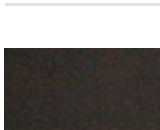


News > National > Federal Election

Yfoundations calls for national youth homelessness strategy to tackle growing problem

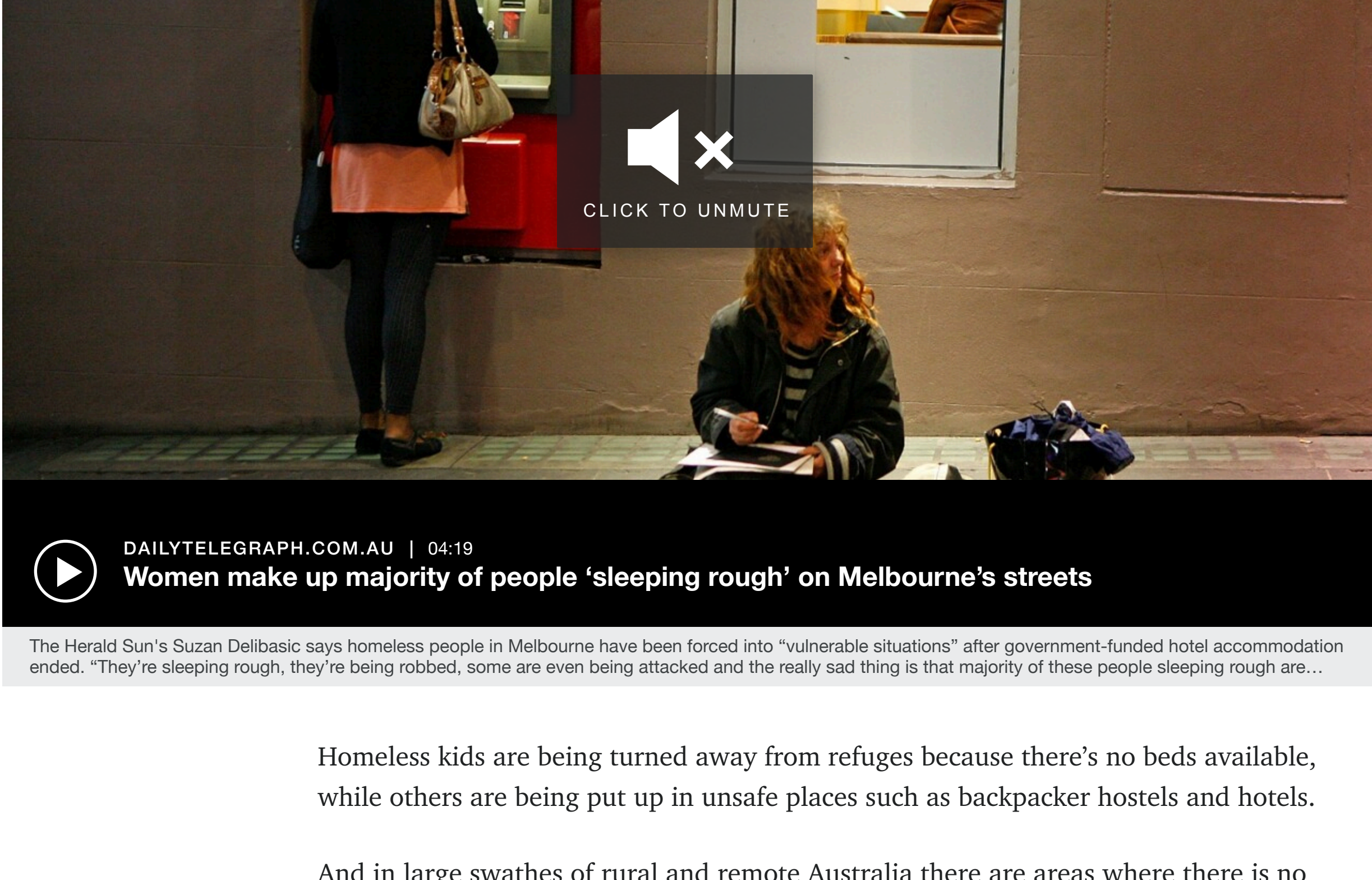
With 28,000 Australian children now officially homeless, services are facing unprecedented demand for help, while in some areas there is no accommodation at all.

