

**Minister for Community Services
Linda Burney MP**



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**MEDIA RELEASE
HOMELESS SERVICE SUCCESSFULLY FINDING HOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

During Youth Homelessness Matters Day today, Minister for Community Services Linda Burney said the numbers of young people in NSW without a place to call home remains too high and tackling this issue continues to be a priority for the NSW Government.

Ms Burney said having a home is a human right, not a luxury.

"We know that each night, more than 11,000 young people in NSW are sleeping rough, couch surfing or living in crisis accommodation. The NSW Government is committed to reducing this number," Ms Burney said.

"This financial year over \$45 million of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) funding is going towards helping young homeless people. This program has already successfully kept thousands of young people off the streets and helped them return to stable accommodation.

"It is reassuring to know that about 75 per cent of the 12,000 young clients who use the program each year only need to use it once.

"This shows that supporting young people facing homelessness at the early stages is vitally important. If we help them quickly, they may not become entrenched in a desperate cycle of chronic homelessness and poverty.

"What is particularly concerning to me is that the largest single group of homeless young people are young women aged 15 to 19 years. In 2006/07, 4,140 young women in this age group used our services."

The NSW Government is tackling homelessness through a range of strategies. It is working closely with the Federal Government to develop a national strategy as part of the Commonwealth Government's White Paper process.

Through this process, NSW has committed to the Commonwealth's National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and National Partnerships on Homelessness, Social Housing and Indigenous Housing. The Commonwealth and States together are contributing \$800 million new funding over four years to address homelessness.

"Premier Rees has made a personal commitment to reducing homelessness. Our Government is preparing its first Homelessness Strategic Framework, in consultation with the not-for-profit community services sector," Ms Burney said.

"The Government has also set up the Nepean Youth Homeless Project to help young people who are sleeping rough. The project will help them address issues that led to their homelessness, find them a stable home, improve their health and social outcomes and give them better access to education, training and jobs."

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Ms Burney said young people become homeless for a range of reasons, frequently not related to income or social status.

“Half the young people getting help from our services said relationship problems with parents or step-parents and family breakdowns led to their homelessness,” she said.

“Over the past decade, the NSW Government has also invested heavily in a range of services to prevent the fundamental causes of youth homelessness such as drug and alcohol addictions and mental health problems.”

Mr Michael Coffey, Chief Executive Officer of Youth Accommodation Association (YAA) – the youth homeless peak of NSW – welcomed the NSW Government’s commitment to resourcing services supporting young people in crisis, towards a pathway out of homelessness.

“It is encouraging that Premier Nathan Rees and Minister Linda Burney show a real commitment to reducing youth homelessness,” he said.

“As the world economy shifts into economic gloom, we expect higher rates of unemployment and other economic pressures will put many more young people at risk of homelessness. We must build on the foundations of our work or homeless numbers will increase. The NSW Homelessness Plan and additional projects like the Nepean Youth Homeless Project are welcomed initiatives.”

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