on the Australian and NSW Governments to more effectively respond to the diversity and complexity of children and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Children and young people need a collaborative and integrated whole-of-government and whole-of-community response towards preventing youth homelessness, intervening early before young people become entrenched in homelessness and disadvantage, and providing evidenced-based good practice responses when they do experience homelessness.

Yfoundations works to raise awareness in the community and increase support and understanding of child and youth homelessness, including work to reduce stigma and educate the community about false assumptions and misleading narratives. Youth Homelessness Matters Day is our key annual national campaign, which we promote in collaboration with youth homelessness services and other relevant and interested organisations.

Yfoundations presents at conferences, forums and events to raise awareness of our work, child and youth homelessness, and what we can do to end it. Yfoundations is also frequently called on by media outlets to speak about youth homelessness.

We celebrate diversity in all forms and believe diversity among our staff and Board makes Yfoundations a more effective and inclusive organisation. We always welcome feedback from the sector and community on our work and efforts towards inclusivity and solidarity. We acknowledge that this work is ongoing and must continuously evolve.

The name 'Yfoundations' reflects the fundamental principle on which our work is based. We believe an essential key to ending youth homelessness is supporting the growth and development of all children and young people through the following five foundations: safety and stability, home and place, health and wellness, connections and participation, and education and employment. Each foundation represents an important component of a child's and young person's developmental process.

Our Vision

To create a future without child and youth homelessness in Australia.

Our Purpose

To lead the change to end child and youth homelessness in NSW and throughout Australia through collaboration with our members, young people and stakeholders.

Our Values



Authenticity

We are genuine about our passion for impactful change and transparent about our work and decision making.



People Centred

The experience of children and young people, and our members, are at the heart of our work to empower change.



Inclusive

We value and implement the expertise and wisdom of diverse cultures, experiences and perspectives.



Collaborative

We work with our members, young people, government and other stakeholders.



Fearless

We are bold in our fight to end child and youth homelessness.

Organisational Strategy

Our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan is dedicated to leading systemic change to end child and youth homelessness in NSW and across Australia. Grounded in collaboration with our members, young people and key stakeholders, our approach is guided by five core values: authenticity, people-centred, inclusive, collaborative and fearless.

Our strategy focuses on three key objectives.

Strategic Objective 1

Drive advocacy to achieve an increased focus and investment in responses to end child and youth homelessness.

The public is exposed to information about child and youth homelessness and how it can be addressed.

The need for specialised responses to child and youth homelessness is reflected in government policy, strategy and investment.

Strategic Objective 2

Harness the expertise of members and young people with lived experience of homelessness to guide our role in policy and system reform.

Yfoundations policy and advocacy is informed by evidence, sector expertise and lived experience.

Strategic Objective 3

Support members to deliver quality homelessness and housing services for children and young people experiencing homelessness.

Members have access to, and the opportunity to share, information and resources to support good practice.

Through these efforts, we aim to create a future where no child or young person in Australia experiences homelessness.

President's Report

As President of Yfoundations, I am pleased to deliver the Yfoundations Annual Report for the financial year 2025–26.

Since 1979, Yfoundations has worked closely with NSW specialist youth services that support vulnerable young people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. As the first full year of delivery against the objectives of the Yfoundations Strategic Plan 2024–29, it has been critical for the Yfoundations team and Board to continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to responding and advocating for real solutions to the crisis of child and youth homelessness across NSW and Australia. That commitment is strongly demonstrated in this report.

Under the leadership of our CEO John Macmillan and Head of Operations and Sector Support Anna Schinella, a committed and stable Yfoundations team has worked hard to harness the expertise of members and young people with lived experience to drive advocacy for an increased focus and investment into ending child and youth homelessness, and supporting our sector to deliver effective and quality services.

I have been pleased to see the direct engagement and influence of members and young people alike in Yfoundations' work, including the range of quality submissions to government and the development of practical resources for frontline staff. The results of the 2025 Annual Membership Survey confirm that our renewed focus on engaging and supporting members is delivering positive results.

In recognition of the multiple drivers of child and youth homelessness, there has also been a strong emphasis this year on building and maintaining partnerships, working collaboratively across the broader homelessness sector and other sectors. The Youth Homelessness Matters Day campaign continues to grow in delivering its objective of raising broad community awareness about child and youth homelessness, and we are very grateful for the partnerships with the Property Industry Foundation and UnLtd, and the contributions from the media and advertising industries.

This year we have seen positive shifts, including greater funding certainty for our members through five-year contracts under the Specialist Homelessness Services program, new commitments and activities to deliver the much-awaited NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan, and the strong engagement of Yfoundations and the youth homelessness sector in these processes. Nevertheless, the enduring challenge of child and youth homelessness, and the need for greater investment in the service system, highlight the ongoing need for effective advocacy. The Yfoundations team and Board will continue to drive this incredibly important agenda.

I would like to sincerely thank the **Yfoundations team** for their hard work, commitment and, importantly, the way they work together. It is the strength and cohesiveness of this team that achieves an impact well beyond its size. I am very proud of what the team has achieved this year. I am confident they will continue to strive to deliver against the objectives of our Strategic Plan towards our vision for a future without child and youth homelessness in Australia.

I would also like to thank our CEO John for his leadership and commitment, and Anna and the wider team for the important work they do every day in supporting our members and advancing the work of Yfoundations.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my fellow Board members. Their commitment, expertise and willingness to give their time as volunteers is greatly valued. The Board has worked constructively with the team throughout the year, providing governance, oversight and strategic guidance while allowing the staff to get on with the important work of the organisation.



As we look ahead, I am confident that Yfoundations is well placed to continue building on this year's achievements. We have a clear purpose, a committed membership, a strong and cohesive team, and a Board that is genuinely invested in the organisation and its future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Nerida', written over a white background.

Nerida Ackerman
President
Yfoundations

CEO's Report

It is a great pleasure to present the Yfoundations 2025–26 Annual Report, showcasing our commitment to working with and for children and young people experiencing and at risk of homelessness, and the incredible services that support them.

This has been a year of substantial work by the Yfoundations team, responding to the ongoing challenges faced by the youth homelessness sector and advocating for, creating and responding to opportunities for positive change. Throughout the year our work has continued to be underpinned by the Yfoundations Strategic Plan 2024–29, which places harnessing the expertise of our members and the lived experience of the Youth Homelessness Representative Council (YHRC) at the centre of everything we do.

Starting the year with visits to regional and remote service providers on the Mid North Coast, Northern Rivers, Central West and the South Coast was an excellent way of ensuring our work is properly informed by the operational realities, challenges and opportunities on the ground. We are incredibly appreciative of the warm welcome we received from our members and, as a team, are committed to continuing to learn from you all through ongoing visits to and engagement with service providers.

We have continued to ensure our advocacy and sector development work is informed by our members and young people with lived experience through a range of working groups and other sector consultation mechanisms, including our bi-monthly General Meetings of members.

A major focus for the homelessness sector throughout the year has, of course, been the commissioning of specialist homelessness services (SHS) by Homes NSW. Strongly informed by our Commissioning Working Group of members, Yfoundations played an active role in advocating for and negotiating changes to the SHS specifications and the commissioning process with Homes NSW and the Minister, facilitating briefings and other communications between the department and the sector, and providing practical resources to assist our members.



Our feedback and advocacy on other government initiatives such as the \$130m Building Crisis Housing Plan have been directly informed by our engagement with and representations from member organisations. Our submissions to the Fair Work Commission's gender undervaluation review of the SCHADS Awards, and the subsequent expert panel process determining the classification structure, were directly informed by consultations conducted with members.

Likewise, we utilised our engagement with the youth homelessness sector to strongly inform our 2026–27 NSW and Federal Pre-Budget submissions, amongst others. We were very pleased to be invited to give a presentation to the Homelessness and Housing Policy Division at the Federal Treasury as part of our Youth Homelessness Matters Day commitments.

Continuing to build on our highly valued partnership with the Property Industry Foundation and UnLtd, the national Youth Homelessness Matters Day campaign has gone from strength to strength. Working with our members, our colleagues across the

country and the YHRC, we produced a range of practical resources to support the sector and the broader community engagement with the issue of youth homelessness. We thank all those who participated to achieve the increased community awareness, media and social media attention and political engagement through the campaign, and made such a meaningful contribution to advocating for new investments in the Federal Budget to improve young people's access to social housing.

The launch of the *Working with children and young people who use violence* online learning modules on 1 July was a great start to a year also focused on building and delivering practical resources and supports for frontline workers in the youth homelessness sector. Through our dedicated 'sector development' page on the Yfoundations website, we continued to host the *Sticky Stuff* and *Because You Care* online sexual health training, and we thank the members of the Good Practice Guidelines Working Group for assisting us with the finalisation of the first tranche of the Guidelines.

CEO's Report



John Macmillan
Chief Executive Officer
Yfoundations

This year we said goodbye to some fantastic young advocates who reached the age of 25 years and therefore ended their terms on the Youth Homelessness Representative Council. We also welcomed new members to the YHRC. Over the year, the YHRC has rapidly become the go-to source of lived experience expertise for a range of government and non-government partner organisations that have consulted the Council in their policy development processes. YHRC members played a major role in Youth Homelessness Matters Day and informing Yfoundations' work throughout the year.

At the Youth Homelessness Matters Day Sydney breakfast event on 31 March, Minister Jackson announced new steps for, and a strong focus on, finalising the NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan. Yfoundations is working closely with Homes NSW in advocating for an ambitious and effective plan. We were very pleased to have led sector consultations in late May 2026 in collaboration with our sister homelessness peaks, and to provide a strong submission to government

informed by these consultations. The issues and opportunities identified by our members and the broader homelessness sector will provide a blueprint for our advocacy work as we move into an election year.

We have been strongly encouraged by the findings of our 2025 Annual Membership Survey, demonstrating positive improvements in the level of satisfaction our members have with our engagement and consultation with them, the information and resources we have provided, and the trust placed in Yfoundations to represent the sector and advocate on child and youth homelessness.

I want to thank the hard-working Yfoundations team for achieving these great results and their commitment to continue to build on our performance as the peak body for youth homelessness.

Thank you also for the support and commitment of the Yfoundations Board throughout the year.

Youth Homelessness Representative Council

The Youth Homelessness Representative Council (YHRC) aims to engage and empower the voices of young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in NSW, and to ensure those voices shape policy and service system design. During 2025–26, the YHRC continued to build on this mandate through renewed governance, active membership, high-profile advocacy events and sustained input into state and federal consultations.

Strengthening governance: a lived experience framework

A major achievement this year was Yfoundations' review and renewal of the policies and procedures governing the Council. YHRC members were directly engaged in this process, ensuring the review was shaped by lived experience. The result is a new Lived Experience Framework covering organisational readiness and culture change, definitions of scope and accountability, guiding principles, council structure and governance, engagement and decision-making, support and wellbeing, diversity and ethical practice, resourcing and remuneration, and mechanisms for embedding influence, accountability and continuous improvement.



This framework strengthens the Council's capacity to advise on and advocate for government policy and reform, giving members clearer pathways to participation and a stronger foundation for governance. The framework has also been shared with other organisations in the sector, extending its value beyond Yfoundations.

across the period, including in July, August, December, February, March and April, with two of these meetings held face-to-face.

Consultations and policy engagement

The reporting period saw a marked increase in external engagement with the YHRC alongside continued involvement in Yfoundations' policy and project work. The YHRC was consulted on pathways for young people with lived experience into the youth homelessness sector workforce, informing Yfoundations' policy work in this area. The Council also consulted with Homes NSW on two separate projects, the NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan and the Client Outcomes Survey, and worked with Uniting on their joint project developing best-practice guidance for the design and construction of youth housing.

YHRC Members

Current

Aries Costa
Emery Kaison
Natasha Ransford
Jennifer Zerafa
Shirley (Jia Rong) Zhuang

Retired

Nick Barker
Korrine-Lee Hellier-Bartholomew
Ari Kallistos
Gypsy McHugh
Kylan Orcher
Marija 'Maja' Rathouski
Jordan 'Jae' Valencia
Zaw Ye Htike

Active alumni

Ari Kallistos
Jordan 'Jae' Valencia

Membership

The YHRC farewelled several long-standing members whose tenure concluded during this period. We thank Maja, Zaw, Jae and Ari for their significant contributions during their time on the YHRC and for their commitment and insight. We also welcomed two new members, Aries and Emery, who joined existing members Jennifer, Natasha and Shirley. Ari and Jae continued to support the Council in an alumni capacity, maintaining continuity of experience even after their formal terms ended. The YHRC met regularly

Youth Homelessness Representative Council



YHRC members also participated in a Youth Week event hosted by the newly appointed NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, and attended the launch of the Australian Human Rights Commission's report on preventing violence and supporting quality engagement with children, meeting the federal Minister for Social Services and the National Children's Commissioner on 20 May.