 Julie Cross National Social Affairs Reporter

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The Herald Sun's Suzan Orlowski says homeless people in Melbourne have been forced into "vulnerable situations" after government-funded hotel accommodation ended. "They're sleeping rough, they're being robbed, some are even being attacked and the really sad thing is that majority of these people sleeping rough are..."

Homeless kids are being turned away from refuges because there's no beds available, while others are being put up in unsafe places such as backpacker hostels and hotels.

And in large swathes of rural and remote Australia there are areas where there is no accommodation at all for children, according to multiple state organisations.

It comes as homeless services say they are seeing unprecedented demand for their help.

Yfoundations CEO Pam Barker said there were 28,000 children currently without a home in Australia, accounting for a third of all homeless people.



Pam Barker, CEO for the peak body Yfoundations. Picture: supplied

The peak body is behind a petition calling for a federal government youth homelessness national strategy,

"No child should be homeless in Australia," Ms Barker said.

"No-one appears to be accountable, there are no federal government targets and a lack of funds to help solve this issue.

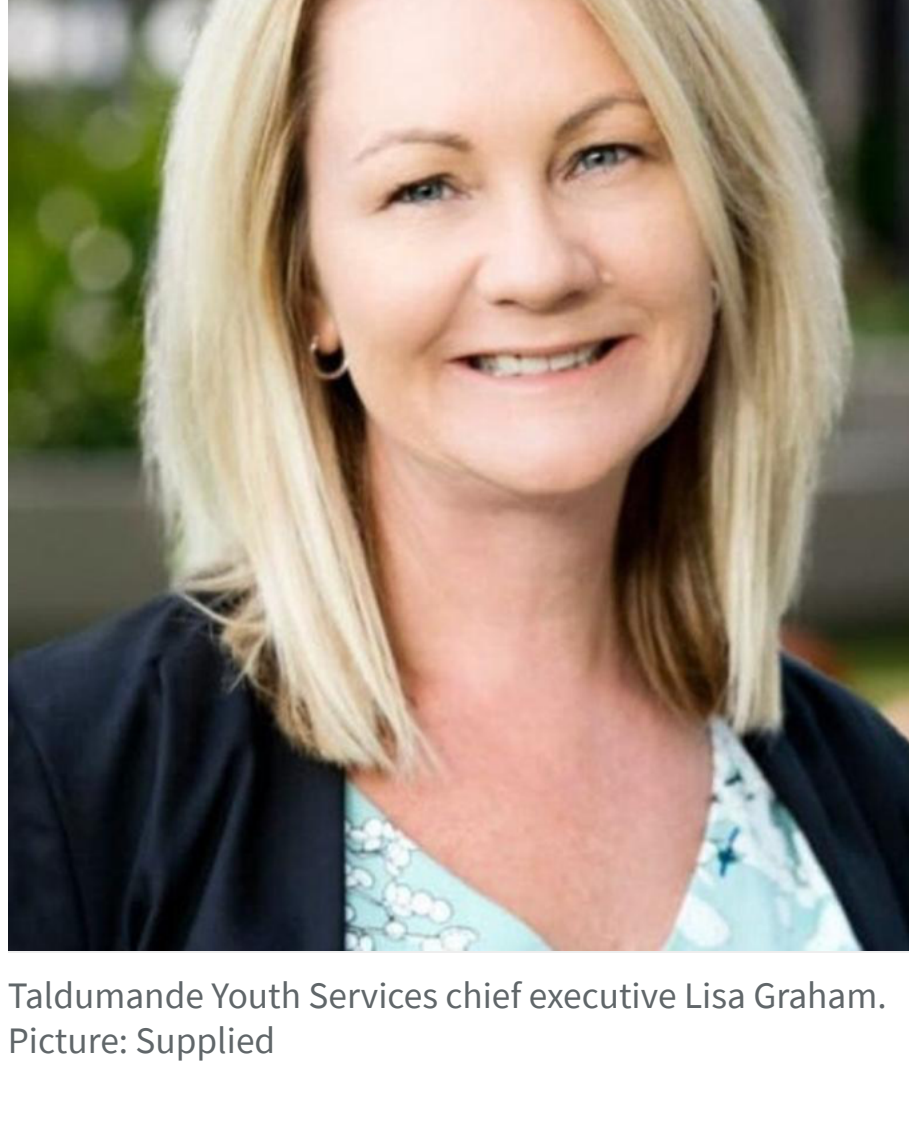
"We need a national plan."

