

ASeTTS
Association for Services
to Torture and Trauma
Survivors

HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

the impact of homelessness
on newly arrived youth



Australian Government
Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

The homelessness prevention program for newly arrived youth project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs under the National Homelessness Strategy.



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Hidden homelessness: the impact of refugee

homelessness on newly arrived youth

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List of acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASeTTS	Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
CaLD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds
CMYI	Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
DHW	Department of Housing and Works WA
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship WA
FaHCSIA	Australian Department of Families, Housing, Communities and Indigenous Affairs
TPV	Temporary protection visa
PPV	Permanent protection visa
PTSD	Post traumatic stress disorder
IEC	Intensive English Centres
IHSS	Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy
NAYSS	Newly Arrived Youth Support Service
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SGP	Settlement Grants Program
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations Humanitarian Commission for Refugees
YSAAP	Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

1. Executive Summary

This project was undertaken to assess the extent, nature and impact of homelessness among young people aged between 16 and 25 years, who have been resettled in Australia through the humanitarian program, and been in the country for less than five years,

1.1 The Issue

Homelessness is experienced by many different groups of young people in contemporary Australia. The terms ‘homelessness’ and ‘at risk of being homeless’ require further exploration if we are to gain an understanding of the myriad of meanings they represent to youth and service providers alike. There are an extensive number of factors that contribute to youth homelessness in Australia, many of which are well established in the literature. Newly arrived youth, however, present additional concerns. In considering the elements contributing to homelessness in their case, it is imperative to remember the historical context that has led to their arrival in Australia, language and cultural differences and their adolescent developmental stage. The intersection of these elements impacts on these young people’s ability to secure accommodation and participate to their full potential in Australian society.

1.2 Overview

The study drew together the knowledge and experiences of newly arrived youth, stakeholders, service providers, community members and secondary sources to address the following questions:

- What do we know about homelessness among newly arrived youth? How should we understand the phenomenon?
- What is the extent of homelessness among newly arrived youth? What is their risk of becoming homeless?
- What are the factors contributing to homelessness among newly arrived youth?
- What are the torture and trauma issues faced by newly arrived youth?
- What are some of the future directions towards preventing homelessness among newly arrived youth?

At the end of the main data collection stage (undertaken through consultations and focus groups), four workshops (two for service providers and two for newly arrived youth) were carried out. Their main aims were to disseminate the findings, draw on participants’

knowledge and experience in interpreting the data, and promote considerations relating to best practice in the case of service providers. Finally, a brochure on effectively supporting and engaging newly arrived youth was developed to distribute to service providers working with this group of youth.

1.3 Findings

The study found that:

- Secondary homelessness - that is, homelessness experienced by people who move from one temporary accommodation to another - was the main form of homelessness experienced by newly arrived youth. This included “couch surfing” - that is, the practice of sleeping in the homes of acquaintances or other helpful people on a rotating basis. Primary homelessness - sleeping rough on the streets or in improvised dwellings - where it had occurred had only been for a short term.
- Though numbers varied with individual crisis accommodation centres, there had been a steady increase of newly arrived youth in crisis accommodation services generally over the past few years.
- The main causes of homelessness were identified as family conflict and relationship difficulties, shortage of private and public housing, financial constraints and unavailability of other resources.
- The disruption of schooling, overcrowding in small units with the risk of more evictions, and the triggering of past traumatic experiences were identified as the major impacts of homelessness on the target group.

1.4 Recommendations

All participants were provided with the opportunity to propose future directions and considerations for the prevention of homeless among newly arrived youth. These fall into three groups: considerations for FaHCSIA and government more generally; considerations for service providers; and considerations for community members and leaders.

Considerations for FaHCSIA

Education and awareness of available services

The consultations and workshops identified the need for:

- Specifically designed orientation programs for newly arrived youth to equip them with the skills and knowledge to access housing information and support.

- More appropriate publications, training resources and workshops focused towards homelessness prevention for newly arrived youth.