Impact

Yfoundations has successfully renewed the YHRC's membership, sustaining a structured avenue for young people with lived experience of homelessness to influence policy and service design.

The YHRC is increasingly recognised by government and other stakeholders as a credible and important voice in policy development, contributing directly to NSW Government initiatives, including the Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan. Members met with Minister Jackson and other senior government representatives to ensure lived experience perspectives inform both policy and practice.

YHRC members also played an active role in the Youth Homelessness Matters Day campaign and related advocacy. The strength of sector engagement in YHMD 2026 substantially lifted community awareness of child and youth homelessness, and the links between YHMD and the national Home Time campaign contributed to successful lobbying of the Federal Government, which committed \$60 million in this year's national budget to address the youth housing penalty faced by young people experiencing homelessness due to lower income support levels.

The YHRC is a remarkable group of young people who are brave and forthcoming in their work championing the rights of young people experiencing homelessness. Their achievements with the council, with their own work and lives, and with their advocacy outside of the YHRC is a testament to how young people thrive when they are given the opportunity and support to thrive.



The Office for Youth consulted the YHRC on the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2027–2030. This was a particularly strong consultation that delivered great insight for the plan and has led to further consultation.

Two YHRC members were appointed to the Homes NSW Advisory Group overseeing the development of the Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan, and are being supported to participate fully in that group's ongoing work.

All Council members also contributed quotes to Yfoundations' media release responding to the 2026 NSW Budget, ensuring the sector's public response was grounded in lived experience.

Events and advocacy

The YHRC maintained a high public profile throughout the year. Jennifer bravely shared her lived experience at the UnLtd Cup, a well-supported

indoor soccer event attended by the media industry. The Council also contributed to the lived experience activation at Big Dream, UnLtd's major annual fundraising gala, where Maja spoke as a keynote speaker in front of an audience of around 2,000 people.

In March, Natasha and Jennifer presented alongside Minister Jackson at the Property Industry Foundation's Youth Homelessness Matters Forum in Sydney. Aries and Emery engaged directly with Minister Jackson during a service visit on 15 April held as part of Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD). Several members also contributed to related media activities as part of the YHMD 2026 campaign.

A standout initiative was the *I Am* video project, conceived and designed by YHRC members as a contribution to the YHMD campaign. The project was finalised and launched at the Youth Homelessness Matters Forum to strong acclaim and was subsequently used as part of the broader YHMD 2026 campaign.

Advocacy and Policy

This was the year in which long-signalled reform became real. The recommissioning of specialist homelessness services moved from consultation to contract, the NSW Homelessness Strategy Action Plan was finalised, and the NSW Government began developing a dedicated Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan. Yfoundations worked to ensure that at each of these turning points, the distinct needs of children and young people experiencing and at risk of homelessness – and the realities faced by the services that support them – were understood, recorded and acted on.

Our policy and advocacy work this year was shaped by a sector operating under sustained pressure: rising demand, static funding, increasing compliance obligations and a critical shortage of housing options for young people. Against this backdrop, the completion of SHS commissioning and the commencement of development of the NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan presented a rare and important opportunity to influence the shape of the service system for years to come.

Yfoundations approached that opportunity by listening first. Our positions were built on the evidence of our members, the expertise of the youth homelessness sector and the lived experience of the young people of our Youth Homelessness Representative Council. Through working groups, sector surveys, service visits and consultations, we gathered what the sector and the young people it supports were experiencing and carried it directly to the people making the decisions.

Submissions and representations to government

In 2025–26, Yfoundations made the following submissions:

- to the Fair Work Commission's gender undervaluation review of the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHADS Award, matter AM2024/21)
- NSW Pre-Budget Submission 2026–2027
- Federal Pre-Budget Submission 2026–2027
- to Fair Work Commission Expert

Panel Conference Process on the SCHADS Award

- a joint submission with Shelter NSW to the Select Committee on Youth Justice
- Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan Sector Consultation Paper
- a response to the Office for Youth's NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People Consultation Paper 2027–30.

We also provided written and verbal feedback to the NSW Government on a range of matters that were not published, including:

- the draft SHS Program Specifications
- the Client Outcome Survey Tool
- the SHS Access, Withdrawal and Eviction Policy.

Our submissions are available in the Resources hub on our website at www.yfoundations.org.au/Resources

A core focus of our submissions to both the Australian and NSW governments has remained consistent: children and young people experiencing homelessness need responses designed for them, not adapted from adult service models. We continued to press for investment in youth supported housing to address the lack of options available to young people exiting crisis accommodation while maintaining and adequately funding crisis responses and the youth homelessness sector overall.

These submissions have been made against a fixed funding envelope. As we reported last year, the recommissioning of specialist homelessness services proceeded on the basis there would be no additional funding for SHS programs, and we said at the time that the consequences of

that decision would be a major focus of our work in the year ahead.

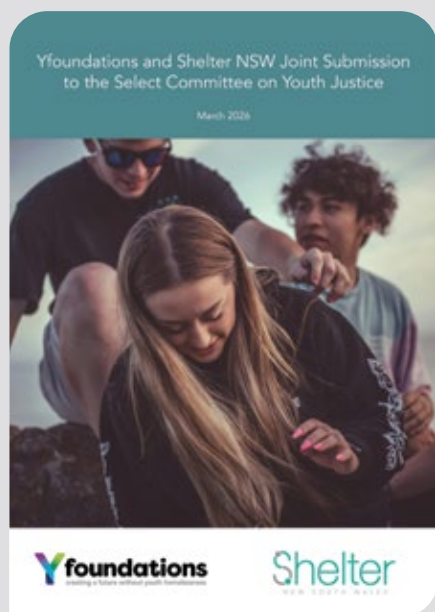
This year, we built the mechanism to do that. The problem is straightforward: costs – wages, insurances, utilities, compliance – keep increasing, and the funding does not. What has been missing is a reliable record of what that gap does to services over time.

Yfoundations launched a project titled *Youth SHS Sector Funding Impact Monitoring 2026–2030* as a response. It records the operational, financial and workforce impacts of the new funding cycle on youth SHS in NSW, year by year, across the life of the contracts. It is deliberately practical rather than academic: we ask our members what has changed, we record it consistently, and over time we build a picture of what a static funding envelope does to service delivery. The first round of data, collected in late 2025, focused on the operational costs services were carrying prior to entering a new cycle.

That first round of data proved its worth immediately. Our NSW Pre-Budget Submission 2026–27 drew on this data to demonstrate the widening gap between the real cost of delivering services and the funding available to meet it – a gap the sector has long described. Being able to quantify it, in addition to asserting it, materially strengthened our case.

On that basis, the submission called for a 50 per cent uplift in funding across all homelessness services and for social housing to reach at least 10 per cent of occupied residential dwellings by 2050, with a proportionate share of both ring-fenced for child and youth homelessness. We argued that the first call on any uplift should be stabilising existing services against real operating

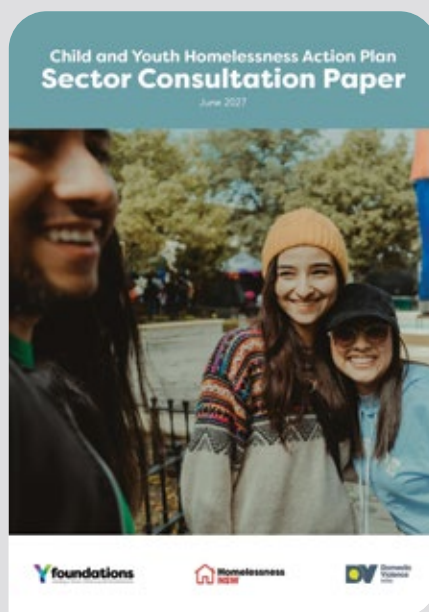
Advocacy and Policy



costs, and that medium-term and transitional accommodation should be recognised as part of the social housing continuum. We also pressed for the youth homelessness sector and young people with lived experience to shape the development, implementation and monitoring of the Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan.

The NSW State Budget was released on 23 June. While it made some inroads in the domestic and family violence space, the \$39 million committed for temporary accommodation and \$4.5 million for three homelessness service centres on the North Coast will have limited positive impact for the homelessness sector overall and for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Yfoundations responded with a media release, strengthened by quotes from members of the Youth Homelessness Representative Council (YHRC). The Budget sets the playing field for the lead-up to the next state election in March 2027.

At the federal level, our Pre-Budget Submission argued that the Commonwealth holds many of the levers that determine whether young people can access housing early and sustain it. Aligned with the Youth Homelessness Matters Day campaign, it called for a dedicated



youth allocation within a national homelessness prevention fund, explicit targeting of youth-specific housing in commonwealth capital investment, reform of the income support settings that delay access for young people who cannot live at home, and an increase to income support to remove the youth housing penalty that leaves young people unable to afford housing and unattractive as tenants to community housing providers.

In April 2026, Yfoundations was invited to present to the Commonwealth Treasury on the key issues raised in our Federal Pre-Budget Submission, an opportunity that allowed us to make the case for children and young people to those advising on national budget decisions.

Commissioning of specialist homelessness services

The recommissioning of youth specialist homelessness services was the single largest focus of our advocacy this year. It was also the clearest demonstration of what sustained, sector-informed engagement can achieve.

Our Commissioning Working Group of member organisations met monthly across the full year – ten meetings

in total – incrementally reviewing Homes NSW documentation as it was released, identifying issues and translating the operational realities of youth SHS into feedback the department could act on.

In the first half of the year, this work focused on the SHS Program Specifications. We participated in the Homes NSW focus group on 1 October 2025 to review and advise on the draft specifications, and on 15 October provided consolidated written feedback from the Working Group. We negotiated essential amendments to the specifications ahead of their release and participated in DCJ sector briefings on the commissioning process throughout November and December. Alongside this, we maintained ongoing liaison with Homes NSW on the review of ‘pilot’ programs.

To ensure our members were not navigating the process alone, we developed a practical resource – informed by the Commissioning Working Group – to support youth SHS participation in the commissioning process.

In the second half of the year, our focus shifted to implementation and the issues emerging as services moved toward contract. We arranged for the Executive Director, Programs and Partnership, Homes NSW to present and take questions from the youth specialist homelessness sector at our February 2026 General Meeting, surveying the sector in advance and putting members’ questions on the record on their behalf.

We met with senior Homes NSW staff in February to advocate for youth-related pilot program funding to be built into SHS contracts, and kept impacted providers informed as those discussions progressed. We provided specific and regular written updates on commissioning to the sector through our monthly newsletter and met with individual organisations, on request, to work through the issues they were facing.

Through those consultations, we identified the operational impact of new government policies and compliance requirements introduced through commissioning.

Advocacy and Policy

When advised by Homes NSW and DCJ that the department did not have scope to amend these requirements, we escalated. We met with the Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, Minister for Housing, Homelessness and Youth, in March 2026 to put the case directly. The Minister subsequently met with the DCJ Secretary, and we understand this resulted in the establishment of a red-tape review to be conducted by Homes NSW over the life of the new SHS contracts.

We met with senior Homes NSW staff again in April 2026 to provide advice on the Building Crisis Housing Plan and its associated tender process.

The commissioning process was completed at the end of June 2026. The outcome reflects the expertise of Yfoundations and the youth homelessness sector: medium-term accommodation services are recognised and will be commissioned in line with the government's commitments; pilot program funding has been built into relevant SHS contracts; and there is a commitment to reviewing and minimising red tape across the life of the contracts.

Having worked through to the establishment of contracts, our Commissioning Working Group will now turn to monitoring the implementation of the new SHS specifications, providing advice to the sector and to Homes NSW as required. The concerns we raised last year about a reform process delivered without additional resourcing have not gone away, and monitoring the real-world impact of the new contracts on service delivery capacity will be a priority for the year ahead.

NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan

For several years, Yfoundations has advocated for a dedicated NSW homelessness plan for children and young people. This year, that plan moved decisively from commitment to development – and we worked to ensure the sector and children and young people themselves were at the centre of it.

We participated in all Housing and Homelessness Peaks meetings facilitated by Homes NSW, where the NSW Homelessness Strategy was a standing agenda item. We attended the launch of the Homelessness Strategy in August 2025, met Homes NSW on 10 October 2025 to provide feedback on the draft Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, and provided further feedback on the final draft in December 2025.

Our input ensured an appropriate focus on children and young people across relevant actions and reinforced the government's commitment to a specific Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan.