Brisbane Youth Service chief executive Annemaree Callander said the number of young people seeking help had doubled in three years.

FROM OUR PARTNERS 07
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CEO of Brisbane Youth Service in Fortitude Valley, Annemaree Callander - Picture: Richard Walker



Taldumande Youth Services chief executive Lisa Graham. Picture: Supplied

The majority were couch-surfing or rough sleeping and often there were no beds available, even short term.

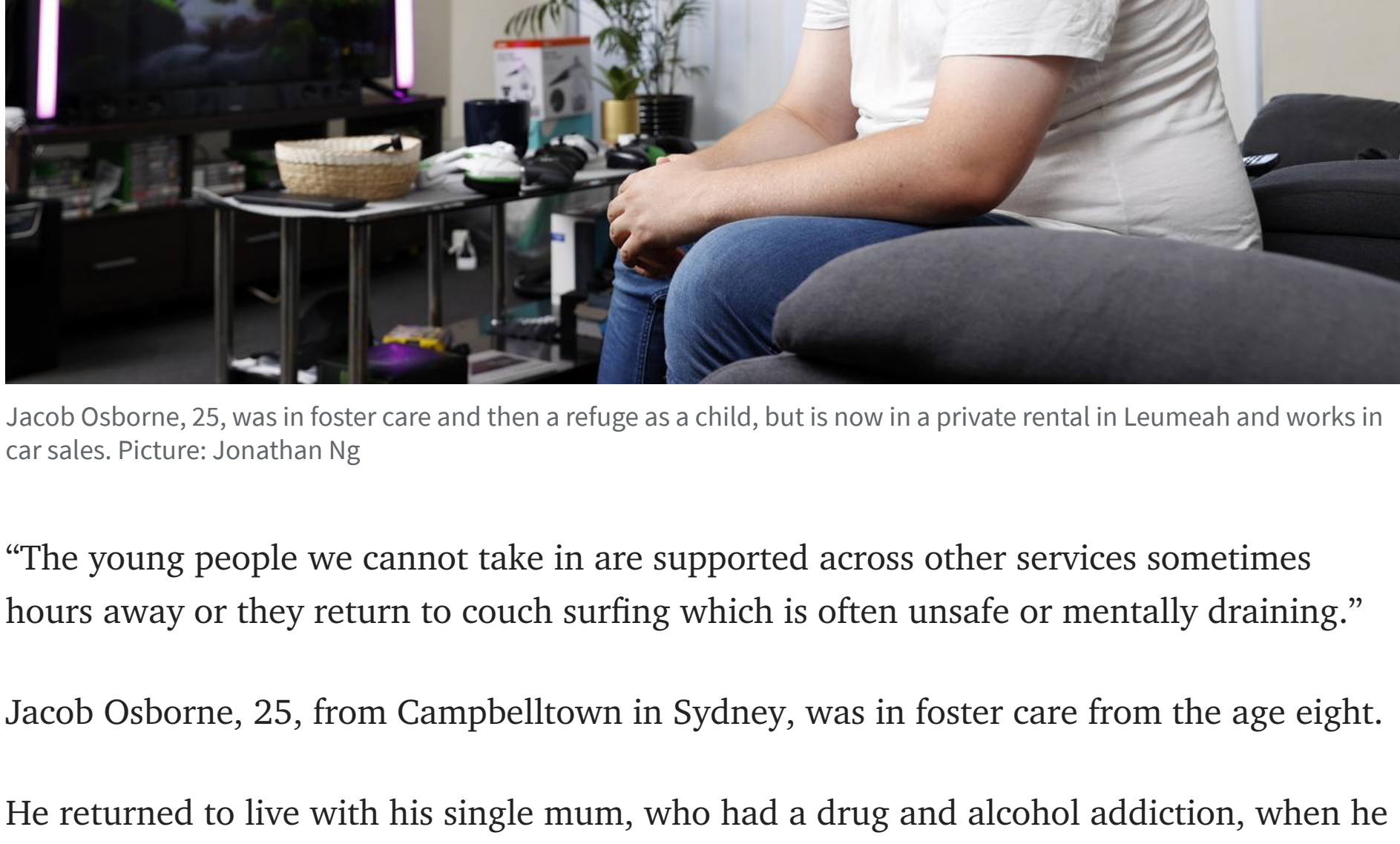
"There is a critical lack of housing options and this has been further exacerbated by the pandemic and more recently the floods in Brisbane," Ms Callander said.