Funding

- It is requested that FaHCSIA continue and extend its long term funding for early intervention programs for newly arrived youth. The WA Newly Arrived Youth Support Service (NAYSS), funded by FaHCSIA, is widely recognised as a good example of a culturally appropriate early intervention program and has been in high demand among many service providers. However, it is limited to servicing one geographical area in the northern metro area of Perth.
- The cultural and religious mores of many newly arrived youth forbid the sharing of accommodation between male and female clients who are not related. Consequently it is requested that government provide funding for the establishment of gender specific crisis accommodation.
- It is suggested that government and other funding bodies consider incorporating “best practice” service delivery models in their funding agreements (see below under ‘considerations for service providers’)

Further research

- Regular ongoing research is necessary to evaluate the extent of homelessness within newly arrived youth over time and potential funding from FaHCSIA could be explored. We also recommend that longitudinal research be undertaken on the coping mechanisms of newly arrived youth who have experienced torture and trauma.

Considerations for service providers

Service delivery:

- It is recommended that service providers adopt proactive and flexible service delivery models to support newly arrived youth with complex needs - in particular, outreach services that would assist with the navigation of the system and directly work with family members as well as the young people themselves. It is suggested that government and other funding bodies could incorporate these service delivery models in their funding agreements.
- It is recognised that there are a number of youth networking groups that play a vital role in raising awareness and dealing with issues faced by newly arrived youth.

However, there is a need for a regular state wide youth networking meeting with sound representation from all services within the sector, to share information, lobby relevant government bodies, and where possible, share available resources and expertise. It is recommended that efforts be made by all service providers working with newly arrived youth to establish this networking group.

Professional development and training

- Crisis accommodation services staff are highly skilled; nevertheless it is vital to ensure that the staff are culturally competent and understand the complex needs of newly arrived youth. It is recommended that regular training and professional development for crisis accommodation workers be provided by ASeTTS or other relevant agencies with well developed training modules on working with newly arrived youth as part of ongoing work force development.

Data collection

- To effectively establish planning and implementation processes, accurate data concerning the number of newly arrived youth accessing housing or accommodation services is essential. It is recommended that all service providers regularly collect such data. This data should consist of the country of origin; visa type (TPV or PPV); kind of homelessness - primary, secondary, tertiary, or at risk; length of time spent in Australia and other relevant demographics. It is acknowledged that this may create more work for staff but it will enhance service delivery and the development of strategies for the prevention of homelessness. The data should be used in policy development and improving service delivery.

Considerations for community members/leaders

- Community members, elders and religious leaders play a vital role in the prevention of homelessness through mediating between young people and their families. They often work long hours with no pay. It is recommended that strong working partnerships between these individuals and service providers be formed in dealing with homelessness issues and where possible financial remuneration for their time and knowledge be provided to them. This should predominately be undertaken by the service providers with financial input from the relevant funding bodies both state and federal.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background to the project

Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivor's (ASeTTS) Homelessness Prevention Program for newly arrived youth commenced in July 2007 with the overall aims of:

- Developing information and understanding on the issues that impact on the occurrence of homelessness within newly arrived youth
- Developing links and where possible collaboration between service delivery among newly arrived youth and mainstream services
- Identifying and promoting good practice and service delivery models to enhance homelessness policies and programs
- Increasing awareness of the torture and trauma issues experienced by newly arrived youth.

This report presents the overall outcomes of the project. In addition to the discussion of homelessness, it highlights torture and trauma experiences and their impact on this group of young people. The report has been titled 'Hidden Homelessness' to emphasise the nature of homelessness faced by newly arrived youth.

2.2 Outline of the process

To achieve the above aims, the project was implemented in a three-pronged approach.

Stage 1: Research and data collection

This entailed consultations with youth, parents, community members and relevant service providers. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What is known about homelessness among newly arrived youth? How should we understand the phenomenon?
- What is the extent of homelessness among newly arrived youth? What is their risk of becoming homeless?
- What are the factors contributing to homelessness among newly arrived youth?
- What are the torture and trauma issues faced by newly arrived youth?

- What are some future directions towards preventing homelessness among newly arrived youth?

The findings of this stage, which constitute the bulk of this report, provided important information and building blocks to undertake the remaining two stages of the project.