We then worked to provide feedback, with the aim that the plan be developed properly. We facilitated engagement between the Executive Director, Housing Strategy and Policy and the youth homelessness sector at our August 2025 sector meeting to initiate discussions on collaborative development of the Action Plan, and followed up with specific feedback on how young people with lived experience should be engaged in the process.

We met with Homes NSW on 18 November 2025 to discuss the establishment of Local Collaboration Networks and their relationship to the Action Plan, and again on 26 November to plan the development of the Action Plan itself.

We advocated for the establishment of a Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan Advisory Group – announced by Minister Jackson at our Youth Homelessness Matters Day event on 31 March 2026. We participated in Advisory Group meetings in April and June, and supported the participation of lived experience representatives within the group.

In May 2026, in partnership with Homelessness NSW and DVNSW, we led whole-of-sector consultations to inform the development of the Action Plan, attended by around 100 participants in total. We also led a dedicated consultation with our YHRC. The comprehensive feedback from these consultations was provided to

Homes NSW and formed the basis of our Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan Sector Consultation Paper, published in June 2026.

The paper argues, in short, that a plan for children and young people cannot succeed if it sits within the housing and homelessness portfolio alone. It advocates for whole-of-government investment across the health, justice and child protection portfolios to achieve better outcomes for children and young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness, and it will form the basis of our ongoing advocacy in this area.

Alongside this work, we participated in all meetings of the HYAP Community of Practice facilitated by Homes NSW, where the review of the Unaccompanied children 12–15 years accessing Specialist Homelessness Services Policy (the Under 16s Policy) remains an ongoing agenda item. Departmental advice continues to indicate the review is primarily internally focused; we will keep pressing for the sector to have a meaningful role in it.

We also participated in the Homes NSW Service System Coordination workshop in May, met with senior Homes NSW staff to discuss the planned implementation of the new Commonwealth youth housing supplement in NSW, and took part in the June workshop on the development of the Aboriginal Homelessness Action Plan.

Workforce, awards and sector sustainability

A sustainable service system depends on a sustainable workforce. This year we continued and expanded our engagement with the Fair Work Commission's (FWC) review of gender-based undervaluation in the SCHADS Award, lodging a submission to the priority awards review in September 2025 followed by a further submission to the FWC Expert Panel Conference Process in February 2026 in response to its release of a draft classifications structure.

We also participated in the FWC SCHADS Peaks Meeting organised

Advocacy and Policy

by NCOSS in August 2025 and subsequent meetings throughout the year, keeping our members informed of developments through sector meetings and our newsletter.

On 1 June, the FWC handed down its decision on the review and the new classification structure under the Award, which will take effect on 1 October 2027. This decision has largely addressed calls from the sector and the Australian Services Union (ASU), which represents the interests of the sector workforce before the FWC.

The sector will be planning and phasing in implementation of these changes over the coming year and Yfoundations will continue to provide updates and guidance, in addition to updates on the next phase of the Award review as the ASU reopens its wage claim to the Fair Work Commission (first lodged in 2024) under its Skilled Respected, Equal campaign calling for pay rises of up to 35% for work covered by the SCHADS Award.

While three of the union's calls under the campaign have been addressed with the new classification structure, what remains is the need for recognition of the complexity of sector work and how this has grown substantially since the last major wage review in 2012 (under the landmark Equal Remuneration Order (Equal Pay Case)). That complexity includes delivering person-centred, trauma-informed care and responses, harm reduction methods and culturally competent practice as a standard. It also includes increases in regulatory requirements and increased demand for services.

Our advocacy on sector sustainability extended beyond wages. Our March meeting with Minister Jackson produced a further outcome: we were asked to prepare a paper on insurance cost pressures facing the sector – a request that reflects the growing recognition of Yfoundations as a source of reliable data on the operating environment. That paper drew on our Youth SHS Sector Funding Impact Monitoring data on the operational costs facing youth homelessness services.

Youth justice

Recognising the well-documented relationship between homelessness and contact with the criminal justice system, Yfoundations made a joint submission with Shelter NSW to the Select Committee on Youth Justice in March 2026.

We continued our participation in the Youth Justice Coalition and the Youth Action Throughcare Steering Committee, ensuring that housing and homelessness are understood as central to – not separate from – better outcomes for young people in and leaving the youth justice system.

Representing the voice of the sector

Our capacity to advocate credibly rests on the quality of our engagement with the sector.

In July and August 2025, we visited youth homelessness services across four regions of NSW – the Far and Mid North Coast, Northern Rivers, Central West and South Coast – meeting with Pathfinders, Blue Sky Community Services, Wesley Mission, The Family Centre, Social Futures, Nyami Gawbarri, Veritas House, CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes, Uniting-Doorways, CareSouth, Campbell Page, South East Women's and Children's Services, and Southern Youth and Family Services.

These visits gave services the opportunity to articulate challenges that are rarely understood outside their regions or adequately captured in metro-based data and policy frameworks. What we heard is being published in a report documenting each region's service delivery reality, drivers of youth homelessness, systemic barriers and workforce impacts, and setting out the priorities services identified.

Youth homelessness sector meetings were held in August, October and December 2025 and February, April and June 2026, where we presented information and conducted consultations on the SHS commissioning process, the Federal Pre-Budget Submission, Youth Homelessness Matters Day, the Fair

Work Commission's review of the SCHADS Award and AHURI research findings.

We continued working with the steering committee for the development of the Good Practice Guidelines, and maintained a working group focused on the intersections between the youth homelessness sector and the NDIS – participating in the NDIS SHS Interface Working Group meetings across the year and in NSW and ACT NDIS Community Stakeholder Updates. We conducted surveys to inform our policy development, campaigning and other advocacy, met with individual service providers on request, and attended a wide range of sector events.

Whole-of-government and cross-sector advocacy

Ending child and youth homelessness requires more than a housing response. This year we deliberately widened the range of forums in which the interests of children and young people are represented, extending our engagement across the health, justice, child protection and broader community sectors. Our standing representation on these committees and forums is detailed in the Partnerships, Networks and Committees section of this report.

We also took opportunities to raise child and youth homelessness in less familiar settings, participating in the eSafety Commissioner's industry consultation on social media age restrictions, contributing to the NSW Foyer Invest Working Group and the NCOSS Peaks CEOs Meeting, and participating in the Budget Lockup meeting of peak bodies hosted by NCOSS in June 2026.

Building the evidence base

The absence of good data about child and youth homelessness – and the sector that responds to it – has long constrained what can be argued for.

Advocacy and Policy

Literature Review: History of the Homelessness Sector

Yfoundations has completed a comprehensive literature review analysing the available research documenting the history of homelessness services in Australia and NSW, including the evolution of the focus on child and youth homelessness.

In tracing that history, our review identified the challenges currently facing the youth homelessness sector and the needs of its workforce moving forward. Bringing together a fractured historical evidence base, the report provides an enduring and important baseline from which the gaps in the existing evidence base can be systematically analysed, and future research priorities and activities identified.

Together with our regional visits, it has given us a contemporary picture of the operating environment across NSW and informs our ongoing consultation with the sector. The report is in the final stages of production for promotion and publication on the Yfoundations website.

The youth homelessness and NDIS interface

The intersection between specialist homelessness services and the NDIS has long been a source of complexity for members and those they support. In August 2025, we convened a breakout session at the Homelessness NSW SHS Sector Meeting to hear directly from workers about what they are encountering when supporting young people who are engaged with or trying to access the NDIS.

What they described was the gap between the two systems, the demands those gaps place on services, and the young people who fall through them, making clear that this is not a series of isolated cases but a structural problem requiring sustained attention.

Those insights led directly to the establishment of the Yfoundations NDIS Working Group, bringing members together to build a shared understanding of the issues, identify what the sector needs, and give us

a considered basis from which to engage with government and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The Working Group's efforts will shape our advocacy in this area in the year ahead.

Youth SHS Sector Funding Impact Monitoring 2026–2030

Our own initiative, described earlier in this report, moved from design into delivery this year, with data collection proceeding to schedule. Its first round has already shaped both a budget submission and a paper requested by the Minister, which is exactly why we started it: when the sector can point to its own consistent figures, the conversation with government shifts from whether there is a problem to what should be done about it. Collection continues annually across the life of the SHS contracts, and each round will tell us more than the last.

AHURI research

The AHURI research report *Better Futures: Supported Accommodation for Unaccompanied Children and Young People Experiencing Homelessness*, published in April 2026, was informed by our YHRC and cites a range of papers previously published by Yfoundations. It is a significant contribution to the evidence base about what the service system needs in order to improve outcomes for unaccompanied children and young people.

Building on this year's work, Yfoundations will continue to analyse and advocate for research that informs government policy, service system investment and reform.

Annual Membership Survey 2025

Increasing the availability and usefulness of information and resources for the sector was a strong focus for Yfoundations throughout 2025–26, and our Annual Membership Survey conducted in late 2025 and early 2026 tells us how we're tracking.

Due to our increased volume of work

on sector advocacy, consultation, submissions to government and agencies, and being mindful of the impact of several surveys circulating within the sector at the same time, we released this survey later than usual on 19 December 2025 via email. We promoted it through our newsletter and across our social media platforms, extending the closing date to 13 February.

We also refined the survey questions and our distribution list from the previous year, targeting members and a range of stakeholders with whom Yfoundations had worked throughout the year.

The report on the survey outcomes is instrumental in identifying priorities for our ongoing work, including how we communicate with and promote the knowledge and understanding of the sector.

When asked to select the three biggest issues currently affecting the youth homelessness sector, those that ranked highest were those directly impacting the capacity of service providers to cover rising costs while meeting increasing demand, and to provide appropriate responses to those seeking support. Inadequate funding for service providers ranked highest at 47%, with rising costs for service providers, including insurance premiums, utilities, wages and oncosts, etc., selected by 40% of respondents.

This reflects the significant, longstanding and ongoing concerns among service providers about the failure of government to sufficiently invest in homelessness services to meet the needs of young people and, more generally, all people experiencing and at risk of homelessness.

Responses also reflected a continued and consistent focus on housing affordability and availability, with housing and accommodation-related issues remaining primary concerns for those working in the youth homelessness sector. Difficulty accessing social housing (public and community housing) was a significant concern, as was the lack of affordable and/or long-term private rental

Advocacy and Policy



- the Homelessness NSW SHS Sector Meetings in November 2025 and May 2026
- the National Children and Young People at Risk Summit in November 2025
- the Property Industry Foundation's Youth Homelessness Matters Day breakfasts in Melbourne on 18 March 2026, Brisbane on 25 March 2026 and Sydney on 31 March 2026
- Giving young people a place to call home: young people's access to housing, hosted by Homelessness NSW in April 2026
- the Commonwealth Treasury in April 2026, on the key issues raised in our Federal Pre-Budget Submission, in line with Youth Homelessness Matters Day
- Queensland Youth Homelessness Coalition's Platform 1225 Conference 2026.

Looking ahead

The contracts are signed. The strategy is launched. The Action Plan is in development.

For the youth homelessness sector, 2026-27 will be the year in which we find out whether the commitments made translate into better outcomes for children and young people.

Yfoundations' priorities for the year ahead are clear:

- to secure a Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan that is properly funded and genuinely whole-of-government
- to monitor the implementation of the new SHS contracts and hold government to its commitment to reduce red tape
- to continue building the evidence base that our advocacy depends on
- to keep pressing, at both state and federal levels, for recognition that a service system designed for adults will never be adequate nor appropriate for a child or young person.

We thank our members, our partners and the young people of our Youth Homelessness Representative Council for the expertise and generosity that made this year's work possible.

accommodation in regional/remote areas for young people.

The sector's satisfaction with our representation on key issues came through in the survey results and showed an increased level of trust from previous years in our representation of their organisation and/or the sector.

Other key findings with respect to our role in supporting and promoting the sector's knowledge and understanding of the current policy and reform agenda include:

- over 83% of respondents indicated that they were 'very informed' or 'informed' as a result of our communications with them
- a 12% increase in the respondent satisfaction with Yfoundations' engagement and consultation with the sector – an area we identified last year as a high priority for improvement, making this result particularly encouraging
- 95% of respondents indicated that they had utilised Yfoundations resources and information
- 79% indicated a high level of satisfaction with the information and resources provided – our monthly Newsletter ranking highest, followed by participation in working

groups and engagement with campaign materials.

This year's results provide a clear picture of the challenges and needs within the youth homelessness sector and priority areas for resources and support, highlighting the importance of greater advocacy for the sector, for increased funding, and on commissioning; practical resources that guide and support the work of the sector; and stronger sector-wide collaboration.