"We have been relying on backpackers and hotels but these can be expensive and are often not safe options for young people or suitable for young families with children."

The problem was worse in rural areas, but even wealthy suburbs in the cities were turning children away.

One 70-bed service on Sydney's north shore was unable to find places for 240 kids in 2020/2021, compared with 114 in 2017/2018.

Taldumande Youth Services chief executive Lisa Graham, who runs the service in that area, said Australians needed to "address the shocking increase in the number of young people seeking support".



Jacob Osborne, 25, was in foster care and then a refugee as a child, but is now in a private rental in Leumeah and works in car sales. Picture: Jonathan Ng

"The young people we cannot take in are supported across other services sometimes hours away or they return to couch surfing which is often unsafe or mentally draining."

Jacob Osborne, 25, from Campbelltown in Sydney, was in foster care from the age eight.

He returned to live with his single mum, who had a drug and alcohol addiction, when he was 15, but she died shortly after.

He was found accommodation by a homeless service, a long way from his school, before being transferred closer.

"There's been lots of trials and tribulations," Mr Osborne, who is in car sales, said.

"It was scary at times."



The number of children seeking help from homeless organisations has increased.

After getting a full-time job and scrimping and saving he moved into private accommodation, where he also housed three of his older sister's children for a year after she also succumbed to substance abuse.

He was asked to permanently take on his niece, aged 10, because of a shortage of foster carers, but said he could not because he was already "struggling to pay the bills".

He said more needed to be done to help kids like his nieces and nephews who found themselves homeless, through no fault of their own.



Labor MP Jason Clare, address the media at a press conference. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Nikki Short

A Liberal spokesman said there already was already a national housing strategy around homelessness and youth homelessness was addressed specifically as a priority.

He said the Government provided around \$1.6 billion to states every year to tackle these issues.

Shadow Minister Housing and Homelessness Jason Clare said an Albanese Labor Government would create a \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund to build 30,000 social and affordable properties, with 4000 of those allocated to women and children fleeing domestic and family violence.

He said if Labor won the next election it would also develop and implement a national homelessness plan that would include a focus on youth homelessness.