Stage 2: Design and delivery of information, workshops and training modules

This involved the designing and delivery of four workshops. Two of these targeted service providers and two, newly arrived youth. Their main aims were to disseminate the findings, draw on participants' knowledge and experience in interpreting the data, and promote considerations relating to best practice in the case of service providers

Stage 3: Developing a brochure

A brochure on effectively engaging and supporting newly arrived youth at risk of homelessness was developed. This will be distributed to all service providers working with newly arrived youth. Contact details for community organizations for support and referrals in Perth metropolitan area have also been provided.

2.3 Definitions

- In this report unless otherwise indicated the term ***newly arrived youth*** is used to refer to young people aged 16 to 25 years who have been resettled in Australia through the humanitarian program and have been in the country for less than 5 years.
- The term ***mainstream*** is used to refer to young people below the age of 25 years and born in Australia. It is also used in relation to services that target the wider community and do not necessarily provide specialist services to the CaLD community or humanitarian entrants specifically.
- The definitions of ***homelessness*** follows those stipulated in the national homelessness strategy.
 - Primary Homelessness: Experienced by people without conventional accommodation (e.g. sleeping rough and in improvised dwellings)
 - Secondary Homelessness: Experienced by people who move from one temporary accommodation to another (friends places, youth shelters, temporary accommodation)

- Tertiary Homelessness: Experienced by people staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards (some boarding houses or caravan homes).
- At risk of homelessness: that which is experienced by those in a home that is unsafe, for example where there is threat of violence.
- The term *couch surfing* refers to the practice of sleeping in the homes of acquaintances or other helpful people on a rotating basis.

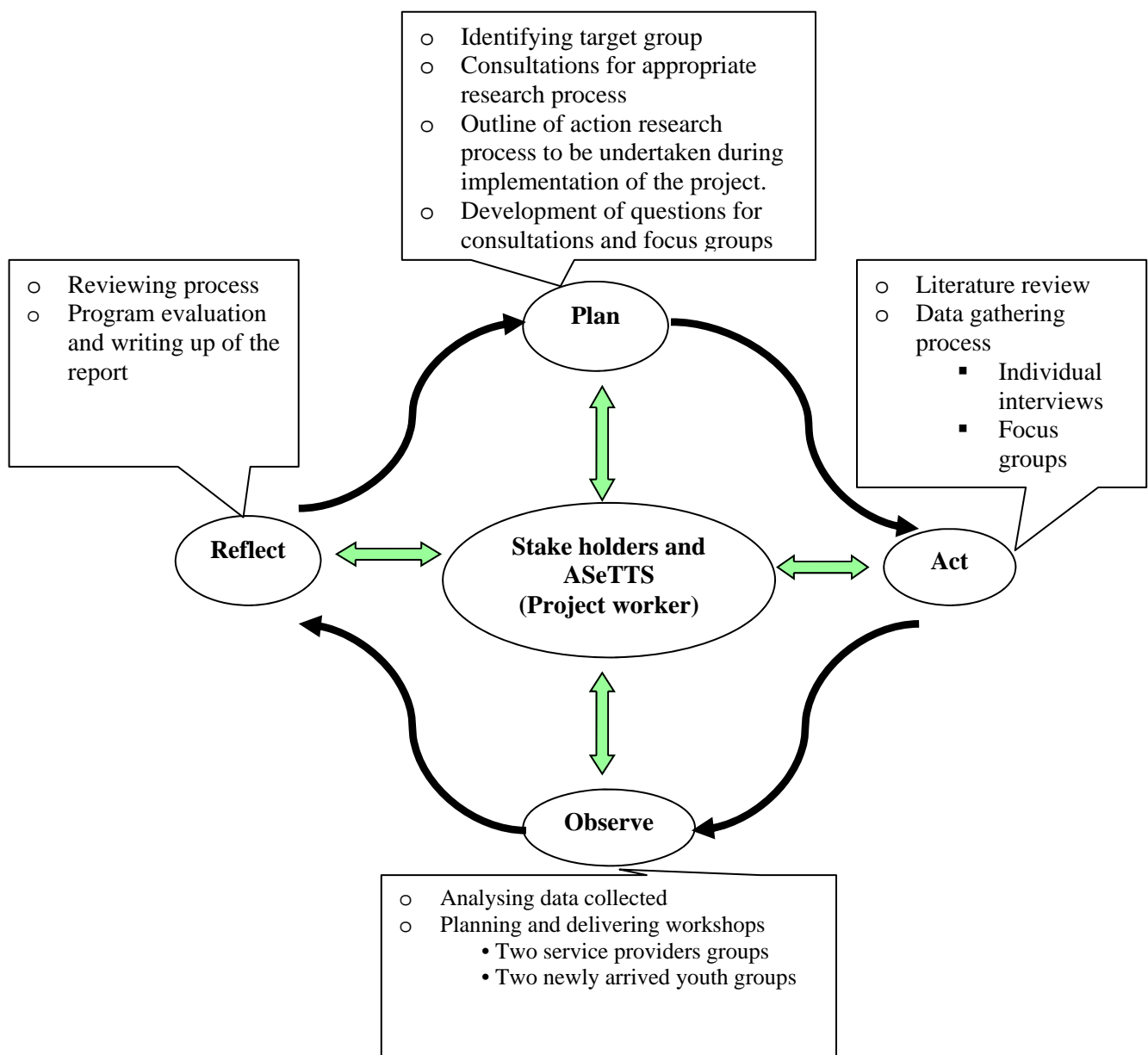
We emphasise that homeless is not always just about housing, it is also missing a stable connection to a network of friends, family and the broader community.