Yfoundations is committed to using the insights in this survey as a key source of information to guide and build on our advocacy and support efforts, refine our resources and continue our strong collaboration with frontline services and other key stakeholders. The full report is available on the Members section of our website.

Presentations and conferences

Yfoundations presented on youth homelessness and our work across a range of forums this year, including:

- the NSW and ACT Youth Connections Summit in August 2025
- the Youth Action Sector Meeting in August 2025

Partnerships, Networks and Committees

In addition to our collaborative work and communications with our members, Yfoundations maintained a strong focus on meeting, advocating and collaborating with a range of other organisations and stakeholders to ensure the needs of children and young people experiencing and at risk of homelessness are included and prioritised across the broad range of policy, campaign, programs and events that intersect with their lives.

Yfoundations has continued our collaborative relationships and engagement with our colleagues in the two other NSW homelessness peak bodies. We work closely with Homelessness NSW and DVNSW in building the knowledge and capacity of the SHS sector, ensuring our advocacy is driven and informed by the sector and by the voices of those experiencing homelessness.

Yfoundations presents updates at the Homelessness NSW SHS Sector Network Meetings on our work, forward priorities and key issues in child and youth homelessness. Our CEO John Macmillan met regularly with the CEOs at Homelessness NSW and DVNSW to ensure a unified voice in campaigning and other advocacy activities throughout the year.

The benefits and strength of this collaboration were clearly demonstrated in the whole-of-sector consultations on the NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan facilitated by the three peak bodies, and the subsequent submission made to Homes NSW on behalf of a unified homelessness sector.

We have also enjoyed a widening network of collaboration with other peak bodies with the shared objective of improving outcomes for children and young people experiencing and at risk of homelessness.

At the August 2025 General Meeting, we welcomed a presentation from the newly appointed Youth Action CEO, Lauren Stracey, and have continued to work with Lauren and her team on a range of projects. Yfoundations was a proud partner and contributor to the Youth Action led report, *From Fragmented to Coordinated: Building stronger systems for young people through Youth Hubs*, published



in November 2025. In June 2026, the Yfoundations and Youth Action teams came together to identify opportunities for collaboration in the lead up to next NSW Election.

In September 2025, Yfoundations joined the Justice and Equity Centre (JEC), Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), People with Disability Australia (PWDA), and Inclusion Australia as a co-signatory to a JEC letter to the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department requesting a meeting to discuss plans and barriers to integrating Proof of Age cards onto

the Document Verification Service (DVS). This work is ongoing.

In March 2026, we made a joint submission with Shelter NSW to the NSW Legislative Council Select Committee on Youth Justice, advocating for a significant expansion of the Bail and Accommodation Support Service, structured collaboration between Youth Justice workers and specialist homelessness services, and investment in supported housing models for young people across the spectrum of crisis, transitional and longer-term accommodation.

Partnerships, Networks and Committees

We have continued effective relationships with key government staff in Homes NSW and relevant areas of the broader Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to ensure child and youth homelessness issues and sector concerns are represented in planning and service delivery processes.

In addition to our regular contribution to the committees and other fora listed below, Yfoundations contributed to a range of other government-led policy development and program-based initiatives, including the commissioning of SHS and HYAP services; Building Crisis Housing Plan; Homelessness Innovation Fund; NSW Homelessness Strategy Action Plan; Local Collaboration Networks; Aboriginal Homelessness Action Plan; and the DCJ Strategic Plan.

At the February 2026 General Meeting, we welcomed the newly appointed NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, Katherine McKernan, to present on her vision for the Advocate's role and opportunities for collaboration. Since then, Yfoundations has continued to work with the Office for Youth, making important links between the Office and our Youth Homelessness Representative Council.

Yfoundations also maintains effective and productive relationships with key staff in NSW Health, which continues to support our sexual health training platform.

At the national level, Yfoundations chaired the Steering Committee for Youth Homelessness Matters Day, comprising senior representatives from the youth homelessness sector in every state and territory, the CEO of Homelessness Australia, and key partner organisations.

Our partnership with UnLtd and the Property Industry Foundation entered its second year and continues to strengthen. Without their support we would be unable to deliver the powerful Young and Alone campaign, and the scope of Youth Homelessness Matters Day would not be growing.

We are grateful for the continuing support of our creative agency, Ogilvy Australia who helped us grow the asset

pool to support Young and Alone, and our planning agency PHD who did an incredible job planning and scheduling the campaign valued at \$1.9 million. We thank Ogilvy, PHD and UnLtd for their ongoing commitment to raising awareness about youth homelessness at a scale we have been unable to achieve in the past.

We are extremely grateful to the Property Industry Foundation for extending their support for the Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD) and the Young and Alone campaigns. Their backing has enabled us to bolster the span and strength of YHMD and will enable us to continue to grow it as the major day of advocacy for the sector.

Yfoundations has continued to be a coalition supporter of the national Home Time campaign to unlock Australia's housing system for children and young people, actively strengthening the relationship with, and utilising, the YHMD campaign to support Home Time advocacy.

We also continued to stand proudly in the partner network of the Raise the Age NSW campaign, focused on raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years.

Yfoundations has collaborated and strengthened our work and relationships with many key organisations throughout the year, including:

- Attorney General's Office
- Australasian Urban and Housing Research Institute (AHURI)
- Domestic Violence NSW
- Family Planning Australia
- Foyer Foundation
- Homelessness Australia
- Homelessness NSW
- My Foundations Youth Housing
- NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS)
- NSW Law Reform commission
- NSW Office for Youth
- Pasifika (Pacific Island) Integrated Network
- Property Industry Foundation
- Queensland Youth Housing Coalition
- Shelter NSW
- Western Sydney Community Forum
- Youth Action.

Committees

To strengthen our advocacy on child and youth homelessness and the services that support them, Yfoundations has representation on the following committees.

Housing and Homelessness Peaks Committee

Yfoundations is an active participant in this key committee, which includes all peak bodies representing housing and homelessness service providers and is facilitated by Homes NSW. We have continued to strongly advocate for the needs of children and young people and the youth homelessness sector, and have kept our members informed of developments through our General Meetings, newsletters and other mechanisms.

Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan Advisory Group

Following our advocacy and announcements made by Minister Rose Jackson in the lead up to YHMD this year, this new committee was established by Homes NSW to inform the government's development of the NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan. Including representation from Yfoundations, the other homelessness peaks and, importantly, two members of the Youth Homelessness Representative Council, the Advisory Group is an important mechanism to ensure the views of both the youth homelessness sector and young people with lived experience inform the development of the Action Plan.

Office for Youth NSW Youth Sector Reference Group

Yfoundations is a member of this newly-formed committee established by the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People and comprising all peak bodies with a specific focus on children and young people. The Reference Group provides an important opportunity for us to ensure the needs of children and young people experiencing and at risk of homelessness are represented in the work of the Office for Youth and across the broader child and youth sectors.

Partnerships, Networks and Committees



Housing and Mental Health Agreement (HMHA) State Steering Committee

A sub-committee of the NSW Mental Health Taskforce, the HMHA was established to ensure effective relationships between mental health and housing service providers. Through our ongoing participation, Yfoundations has continued to represent the needs of young people and the sector to senior government officials, with pathways to the DCJ and NSW Health Secretaries.

HYAP Community of Practice

Yfoundations continues to participate in this community of practice facilitated by Homes NSW for practitioners in Homeless Youth Assistance Program (HYAP) funded service providers.

Youth Hubs Mapping Project Steering Committee

Joining Youth Action and a range of youth service providers, Yfoundations is pleased to be a member of this committee, steering research into youth hubs operating across NSW and identifying opportunities to expand an important model of collaboration with substantial potential to assist young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness.

NSW Family and Sexual Violence Sector Group

Recognising the significance of domestic and family violence and sexual violence as drivers of child and youth homelessness, Yfoundations has continued to participate in this critical forum that ensures essential connections are fostered between intersecting service systems impacting the lives of children and young people across NSW.

Family Preservation Sector Stakeholder Forum

Yfoundations continues to participate in this important forum of service providers and peak bodies involved with the DCJ Family Preservation program. The forum focuses on the significance of keeping children safely within their families, a critical element of preventing and intervening early in child and youth homelessness.

Throughcare Steering Committee

Recognising the connection between better pathways and the prevention of youth homelessness, Yfoundations has continued to participate in this committee chaired by Youth Action, which provides an important opportunity for collaboration between

different sectors and service systems focused on achieving better pathways for young people out of the criminal justice system.

Youth Justice Coalition

Yfoundations participates in this reformed coalition of legal, youth and community organisations advocating for reform of the youth justice system in NSW. Its quarterly meetings are grounded in youth-led community priorities and provide a forum for coordinated advocacy.

Forum of Non-Government Agencies (FONGA)

Chaired by NCOSS to promote reform, development and innovation within the community sector to improve outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable people and communities, Yfoundations is an active member of FONGA along with other peak bodies and service providers.

Over the course of this year, our CEO continued to sit on the boards of My Foundations and End Street Sleeping Collaboration.

Youth Homelessness Matters Day – Young and Alone

Yfoundations continued to build Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD) as our flagship national campaign while also supporting and aligning YHMD with other national and state campaigns. This year, YHMD took place on Wednesday 15 April.

Youth Homelessness Matters Day aims to raise community awareness and advocate for solutions to end child and youth homelessness across Australia. Yfoundations plays a pivotal role in organising, promoting and driving the campaign's impact. The YHMD campaign continued to be supported and strengthened through our partnership with the Property Industry Foundation (PIF) and UnLtd, the social purpose organisation linking the media, marketing and creative industries with charities.

With financial assistance from PIF, we retained our Campaign Manager, Sam Woods to develop campaign resources and coordinate the campaign with the members of the YHMD National Advisory Committee. The partnership continued to strengthen collaboration between the youth homelessness sector and the property/development and media/advertising industries.

In 2026, we aligned the campaign's elements to build awareness with the public while increasing advocacy within the sector and with governments. The *Young and Alone* campaign video assets produced in 2025 ran nationally through a range of media outlets from February 2026 to 15 April, building public receptiveness ahead of YHMD. The delivery of this would not be possible without the support of UnLtd, PHD, Ogilvy and the generosity of media contributors, for which we are incredibly grateful.

With YHMD front of mind in April, it's an ideal time for political advocacy. Taking on feedback from the previous year, messaging was sharpened in 2026. Federal lobbying was tied to the *Home Time* campaign, calling for a youth housing supplement, dedicated youth tenancies, removal of the youth housing penalty, and dedicated planning/funding rounds. As a result of *Home Time*, \$60 million was allocated to addressing these issues in the federal budget following YHMD.



In NSW, lobbying aligned with the *A Place to Call Home* campaign, calling for a 50% funding increase for specialist homelessness services and increased investment into social housing. Each state and territory pursued its own campaign objectives, with YHMD Steering Committee representatives engaging ministers and other elected representatives in their jurisdictions in the lead up to and on Youth Homelessness Matters Day.

Notably, NSW Minister the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC engaged strongly – announcing concrete steps in the development of the NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan at the YHMD breakfast event hosted in collaboration with PIF on 31 March, and visiting Yfoundations member St Laurence House on YHMD, where she engaged with YHRC members.

While Yfoundations is the custodian of YHMD, the day belongs to the sector – a way for services to connect with communities, build their profiles, celebrate achievements and conduct their own advocacy.

This year the overarching strategic goal and messaging for YHMD was: **every**



child and young person has a safe place to go. Supporting objectives included:

- raising public awareness of youth homelessness
- expanding public engagement via digital participation, events, and advocacy
- establishing a clear call to action
- driving fundraising initiatives tied to creating safe spaces for young people
- continuing to push for increased sector funding.

Secondary objectives targeted deeper sector collaboration and cementing Yfoundations' position as the NSW peak body for child and youth homelessness, aligned with our broader strategic goals of driving advocacy, harnessing lived experience, and supporting members to deliver quality services.

Delivery of 2026 objectives

The 2026 vision was to boost awareness and visibility while uniting the nation. Taking on feedback that prior asks were too complex, the

Youth Homelessness Matters Day – Young and Alone

campaign simplified to **Educate. Activate. Donate. Advocate.**, giving the public clear, simple ways to engage. The key objective was to maximise distribution of shareable campaign materials to broaden YHMD's reach beyond the sector.

Sector uptake was strong, and YHMD achieved its highest-ever social media visibility, with growing support from politicians, the public and corporate sponsors. Registered events matched last year's numbers, though many additional unregistered events appeared across social media.

