

Media Release



Thursday 28 April 2016

World First Study: The Costs of Youth Homelessness

A world-first Australian study has shown that preventing young people from becoming homeless by strengthening and integrating school and youth services at a community level could save an estimated **\$626 million per year** across the youth justice and health services systems alone.

The Costs of Youth Homelessness in Australia (CYHA)— released on Thursday 28 April 2016 — shows that the cost to society, just from increased interactions with the health and criminal justice systems for young homeless people, exceeds the total annual cost of all homelessness services across Australia for people of all ages.

Conducted between 2011 and 2015 by leading researchers at Swinburne University in Victoria, Charles Sturt University NSW, and the University of Western Australia, the study involved a longitudinal survey and analysis of young homeless people's use of services to measure the financial and social costs of youth homelessness in Australia. Drawing on welfare economics, sociology and finance theory, it is the first study of its kind anywhere in the world.

It calls for a complete reform of youth homelessness policy in Australia, citing a number of innovative and successful 'early intervention' programs that, if rolled out nationally, would lead to millions of dollars in savings to the economy.

In 2014-15, 41,780 young people aged 15-24 years accessed homelessness services across Australia. **More than 17,787 of these young people received support and assistance from The Salvation Army Australia (Southern Territory)**. A significant number of these youth come to be homeless or are at risk of homelessness due to family violence. Without early intervention, homelessness results in significant health risks, an increased risk of interacting with the criminal justice system and, for many who are early school leavers, the possibility of life-long disadvantage.

The Salvation Army's Economic and Social Impact Survey (ESIS) further supports these findings. The 2015 report found that of the captured data for 2,864 children – 60% of parents were not able to afford 5 or more of their children's essential items, 65% of parents were not able to afford out of school activities, and 62% couldn't afford an internet connection. The report also shows that a significant percentage of those affected by family violence also experienced extreme housing stress (more information to follow in the 2016 report). Early intervention is key in preventing homelessness and disadvantage.

The complete *The Costs of Youth Homelessness in Australia (CYHA)* is available (see below). The 2016 Salvation Army 2016 ESIS report is due out in coming weeks.

-ENDS -

Major Brendan Nottle, an expert in the area of homelessness is available for interview and comment on the CYHA report, as are other contributors to the report.

For further information or to arrange interviews please contact:

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