3. Methodology

The project adopted an action research methodology to engage relevant stakeholders in collating data and presenting future directions and considerations for the prevention of homelessness within the primary target group. In addition to the primary data collection phase a total of four workshops, two for service providers and two for newly arrived youth, were held to disseminate the findings of the research and discuss their implications.

The following diagram illustrates the action research cycle implemented in the study.

3.1 Action research cycle



3.2 Planning stage

The initial phase of the project was to identify the target group and other stakeholders, develop research and discussion questions for the collection of data, and outline the action research process to be undertaken during the implementation of the project. This was done in consultation with the NAYSS coordinator, ASeTTS Community Programs and research managers, Muslim Women's Support Centre program manager and three other agencies specifically working with humanitarian entrants. With the framework for the project clearly defined, an implementation plan was developed to achieve the project goals.

3.3 Methods of data collection

The data collection process of the study involved:

- Primary data collection through eight focus groups, fourteen individual interviews, and three agency visits (crisis accommodation services and a reconnect service).
- A comprehensive literature review.

All efforts were made to ensure that the process was culturally appropriate and sensitive to the lives and experiences of all involved. Some interviews were conducted in the original language of the participants and transcribed and later translated into English. Consent was sought from all the stakeholders including the Deputy Principal of the IEC where some of the youth focus groups and interviews were undertaken. This was done through verbal and written explanation of the project. A copy of the participant information guide was issued to all participants. Each participant was given the option of withdrawing from the study at anytime. Privacy and confidentiality of the participants was emphasised. Real names and any other information that would identify the participants are not used in this report.

Remuneration packs were given to parents and newly arrived youth who participated in the individual interviews as an in-kind payment for their time and contributions. This was in recognition of the time and in tribute to the fact that they are the experts of their own personal experiences. Their contributions were invaluable to the study and the project as a whole.

The transcribed interviews and focus groups were thematically analysed to identify a core category and subcategories of the data collated.

3.4 Participants in this study

A total of 113 stakeholders (newly arrived youth, service providers and community members) participated in the study. Broad eligibility criterion were used to ensure that valuable participants were not excluded. This meant that both newly arrived youth who had faced homelessness and those who had not directly faced it were involved in the process.

Table 1: Study participants (newly arrived youth, community members and service providers)

Participants	Number	Research technique
Newly Arrived Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Male ○ Female ○ Homeless youth 	38 26 6	Focus groups Focus groups Individual interviews
Service Providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth Workers ○ SGP Workers ○ Transition Accommodation Worker ○ Youth Service Manager ○ Officer from DHW ○ Housing Advocacy Workers (SAAP) ○ Student Support Worker ○ Community Liaison worker ○ NAYSS Worker 	6 3 2 2 2 5 1 1 1	Focus group and individual interviews
Community members and leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth Leader ○ Iraqi Community ○ Community Leaders ○ Parents (with children at risk or have been homeless) ○ Other community members 	1 6 3 3 5	Focus groups and individual interviews
Agency visits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crisis accommodation Reconnect 	2 1	Interviews Interview
Total	113	