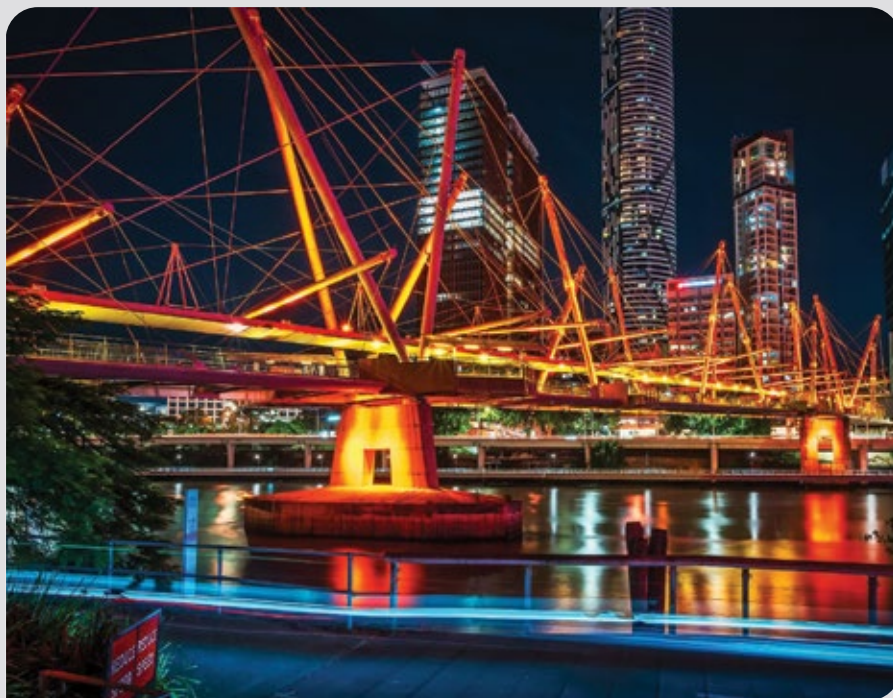
Awareness: The pro-bono *Young and Alone* campaign ran for three months leading up to YHMD, creating a stronger environment for advocacy. Larger, more visible events that received organic coverage increased. The simplified Educate. Activate. Donate. Advocate. framework improved clarity, with 'Educate' driving shared campaign material and 'Advocate' linking directly to *Home Time*.

Actions: Linking to the *Home Time* campaign gave the public a simple lobbying mechanism. Simplified social media tiles gained more traction than previous years. Political engagement rose, with ministers and other elected officials in every state engaging and posting. Service providers across the country successfully used YHMD as a platform to launch their end-of-financial-year fundraising.

Secondary outcomes: The YHMD Advisory Committee matured into a more cohesive body that worked more effectively to move the day forward and distributing YHMD messaging and material. Yfoundations strengthened its political standing, working more closely with NSW ministers, government departments, the federal minister and other peak bodies. Notably, the NSW Government announced its Action Plan for Children and Young People at the Sydney breakfast event forum, with ongoing consultation involving the Youth Homelessness Representative Council

Educate.

A broader suite of social media assets, including refreshed *Young and Alone*



and YHMD visuals sharing consistent imagery, improved campaign cohesion across Australia. Messaging used plainer, more relatable language highlighting key statistics.

Social media metrics saw substantial growth (in some cases exceeding 1000%+) against the average month, reflecting a lift in organic reach.

The sector should be commended for a more unified, cohesive approach to YHMD in 2026, with more services sharing campaign materials and simplified, issue-focused tiles distributed via the YHMD Steering Committee. Visibility and posting frequency exceeded previous years, with growing engagement from politicians and commercial partners.

Activate.

Events remain a longstanding YHMD pillar, from market stalls to service open days, to the famous Darwin Couch Races. In 2026, 27 events were registered with Yfoundations, with a considerable number of private or invite-only events promoted independently.

Highlights included the Youth Homelessness Matters Breakfast Forums hosted by PIF in three

states; two capital cities lighting landmarks orange (with a national 'Light It Orange' rollout planned for 2027); Adelaide cafés using YHMD-branded coffee sleeves; plus a soccer tournament, documentary launch, webinar, morning teas, community events, barbecues, open days, donation drives, and the couch races.

Donate.

The number of organisations participating in the YHMD donations portal hosted on the Yfoundations website increased by 10% this year. Although the level of donations did not increase, the portal gives the public a tangible way to engage, and many services use YHMD as a launchpad for their own end-of-financial-year fundraising. The potential to utilise YHMD to support fundraising for the youth homelessness sector will continue to be explored and discussed with the YHMD Advisory Committee.

Advocate.

At its core, YHMD is a day of advocacy. The 2026 campaign set clear and specific asks of both the federal and state and territory governments.

Federal: Advocacy amplified the *Home Time* campaign, calling for

Youth Homelessness Matters Day – Young and Alone

YHMD Advisory Committee members

(to 30 June 2026)

Michelle Ackerman, Head of Youth Support Services, Youth Off The Streets (NSW)

Nerida Ackerman, President, Yfoundations

Katie Berry, Advocacy and Engagement Manager, Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

Nicole Chaplin, CEO St. John's Youth Services, South Australia

Kate Colvin, CEO Homelessness Australia

Debora Di Natale, CEO Council to Homeless Persons (VIC)

JV Douglas, Innovation Manager, Property Industry Foundation

Lorraine Dupree, Executive Director, Queensland Youth Housing Coalition

Jason Juretic, CEO Stepping Stone House (NSW)

Alicia Keenan, Policy and Advocacy Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

John Macmillan, CEO Yfoundations

Melanie Martin, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Brisbane Youth Service (QLD)

Shorna Moore, Head of Policy, Advocacy & Government Relations, Melbourne City Mission (VIC)

Katie Reynolds, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Home Base Tas (TAS)

Thomas Stevens, Director - Sector Development, Workforce Capability & Communications, Youth Coalition of the ACT

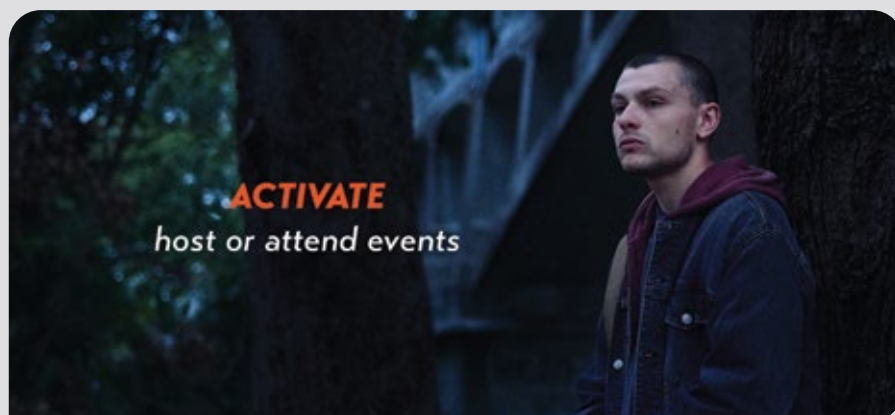
Dianne Underwood, CEO Home Base Tas (TAS)

Laura Watson, Fundraising and Communications Senior Manager, Brisbane Youth Service (QLD)

Hannah Watts, CEO, Youth Coalition of the ACT

Jemma Wood, Director, Youth & Family Services, Anglicare NT

Sam Woods, Campaign Manager YHMD, Yfoundations



15,000 dedicated youth tenancies (for young people aged 16-24 years) across Australia, linked support services, and rental gap funding for housing providers. This resulted in a \$60 million federal budget commitment over four years toward the youth housing penalty.

NSW: Advocacy backed the Homelessness NSW *A Place to Call Home* campaign. The Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC spoke at the Sydney YHMD Breakfast Event on 31 March, announcing the development of the NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan, and visited a member service on YHMD with Yfoundations staff and YHRC members. Homes NSW consultation with the YHRC continues via the Action Plan advisory group.

The single, unified national advocacy approach was powerful, and backing it with a consistent state-specific message that was linked to local needs made advocacy even more effective.

Media and mentions

Media coverage was substantial in 2026, spanning local, national and international outlets - notable given the absence of last year's major *Young and Alone* PR coverage. Press releases were distributed via Yfoundations and the Advisory Committee for local distribution. Event coverage was strong nationally, especially for HomeBase Tasmania, Brisbane Youth, and the Darwin Couch Surfing race, which also featured on ABC News, ABC Radio, NT News, First Nations Broadcasting, and Hot 100 radio.

Extensive corporate, political and sector support underpinned the campaign, including backing from Taskforce, RedZed, Sheridan/ StreetSmart, dozens of state and federal MPs, and a wide network of homelessness service providers across every state and territory, alongside numerous unregistered grassroots events run by member organisations nationwide.

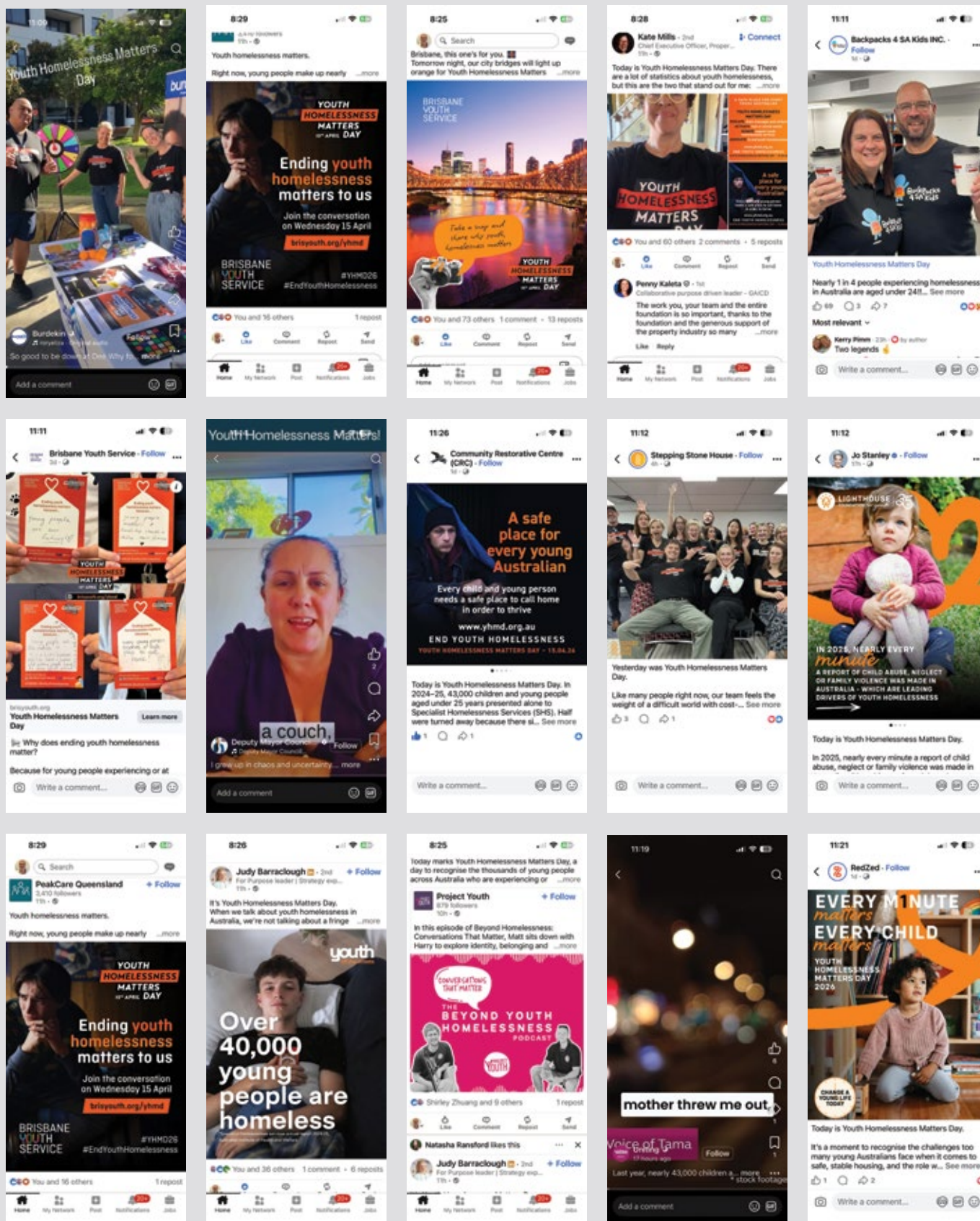
Young and Alone

Young and Alone continued to raise public awareness of the plight of children and young people experiencing homelessness. In a year that has been extremely challenging for media organisations across the board, their generosity in supporting the campaign was extraordinary. Close to \$2 million in advertising time and space was donated to support the campaign. We're incredibly grateful to UnLtd and PHD for their unwavering support.