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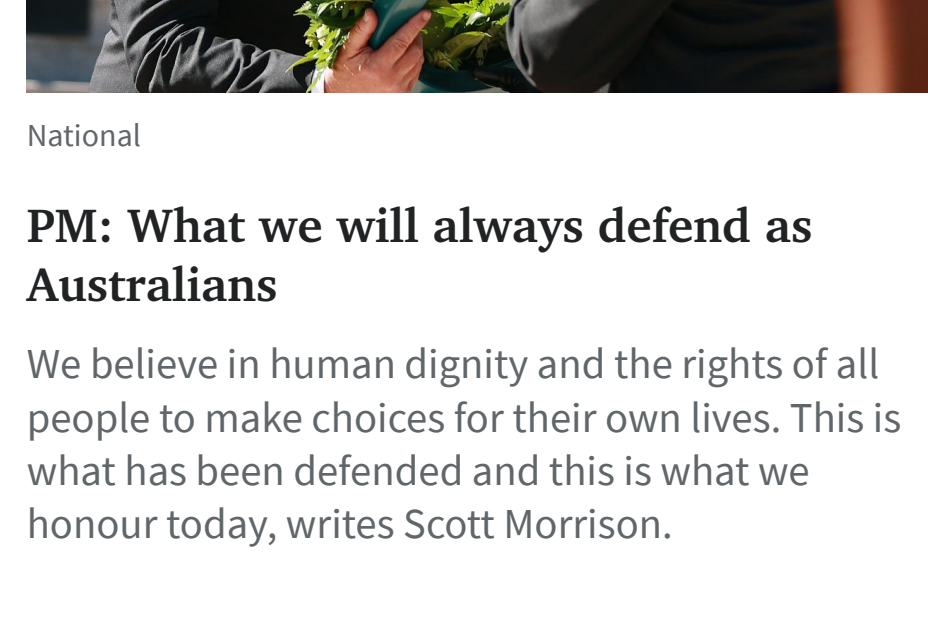
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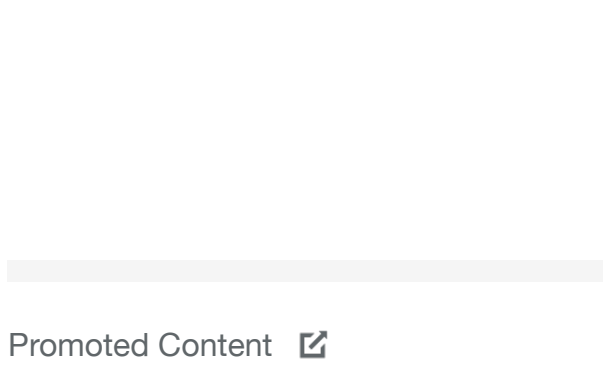
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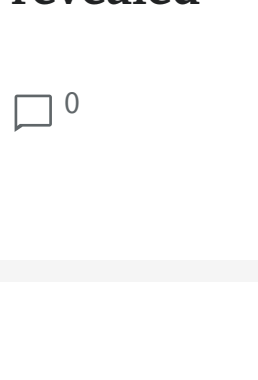
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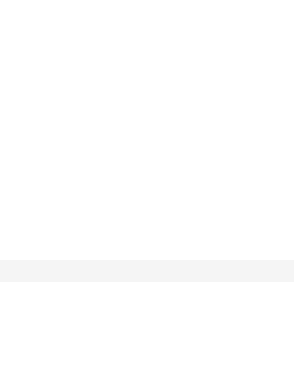
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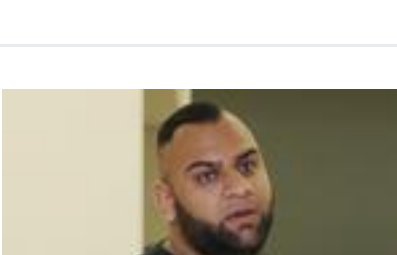
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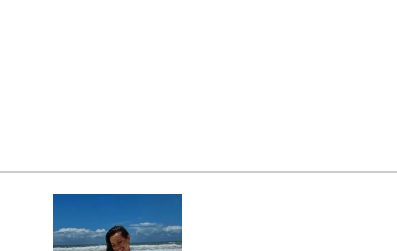
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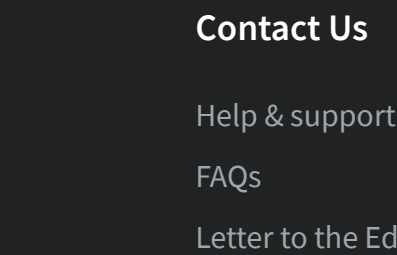
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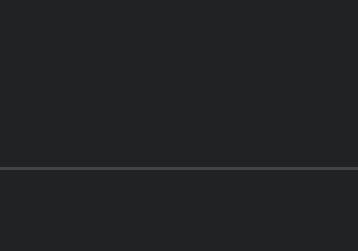
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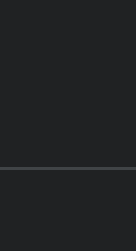
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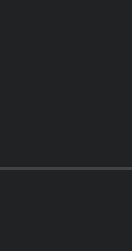
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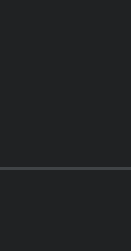
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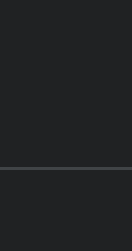
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 \$75

 \$64.50

 \$105

 \$99