3.5 Profile of all stakeholders

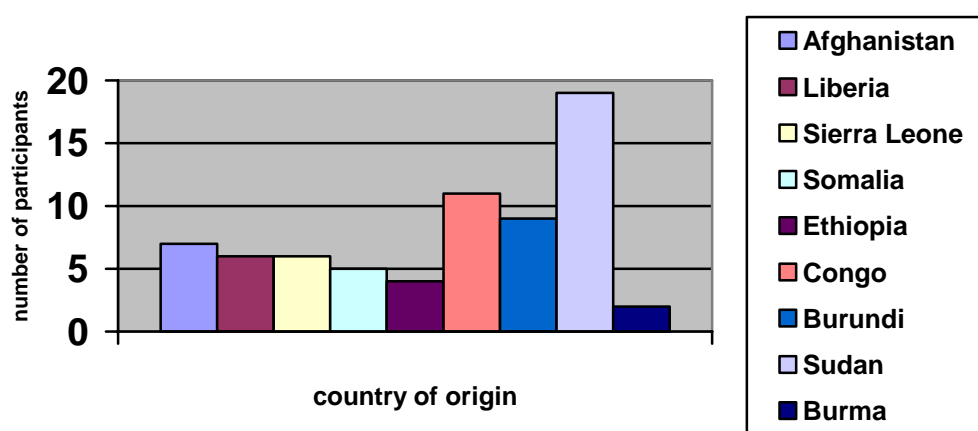
Newly arrived youth

While Australian Research Alliance for children and youth (ARACY) (2007) defines as a young person as aged 12-25. This study focused on younger people aged between 16-25. This was by no means assuming that anyone under 16 was not at risk or even homeless, but in recognition of the state's responsibility to take under its wing anyone below the age of 15 as a ward of the state.

A total of 70 newly arrived youth participated in the study. This included 27 females and 43 males. They were all between 16 and 25 years of age. In addition all participants had been in Australia for less than 4 years. They originated from Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Ethiopia, Congo, Burundi, Sudan and Burma.

Below is a graph illustrating the number of newly arrived youth who participated from each of the countries identified above.

Figure 1: Profile of study participants (Newly arrived youth)



Participants were sourced from the ASeTTS' NAYSS service, a post compulsory Intensive English Centre, and by individual referrals from other agencies working with newly arrived youth.

Community members and leaders

Community members were selected on the basis of their relationship with their respective communities through country of birth and their ethnicity as identified by themselves and in their visas. Participants were encouraged not to speak on behalf of their own communities but about their own experience within that community. This was in recognition that some

comments and views did not necessarily represent the views of all other members of that community. However, community leaders such as the chairpersons or religious leaders who were chosen to represent their respective communities spoke on their behalf.

Service providers

A total of 23 service providers from government and non-government agencies participated in the focus groups. There was an emphasis on sourcing workers from crisis accommodation services and early intervention programs. The groups represented were youth workers, transitional housing workers, newly arrived youth support service, crisis accommodation workers and housing advocacy workers. A representative from the Department of Housing and Works (DHW) and Centrelink also participated in the project. Another 15 service providers from the same field were invited but opted not to participate. This was mainly because of additional responsibilities in their specific roles and time limitations.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Refugees

A refugee, or the status of refugees, as defined by the United Nations Convention (1951), is:

'A person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, membership of a particular social, or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.'

In 1954 the Australian Government signed the United Nations (UN) Convention and subsequently ratified the UN Protocol in 1973. This committed the country to settling a certain number of refugees each year. The fluctuation of international politics and conflicts has caused shifts in the profile and origin of humanitarian entrants arriving in Australia. This in turn affects the settlement requirements for humanitarian entrants and their settling communities. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship reported that there were 2,120 humanitarian entrants from countries within Africa between 1 July 2007 and 31 January 2008, which signifies a shift away from humanitarian entrants from the former Yugoslavia. Such changes in the composition of humanitarian entrants is a significant consideration when providing services to meet settlement needs given the distinct differences between countries of origin, cultures and language (Dept of Immigration and Citizenship Information Sheet 2008; Olliff cited in Couch and Francis 2006).