YHMD media coverage

We saw a marked increase in media coverage for YHMD. Shared media releases were distributed by Advisory Committee members. There was an increase of support from politicians, more coverage of events and more sector support sharing campaign messaging than ever before.

Youth Homelessness Matters Day – Young and Alone



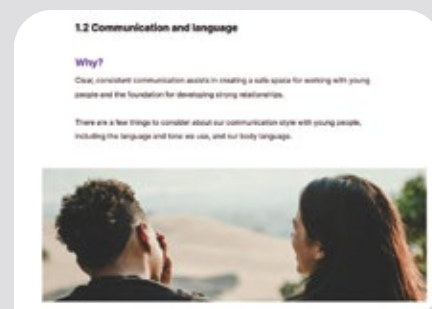
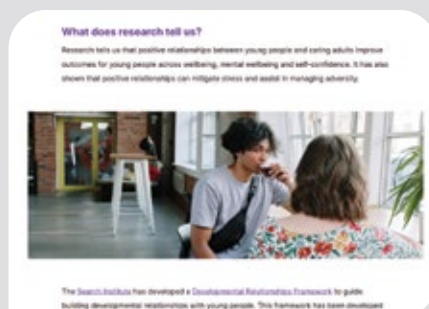
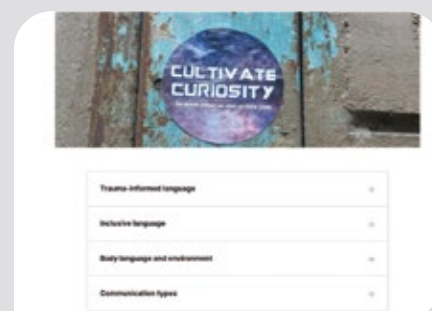
YHMD Media Coverage

The Urban Developer 25 March 2026	'Young & Alone: The Campaign Against Youth Homelessness' https://www.theurbandeveloper.com/articles/young-and-alone-the-campaign-against-youth-homelessness
South West Voice 1 April 2026	'Dream. Dare. Do: theme for this year's youth week' (Campbelltown NSW) southwestvoice.com.au/dream-dare-do-youth/
Moreton Daily 14 April 2026	'Couch surfing for homeless youth' (Moreton Bay, Qld) www.moretondaily.com.au/news/couch-surfing-for-homeless-youth/amp/
Campaign Brief 15 April 2026	'We Are Mobilise and Droga5 turn children's height charts into street art across Australia for Youth Homelessness Matters Day' (Sydney and Melbourne) campaignbrief.com/we-are-mobilise-and-droga5-turn-childrens-height-charts-into-street-art-across-australia-for-youth-homelessness-matters-day/
WA.gov.au 15 April 2026	'Shining the light on cross-sector collaboration this Youth Homelessness Day' (Western Australia) www.wa.gov.au/government/announcements/coming-together-address-youth-homelessness
River1467AM 15 April 2026	'MASP recognises Youth Homelessness Matters Day' (Mildura, Wentworth and Balranald regions) www.river1467.com.au/local-news/masp-recognises-youth-homelessness-matters-day/
Inside State Government 16 April 2026	'NT Dept of Children and Families marks Youth Homelessness Matters Day' (Northern Territory) www.insidestategovernment.com.au/nt-dept-of-children-and-families-marks-youth-homelessness-matters-day/
Pulse Tasmania 16 April 2026	'Nearly two in five homeless people in Tasmania are under 25' pulsetasmania.com.au/news/nearly-two-in-five-homeless-people-in-tasmania-are-under-25/
NBN News 15 April 2026	'Youth Homelessness Matters Day recognised in Armidale' (Armidale NSW) www.nbnnews.com.au/2026/04/15/youth-homelessness-matters-day-recognised-in-armidale/
Salvos Online 16 April 2026	'Coffee with a conscience: Salvos raising awareness of a 'solvable' issue' (South Australia) www.salvosonline.org.au/post/coffee-with-a-conscience-salvos-raising-awareness-of-a-solvable-issue

Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2026 had considerable coverage that is available for review in the 2026 YHMD campaign report available to download from www.yfoundations.org.au

Good Practice Guidelines

The development of the Good Practice Guidelines (the Guidelines) training package progressed significantly during the year, with the first eight modules completed and ready to go live for 1 July 2026.



The Guidelines will provide a practical, consistent approach to good practice in youth homelessness service delivery, supporting staff onboarding, strengthening practice and improving outcomes for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

They are designed as practical, user-friendly learning modules that explore good practice principles and follow the journey of working with a young person experiencing or at risk of homelessness, from intake through to exit. They aim to support services to onboard and train new staff, strengthen practice and deliver high-quality, youth-focused support.

The Guidelines were developed collaboratively with a working group comprising representatives of eight metropolitan and regional youth homelessness services: Coast Shelter, Salvation Army/Oasis Youth Services, Social Futures, Southern Youth and Family Services, St Laurence House, Stepping Stone House, Uniting, and YP Space. They were also informed by Yfoundations' communities of

practice for frontline workers with lived experience and workers from remote and regional areas. Their insights and experiences helped ensure the modules reflect the realities of working in diverse youth homelessness settings.

Building on the challenges identified by the community of practice for workers with lived experience, Yfoundations consulted with the Youth Homelessness Representative Council in December 2025 to explore the opportunities and barriers faced by young people with lived experience seeking careers in the homelessness sector.

This consultation has informed a draft module for the Guidelines, which focuses on creating workplaces that recognise and respond to the needs of young people with lived experience entering the youth homelessness sector workforce. The module will be reviewed by the working group before being added to the online resource.

Work has also commenced to expand the Guidelines with sector-specific

content for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Additional modules on supporting young people accessing the NDIS, and working with LGBTQIA+ young people are also in the pipeline.

The Guidelines training package is being delivered on a new online learning management platform that will house all Yfoundations sector development training resources. The platform provides a central location via the Yfoundations Sector Development Hub for training across specialist areas and will host the first tranche of modules, representing an important milestone in Yfoundations' broader capability-building work.

While the Guidelines form part of our commitment under the SHS Industry Workforce Development project to identify and implement best practice and innovative approaches towards building the sector, as a living resource they will continue to evolve in response to emerging sector needs and feedback.

Sector Workforce Development Projects and Resources

The launch of the Youth Justice training package kicked off the year, followed by regional visits to service providers, the continued development of the Good Practice Guidelines, and ongoing engagement with the sector on workforce development issues to identify and deliver resources for sector workers, all of which was enabled due to the continued funding Yfoundations secured under the SHS Industry and Workforce Development Program.

This enabled us to build on the significant work undertaken since the project commenced in 2024 to strengthen workforce capability, support the sector to respond to emerging challenges, and support industry best practice in youth homelessness services. Throughout the year, Yfoundations engaged extensively with the sector to continue to identify emerging service delivery issues and workforce challenges. This engagement informed our advocacy, capability-building initiatives and development of practical resources for the sector.

NSW Health funding also supported the continued delivery of our popular sexual health training.

Working with children and young people who use violence

The Youth Justice SHS Capacity Building Project came to fruition on 1 July 2025 with the launch of the training package *Working with children and young people who use violence*. This comprehensive, self-paced interactive online learning package was designed to equip frontline workers with the knowledge and tools to support these young people more effectively. It aims to assist better understanding of adolescent violence in the home and how to work with young people who use violence, acknowledging that domestic and family violence (DFV) perpetrated by young people is complex and different to that perpetrated by adults.

The modules provide insights into effective trauma-informed, strengths-based practice and strategies for working effectively with young people using violence, with knowledge, stories and examples shared by practitioners



who collectively have decades of experience working in this area. The modules include the following key components:

- access to data and research on adolescent violence in the home, relevant legislation and links to policy frameworks
- stories from the frontline, including contributions from Indigenous frontline workers at the Bail Accommodation Support Service and a case worker with lived experience
- a digital story from Jeff Amatto, Wiradjuri man and founder of More Cultural Rehabs Less Jails, who shares his personal journey and insights into supporting young Aboriginal men
- training modules with Ken McMasters, a seasoned expert with over 40 years of experience working with young people, and Shayne Hood, Founder of Wounds and

Wisdom, who offers practical training on breaking harmful cycles, coaching techniques and reflective practices, utilising lived experience in youth justice work

- a collection of tools, templates, practice guides and updated resources to support practitioners in their daily work.

Since its launch, workers from every district in NSW have engaged with the training package, with 183 people registering for the training and 154 participants completing the package throughout the year. Feedback from participants is being collated and will inform future updates to the modules.

The package was updated in the latter half of the year ready for migration to our new learning management platform, and will continue to be updated to capture changes in legislation and service provision, as well as the latest data and practice innovations.

Sector Workforce Development Projects and Resources

New learning management platform

In April 2026, following concerns about the limitations of our current learning management system (LMS) and a period of robust market research, Yfoundations engaged a new LMS provider for the delivery of our existing sector training resources, including sexual health resources *Sticky Stuff* and *Because You Care*, and Working with young people who use violence, as well as the Good Practice Guidelines. Preparing our packages for this transition also gave us an opportunity to review all current packages to identify what updates were required, and to update those we could in the lead up to the launch of the new platform, scheduled for 1 July 2026.

The new platform provides a significantly improved user experience both from a development and learning perspective, and enhanced data and reporting capabilities. All materials have been migrated to the platform, and a communications strategy has been implemented to ensure registered users, members, the wider SHS sector and key stakeholders have been advised of the forthcoming transition.

The availability of the Good Practice Guidelines and scheduled go-live date have also been communicated to members, the wider homelessness sector, peak bodies and key stakeholders.

Communities of practice

Drawing on the insights provided by the communities of practice (CoPs) held for regional and remote workers, and workers with lived experience in the previous year, in addition to other sector engagement throughout the year, Yfoundations continued to build the evidence base for workforce development and identify emerging capability needs.

Ongoing pressures and demands on youth homelessness service providers and frontline staff posed challenges in generating interest in the establishment of new CoPs and continued participation in the existing

ones this year. The sector told us that increasing service demand and static resourcing had reduced their capacity to engage in additional initiatives. Yfoundations continues to work with the sector and partner peaks to identify more effective and sustainable ways to support frontline workforce capability in this environment.

Consultation began with Aboriginal workers at Homelessness NSW, who in turn connected us with an Aboriginal consultant with extensive experience in the housing and homelessness sector. Collectively, we have begun to explore engagement strategies for establishing a community of practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers supporting young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and one that includes non-Indigenous workers who support Aboriginal young people.

Opportunities to establish a CoP for workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are also being explored.

Off the back of the work initiated by our Senior Policy and Communications Officer on the intersection between the NDIS and youth homelessness services, which was identified as an emerging issue, and the establishment of the NDIS Working Group (discussed in the Advocacy and Policy report), we are also exploring the creation of a new CoP focused on workers who support young people navigating and using the NDIS.

These initiatives aim to strengthen workforce capability and ensure sector development work reflects the experiences and needs of diverse workers and the young people they support.

Regional engagement

In July 2025, Yfoundations staff visited youth homelessness services across four NSW regions: the Mid North Coast, Northern Rivers, Central West and South Coast, including larger providers operating across extensive geographic areas, and smaller local services that are the only youth homelessness service provider covering an expansive area.

These visits provided an important opportunity to hear directly from a range of service providers in regional and remote areas about the challenges of service delivery in those areas and for children and young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness. They also gave us the opportunity to witness firsthand the specific challenges of these geographic locations in terms of distance, transport availability, housing availability and availability of other local resources.

The visits were incredibly impactful and strengthened our advocacy on regional and remote sector workforce and service delivery issues, which were discussed with senior staff at Homes NSW and continued to inform our advocacy throughout the year.

Yfoundations sincerely thanks everyone who gave up their valuable time to speak with us. The findings are being collated and encapsulated in a report that is due to be released to the sector shortly.

Commissioning process and SCHADS Award

Yfoundations continued (and continues) to keep the youth homelessness sector engaged in and informed about developments in the SHS commissioning process through General Member meetings, newsletters, the Commissioning Working Group, and direct engagement with member organisations. We also kept the sector informed about the Fair Work Commission's review of the SCHADS Award, including developments relevant to the youth homelessness sector workforce. Information from sessions organised by NCOSS and the Australian Services Union, and feedback from our information sessions with Yfoundations members, informed our submissions, which, in turn, were relayed back and made available to the sector. These submissions reflected the impact on and concerns of the youth homelessness sector by the proposed changes to the Award and classification structure.

Sector Workforce Development Projects and Resources

Sexual health training

In 2025–26, Yfoundations continued to support frontline workers and carers across NSW to feel more confident and better equipped to have conversations about sexual health with young people.

Our two programs *Sticky Stuff Online* for workers, and *Because You Care* for carers and workers supporting young people in out-of-home care, remained freely available through our online learning platform, offering engaging, self-paced training. The work continues to be supported through funds from the NSW Ministry of Health's STI Programs Unit, which sustain the online delivery platform. Yfoundations values this ongoing partnership, which allows us to provide high-quality sexual health education to the sector at no cost to participants or their services.

Growing uptake

Uptake grew substantially this year. Across both programs, 288 people registered, and 89% of those went on to complete all modules – a significant increase on the 170 registrations recorded last year, with completion rates holding steady as numbers rose. *Sticky Stuff Online* accounted for 162 registrations, and *Because You Care* for 126, with the latter recording particularly strong growth from February 2026 onwards.

The training also continued to reach well beyond metro-Sydney. Of the *Because You Care* participants who told us where they were based, more than three-quarters were located in regional NSW alongside participants from interstate and overseas. For workers and carers in regional and remote communities, where training is often difficult to access and costly to travel to, self-paced online modules remain a practical and immediate option.

Most participants came to the training through their employer or manager, with others finding it through internet searches and our monthly newsletter, which drove consistent traffic to the learning platform across the year.

What participants told us

Evaluation responses again indicated meaningful shifts in knowledge and confidence.

Among *Sticky Stuff Online* participants, the proportion who strongly agreed they knew a range of creative tools for engaging young people in conversations about sexual health rose from 5% before the training to 50% afterwards. Every post-training respondent agreed or strongly agreed that they were familiar with enough strategies to support their service to engage young people around sexual health, compared with half of those responding beforehand.

Among *Because You Care* participants, the proportion who said they fully understood the prevention, testing and treatment of STIs rose from 32% to 70%, and the proportion who said they fully knew what services were available in their area to support young people's sexual health rose from 14% to 55% – a shift that matters, because knowing where to refer a young person is often the step between a good conversation and a good outcome.

Participants described the training as quick, easy to follow, non-judgemental and accessible at the moment they needed it. Asked what they intended to do differently over the following six months, they told us they would begin conversations with the young people they support, develop resource hubs in their offices, make condoms available, link young people to sexual health services and appointments, and hold a trauma-informed lens in that work.

Feedback also told us where to improve. Participants asked for more interactivity, greater control over pacing, and the addition of a knowledge quiz. One participant in a remote community described the

difficulty of arranging STI testing for a young person under 18 where the only pathway is a GP appointment weeks away – a reminder that training can build a worker's confidence but cannot substitute for accessible local services. This feedback informs the forthcoming revision of modules.

The return of face-to-face training

Last year we reported that the cessation of funding for face-to-face training had reduced our capacity to deliver it, and that growing that component of the program over the coming 12 months was a priority. This year we took the first step, delivering a facilitated session to a group of services in June 2026.

Two further sessions are already booked for 2026–27. Our delivery capacity remains modest, and we are being deliberate about building it sustainably. Our intention over the coming year is to grow facilitated delivery steadily alongside revision of the online modules so that services have both accessible self-paced learning for individual workers, and live training for teams who want to build capacity together.

Looking ahead

In summary, Yfoundations has maintained a strong focus on workforce and sector capability throughout the reporting period. By combining sector engagement, evidence gathering, advocacy and practical resources, we continue to support the youth homelessness sector workforce to respond to emerging challenges and deliver effective, evidence-informed good practice for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

***Sticky Stuff Online* and *Because You Care* in 2025–26**

288 registrations across both programs

89% completed all three modules

76% of *Because You Care* participants based in regional NSW

Free to all participants, supported by the NSW Ministry of Health

Communications and Media

Yfoundations continues to promote understanding of government policy, programs and developments across the youth homelessness sector through multiple channels of communication.

Throughout the year, Yfoundations worked to keep members, stakeholders and the broader public informed and connected through timely media releases, monthly newsletters, consistent social media engagement and regular General Member meetings. These communications activities directly supported the organisation’s policy and advocacy work by spotlighting sector developments, mobilising support for reform, and elevating lived experience. Key data, policy gaps and public opinion on child and youth homelessness were consistently highlighted, reinforcing advocacy priorities and calls for systemic change.

Taken together, these channels formed a coordinated communications strategy: newsletters and EDMs provided depth and detail for subscribers with a direct interest in sector developments; the website served as a durable public repository of reports, submissions and resources; sector meetings enabled dialogue between Yfoundations, our members and government stakeholders; and social media extended our reach to a wider public audience.



Key media releases

Our media releases highlighted key data, policy gaps and public opinion on child and youth homelessness, reinforcing our advocacy priorities and calls for systemic reform:

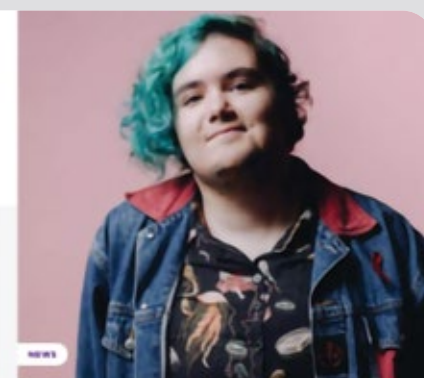
- ‘Nearly 1 in 3 people accessing homelessness services in NSW

are children and young people under the age of 18 years’ (27 August 2025), issued in response to the release of new figures by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), showing that nearly one in three people accessing specialist homelessness services in NSW are under the age

Key Statistics

 Yfoundations creating a future without youth homelessness Views 18,876 (⬆️ 24% from last year) Viewers 4,731 (⬆️ 10% from last year) Content Interactions 672 (⬆️ 14% from last year) Link Clicks 31 (⬆️ 42% from last year) Visits 1,343 (⬆️ 34.4% from last year) Follows 78 (⬆️ 32% from last year)	 Yfoundations creating a future without youth homelessness Views 32,550 (⬆️ 275% from last year) Viewers 11,663 (⬆️ 360% from last year) Content Interactions 1,120 (⬆️ 27% from last year) Visits 659 (⬆️ 26% from last year) Follows 147 (⬆️ 2% from last year)	 Yfoundations creating a future without youth homelessness No comparison data available Impressions 41,815 Reactions 1,071 Comments 28 Reposts 20 Page views 509 Unique visitors 288 Followers 2,223
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Communications and Media



of 18 years, and that NSW has the highest number of unaccompanied 12-17-year-olds seeking assistance from homelessness services in the country - highlighting the urgent need for action and investment, and a sustained focus on children and young people in the state's homelessness response.

- 'It's time to face the reality of Australia's youth homelessness

crisis' (10 April 2026), promoting Youth Homelessness Matters Day, the collaboration with the Property Industry Foundation and UnLtd in developing and promoting the 2026 campaign, the reality of child and youth homelessness and resource challenges for the services that support them.

- 'Young people experiencing homelessness still stuck in the crisis

circuit' (23 June 2026), issued in response to the release of the NSW State Budget 2026-27, highlighted how the budget falls short of what is needed to break the cycle of child and youth homelessness in NSW, particularly around funding for responses for unaccompanied children and young people experiencing domestic and family violence; creating exit pathways for young people out of crisis accommodation; and the need for new and increased investment in specialist homelessness services across the state.

Newsletters and EDMs

Monthly newsletters were published throughout the year and distributed to a subscriber list of more than 1,000 recipients each month across the child and youth homelessness sector and related fields. Each edition covered sector news, including government policy developments and announcements alongside sector events and opportunities, training initiatives, funding and grant opportunities, and updates on Yfoundations' activities and outputs.

In gauging which Yfoundations information, resources and forums are the main sources of engagement with our work, resources, information about child and youth homelessness, and information about developments



YHMD2025

Views

25,534 (📈 46% from last year)

Viewers

9,011 (📈 44% from last year)

Content Interactions

654 (📈 333% from last year)

Link Clicks

29 (📈 81% from last year)

Visits

2,254 (📈 22% from last year)

Follows

246 (📈 40% from last year)



YHMD2025

Views

9,022 (📈 27% from last year)

Reach

3,041 (📈 64% from last year)

Content Interactions

347 (📈 34% from last year)

Link clicks

0 (📉 100% from last year)

Visits

246 (📈 35% from last year)

Follows

88 (📈 21% from last year)



Yfoundations

Newsletter Statistics
(Year-on-Year)

Subscribers:

1,190 (📈 9% from last year)

Average Open Rate:

32.6% (📈 13% from last year)

Unsubscribe Rate:

2.27% (📈 9% from last year)

Communications and Media

impacting the sector, our monthly newsletter ranked highest (at 77.8%) among respondents to our Annual Member Survey conducted from December to February.

Beyond the regular monthly schedule, additional EDMs were issued in response to emerging issues requiring immediate communication. These covered a wide range of developments, including:

- the launch of online training materials on working with young people who use violence
- an expression of interest process for the newly established NDIS working group
- a call for participants in a focus group on responses to children and young people experiencing domestic and family violence
- the state government's announcement of an additional \$130 million for crisis accommodation
- resources to support the sector's engagement in the Specialist Homelessness Services commissioning process
- the launch of the Good Practice Guidelines
- a sector survey on NDIS-related issues
- the release of the Homes NSW Discussion Paper on the Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan
- invitations to sector consultations on that Action Plan
- the Youth Homelessness Matters Day campaign.

Website

The Yfoundations website remained a key source of information for the sector, hosting new training resources on working with young people who use violence, made freely available to practitioners, and publishing a range of significant reports and submissions. These included Yfoundations' submissions to the Fair Work Commission's gender undervaluation review of the SCHADS Award, our Federal and NSW Pre-Budget 2026–27 submissions, media releases on contemporary Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data, the Annual Members Survey 2024–25

report, and submissions responding to the Youth Justice Select Committee, the Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan Sector Consultation Paper, and the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People Consultation Paper 2027–2030.

The site also hosted Youth Homelessness Matters Day campaign resources and reporting, training and sector development materials, media releases, and the member survey report.

Across the full year, the website engaged 148,730 active users, an average of around 12,395 users per month. In the January to June 2026 period, the site engaged 15,500 active users, averaging 2,650 per month.

Sector meetings and consultations

Bi-monthly youth homelessness sector meetings were held throughout the year, providing a forum to update the sector on our work and key developments in government policy, programs and reform. These meetings also facilitated direct engagement between the sector and senior Homes NSW staff, and consultation with the sector on policy development and Yfoundations campaigning activities.

In the first half of 2026, Yfoundations built on this foundation by hosting and leading broader homelessness sector consultation sessions specifically to inform the development of the NSW Child and Youth Homelessness Action Plan.

Social media

Our social media channels (LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook) were used regularly to highlight the needs of children and young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to promote the availability of information and resources, and to support Youth Homelessness Matters Day and other campaigns.

Over the reporting period, Instagram posts recorded a total of 177,998 views – largely driven by the *Young*

and Alone campaign in July. Facebook posts recorded 44,400 views, (averaging 3,700 per month), Instagram recorded 41,500 views and LinkedIn recorded 42,241 impressions for the year.

Feedback

The Yfoundations Annual Membership Survey results showed a marked increase in the utilisation of our resources and information among respondents, with our monthly newsletters ranking highest as the main source of engagement with our work, resources, information about child and youth homelessness, and information about developments impacting the sector.

This was followed by participation in working groups, communities of practice, reference groups and/or committees, with general members meetings, and campaigns and associated activities (e.g. Youth Homelessness Matters Day, *Young and Alone*) ranking equally.

These results indicate our regular engagement is effective and works well for our members and stakeholders, with a preference for engagement in focused and live meetings and forums. The survey results also demonstrated we made significant inroads into increasing the level of satisfaction with the relevance of the information and resources we provided over the year.

Throughout the year, Yfoundations effectively utilised all our communications channels to provide the child and youth homelessness sector with the most up-to-date, reliable and relevant information about government policy, programs, reforms and other relevant developments. This was achieved through the regular publication of newsletters to over 1,000 recipients on a monthly basis, ongoing updates to the website to make information and resources universally available, consultations, forums, bi-monthly sector meetings, and an active social media presence attracting a substantial number of views. We continued to be a trusted and consistent source of information for the sector.

Media Coverage

Out In Perth 11 July 2025	<i>At 20, Ari found himself one of many Australian youth experiencing homelessness</i> YHRC member Ari and CEO, John Macmillan, quoted www.outinperth.com/at-20-ari-found-himself-one-of-many-australian-youth-experiencing-homelessness/
B&T 21 July 2025	<i>B&T's Campaigns of the Month: Amaysim's AI Avenger Takes on Macca's McWings & Yfoundations' Gritty Reality Check</i> Young and Alone campaign mentioned
Institute of Community Directors 17 September 2025	Charities flag deep concern at the number of homeless children John Macmillan quoted www.communitydirectors.com.au/articles/charities-flag-deep-concern-at-the-number-of-homeless-children
Campaign Brief December 25, 2025	<i>A year of impact: A look back at the creative campaigns supported by UnLtd and the industry</i> Yfoundations Young and Alone campaign covered https://campaignbrief.com/a-year-of-impact-a-look-back-at-the-creative-campaigns-supported-by-unltd-and-the-industry/
Time Out Sydney 16 March 2026	<i>Sydney has a big youth homelessness problem - here's how you can help</i> John Macmillan quoted www.timeout.com/sydney/news/sydney-has-a-big-youth-homelessness-problem-heres-how-you-can-help-031626
Melbourne Insider 10 April 2026	<i>Australia Faces Urgent Youth Homelessness Crisis</i> YHRC member Natasha Ransford and John Macmillan quoted https://melbourne-insider.au/australia-youth-homelessness-crisis-2026/
Social Futures	<i>Time for Action. Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2026</i> Links to Yfoundations website https://socialfutures.org.au/time-for-action-youth-homelessness-matters-day-2026/
Burdekin	<i>Join Burdekin for Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2026 in Dee Why</i> Links to Yfoundations website https://burdekin.org.au/join-burdekin-for-youth-homelessness-matters-day-2026-in-dee-why/
Insight	<i>Upcoming: QLD Youth Week and. Youth Homelessness Matters Day</i> Links to Yfoundations website https://insight.qld.edu.au/news/upcoming-qld-youth-week-and-youth-homelessness-matters-day
The Indian Sun 13 April 2026	<i>Half turned away: youth homelessness hits a hard ceiling</i> Natasha Ransford and John Macmillan quoted www.theindiansun.com.au/2026/04/13/half-turned-away-youth-homelessness-hits-a-hard-ceiling/

Our Team



John Macmillan
Chief Executive Officer



Anna Schinella
*Head of Operations and
Sector Support*



Shai Mikus
*Senior Policy and
Communications Officer*



Sam Woods
*Marketing, Communications
and Campaign Manager
/ Lived Experience
Coordinator*



Nicola O'Hanlon
*Industry and Workforce
Development Officer*

Team development

Sam's portfolio of work was expanded from campaigns to include communications and co-coordinating our Youth Homelessness Representative Council alongside Shai. Anna moved from Head of Policy and Advocacy to the newly created position of Head of Operations and Sector Support. Following her coordination work on the development of the Youth Justice training package in 2024, Nicola rejoined the team as Industry and Workforce Development Officer in November.

The team has engaged in organisational planning, team building activities, training and professional development. This includes Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training delivered by Paul Sinclair from Mirri Mirri; the NSW Legislative Council Parliamentary Inquiries Workshop delivered by NCOSS and the NSW Legislative Council-Committees at Parliament House; and Ai Governance.

Shai also commenced a Diploma in Leadership and Management made

available through the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies' Centre for Community Welfare Training.

In November, the team came together for a planning day to develop a new operational plan. The team met again in June to review the plan, map progress and outcomes against each of the projects/activities, and update priorities to factor in shifting challenges and priorities.

We said goodbye to the following staff members:

Simon Byrnes
*Lived Experience
Coordinator*

Adelaide Falzon
*Industry and Workforce
Development Officer*

Nicole Booth
Office Manager

Thank you for your service and commitment to supporting vulnerable children and young people in NSW.

Our Board



Nerida Ackerman
President



Eleonore Johansson
Treasurer
Illawarra Representative
Southern Youth and Family
Services



Alan Brennan
Secretary
Hunter New England
Representative
Pathfinders



Michelle Ackerman
Metropolitan Representative
Youth Off The Streets



Richard Ayoub
Special Interest Delegate -
Lived Experience



Lisa Graham
Northern Sydney
Representative
Taldumande Youth Services



Laurie Matthews
South Eastern Sydney
Representative
Caretakers Cottage



Jody Pearce
Western NSW
Representative
Veritas House



Meena Johnson
Northern NSW
Representative
Wesley Mission



Vivian Stavis
Metropolitan Representative
Lillian Howell Project

Thank you for your service and commitment to supporting vulnerable children and young people in NSW.

Financial Overview

Treasurer's Report

Dear Members, As Treasurer of Yfoundations, I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report for the financial year 2025–2026.

It's been an incredibly busy, productive and rewarding year for Yfoundations, with funds provided by DCJ through the NSW Community Sector Peaks Program and the SHS Industry and Workforce Development Program enabling the extensive engagement, policy and advocacy, and resource development and delivery work with and for the youth homelessness services sector that have been the focus of the Yfoundations team over the year.

This financial support has enabled us to take Yfoundations out to the regions and to bring the learnings and perspectives shared during those visits into our advocacy and policy work, into our resource development, and into the ears of ministers and governments. It has also enabled us to ramp up consultations on key issues and developments and ensure the voices and concerns of the sector are front and centre of the work we deliver.

The contribution from NSW Ministry of Health ensures our online sexual health training resources continue to be delivered and has facilitated the transition of those resources to an up-to-date, user friendly learning management platform delivered by a local provider with local support. We look forward to continuing this relationship with NSW Health and the possibility of their ongoing financial support that will enable us to update and continue to deliver these popular resources to workers across a range of sectors, in particular those working with young people in out-of-home care, and with young people receiving homelessness services and support.

Our partnership with the Property Industry Foundation includes financial support for our Campaign Manager position, which enables the coordination of Youth Homelessness Matters Day and the campaign resources we provide to people and organisations across Australia wanting to raise awareness and help place child and youth homelessness high on the political and public agenda.

Part of the resourcing we provide through that campaign is the platform and support for people to donate to service providers of their choice who have opted into this part of the campaign. These donations are passed on to those services and, as we all know, every little bit helps the sector to provide support and services to young people experiencing and at risk of homelessness.

Speaking of donations, we are also fortunate to be the recipient of a regular donation that enables us to provide operational support to our Youth Homelessness Representative Council, covering some of the costs of YHRC meetings and coordination, and remuneration to YHRC members for their participation in meetings, consultations and events. The increased demand for consultations with the YHRC from government is testament to the importance of the voices of young people with lived experience and their valuable contribution in the policy and program development space. The coordination of this has been made possible through these donations, and Yfoundations is grateful for this support.

This all speaks volumes to how well and how responsibly our finances have been used and managed throughout the year to support this incredible work. It goes without saying (although I will say it) that while it may sound like Yfoundations has substantial financial resources to sustain a substantial team, these resources only allow us to sustain a relatively small team that works incredibly hard and with limited resources to pull all this together and deliver the outputs you have been able to read about in this report.

As Treasurer and on behalf of the Board, I can say we are proud of and thankful for the commitment and dedication this team brings to their work, to ensuring the operational and financial integrity and viability of Yfoundations, and to supporting children and young people experiencing and at risk of homelessness and the sector that supports them.



In rounding off this report, I am pleased to declare that overall the financial position and reserves of Yfoundations are healthy and all legal accruals and entitlements have been provided for.

Thank you to our member services for their continued membership, and a special thank you to the members that support Yfoundations by allowing their staff to participate on the Yfoundations Board and various working groups the team has established and coordinated during the year.

Thank you also to the skilled and knowledgeable organisational leaders and managers who collectively bring years of invaluable experience to the Yfoundations Board, ensuring good governance, financial oversight and informed direction.

Eleonore Johansson
Treasurer
Yfoundations

Surplus of
\$45,213
(2025: \$94,087)

Statement of Financial Position

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Yfoundations ABN 20 512 756 029

	2026	2025
ASSETS	\$	\$
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,305,760	1,311,455
Trade & other receivables	54,162	38,885
Total current assets	1,359,922	1,350,340
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	36,887	30,364
Right-of-use assets	57,154	114,307
Total non-current assets	94,041	144,671
TOTAL ASSETS	1,453,963	1,495,011
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	76,954	125,454
Provisions	36,142	20,513
Lease Liabilities	60,387	60,387
Total current liabilities	173,474	206,354
Non-current liabilities		
Provisions	16,155	15,616
Lease Liabilities	-	53,920
Total non-current liabilities	16,155	69,536
TOTAL LIABILITIES	189,629	275,890
NET ASSETS	1,264,334	1,219,121
TOTAL ACCUMULATED FUNDS	1,264,334	1,219,121

Audited Accounts

The abridged Statement of Financial Position and Statement of Profit or Loss and other Comprehensive Income should be read in conjunction with the full notes on accounts attached to the comprehensive Audited Accounts.

The company's external auditor, Stewart Brown Chartered Accountants, gave the accounts for the year an unqualified audit report.

Board members certify that funding has been expended in accordance with the conditions of funding agreements and guidelines.

A full set of audited accounts can be obtained on request to:

The Secretary

Yfoundations
PO Box 3115
Eora Nation
Redfern NSW 2016

Statement of Profit or Loss and other Comprehensive Income

for the year ended 30 June 2026

	2026	2025
INCOME	\$	\$
Revenue	1,096,439	1,310,576
Other Income	402	9,102
Total income	1,096,841	1,319,678
EXPENSES		
Administration and other expenses	(15,806)	(11,195)
Conferences, events and workshops	(17,388)	(25,494)
Depreciation	(66,287)	(73,937)
Finance costs: lease liability	(6,054)	(1,226)
Occupancy	(15,777)	(10,741)
Office expenses	(29,187)	(42,657)
Professional fees and insurances	(86,724)	(139,226)
Project expenses	(17,485)	(112,369)
Salaries and employee benefits	(724,578)	(730,000)
Telecommunication	(35,376)	(48,986)
Travel	(36,966)	(29,760)
Total expenses	(1,051,628)	(1,225,591)
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	45,213	94,087

Thank you

A sincere thanks to all our members and funders

Alan Brennan
Blue Sky Community Services
Burdekin
CareSouth
Caretakers Cottage
CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay
CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes
Coast Shelter
Community Restorative Centre (CRC)
Detour House / The Girl's Refuge
Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW)
Eleonore Johansson
Foyer Foundation
Jewish House
Jody Pearce
Justine Humphry
Launchpad Youth Community
Laurie Matthews
Lillian's (Lillian Howell Project Inc.)
Lisa Graham
Marist180

Meena Johnson
Mercy Community Services (Perth)
Michelle Ackerman
Mission Australia – Canterbury-Bankstown Youth Service
Moree Family Support
Nerida Ackerman
New Horizons Enterprises
Pathfinders
Platform Youth Services
Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services
Project Youth
Property Industry Foundation
Richard Ayoub
Samaritans Maitland
Settlement Services International (SSI)
Shelter NSW
Social Futures
Sora Community Services
South East Women and Children's

Services (SEWACS)
Southern Youth and Family Services
St Laurence House
Stepping Stone House
Taldumande Youth Services
The Family Centre (St Joseph's Youth Service)
The Salvation Army – Oasis Youth Support
Twenty10
Uniting (NSW.ACT)
Uniting Dubbo
Veritas House
Vivian Stavis
Wesley Mission
YES Youth and Family Services
Youth Action
Youth Off The Streets
Youth Rezolutions
YP Space MNC

Community/ business partners

We are exceptionally grateful to the following additional organisations and people who have supported our work during the year. This work has supported our sector as well as children and young people experiencing and at risk of homelessness.

For Purpose – a social enterprise supporting Yfoundations with digital tools and website design and development.

Oasis Youth Support Services for hosting our General Meetings throughout the year and supporting our content development for the Good Practice Guidelines.

All the individual representatives of our member organisations and

stakeholders who participated in our working groups, steering committees and projects and guided us over the course of the year with their frontline knowledge, wisdom and insights, including:

- the Good Practice Guidelines Working Group
- the Commissioning Working Group
- participants in the Youth SHS Sector Funding Impact Monitoring 2026–2030 project
- the NDIS Working Group
- the national YHMD steering committee.

We wholeheartedly value and appreciate your commitment and contributions to supporting our work in strengthening the sector and ending child and youth homelessness

Government partners

Homes NSW
NSW Department of Communities and Justice
NSW Ministry of Health



Charity tick

Yfoundations is proud to be a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, and has the highest commitment to transparency, accountability and governance.





Yfoundations
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