4.2 Homelessness and youth

Homelessness made a formidable impact on Australian Government reports and policies in the 1980s following the publication of the 1989 Burdekin Report. Since then Chamberlain and McKenzie have made important contributions to these issues, through further research including a census of school students (12-18 years) that were homeless. Through their work and data collected, they estimated 'the homeless population (aged 12 to 24) increased from 40,000 to 55,000 in 1991, then to 100,000 in 1994' (Fopp 2003).

While youth homelessness is an issue for all Australian communities, the evidence suggests that newly arrived youth are likely to experience greater barriers in accessing support services, namely housing and accommodation services, than mainstream youth. Research regarding the percentage of newly arrived youth who access or attempt to access Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Programs (YSAAP) and services is limited. However, research conducted by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI, 2005) indicated that out of 434 refugees (Permanent Protection Visa (PPV) holders and Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders), approximately one third had reported being homeless at some point since arriving in Australia. AHURI also suggested that PPV holders generally move three times in the first year, whilst TPV holders commonly move four times.

The proportion of young people caught in this situation is growing. Olliff and Mohamed (2007) reported that newly arrived youth of less than 30 years of age made up 59% of the humanitarian entrants in 1997 and 75% in 2006. In addition, service providers and youth workers speak of the struggles and barriers experienced by newly arrived youth when accessing accommodation services. Data such as this indicate that increasing numbers of newly arrived youth in Australia are homeless, or at risk of being homeless, and that further exploration and clarification of the contributing elements is required (Couch and Francis 2006; Francis and Cornfoot 2007).

4.3 Classification of homelessness

It is critical to recognise that homelessness may characterise anything from both a single period for an individual to a reoccurring situation a person may oscillate to and from throughout their life (Ransley and Drummond 2001).

The Council to Homeless Persons describes a homeless person as someone who:

'is without a conventional home and lacks the economic and social supports that a home normally affords. She/he is often cut off from the support of relatives and friends, she/he has few independent resources and often has not immediate means and, in some cases has little prospect of self-support' (Council to Homeless Persons 2000)

Chamberlain and McKenzie, leading professionals in the field of homelessness research, have suggested the following classification of homelessness:

Primary – Literal homelessness or rooflessness. This constitutes a person without conventional shelter. Examples include: living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in buildings, cars or improvised dwellings for shelter.

Secondary – This refers to people in temporary accommodation with no other secure housing elsewhere. This may be exhibited by: staying with other households (friends or relatives), couch surfing, entering boarding houses on a short-term basis, staying in emergency accommodation such as refuges, hostels, and night shelters.

Tertiary - Occupants of single rooms in private boarding houses that live there on a long-term basis (3 months or more). They are considered homeless because the accommodation does not have a minimum standard – no own bathroom, kitchen, a separate room for eating, sleeping and secure tenure by lease. (Chamberlain and McKenzie 2001)

4.4 Factors contributing to homelessness for newly arrived youth

There are a number of general or primary issues that contribute to homelessness amongst all youth, or place them at risk of being homeless. These include unemployment, low income, limited public and low cost housing, parent/adolescent conflict and family breakdown. For newly arrived youth these concerns can be exacerbated by past experiences, the migration process and resettlement (O’Sullivan 2006).

The circumstances leading to resettlement in Australia under the Humanitarian Program will have involved major disruptions in the young peoples’ lives. Couch and Francis (2006) and Ransley and Drummond (2006) suggest that, in comparison to mainstream Australian youths, newly arrived youths are noticeably disadvantaged by refugee experiences and the resettlement process. They are likely to have witnessed war and torture, fled from their own country to live as unauthorised immigrants in another country and lived as a refugee in their own country or in a refugee camp. These occurrences can entail extended episodes of interrupted schooling, resettlement within a family grouping that has survived similar events, and arrival in Australia without core family members. Ransley and Drummond (2006, p12) stress that these experiences ‘have a distinct impact on adolescent development and the transition to independence that requires specialised responses from the community’. In

addition, there are the implications of the fact that their first destination or point of refuge may have been an Australian detention centre prior to accessing housing within the community. These events, necessary in their attempts to secure their safety, are extremely traumatising and add to the inherent difficulties they experience in attempting to resettle in Australia. All this increases their risk of homelessness (Couch and Francis 2006; O'Sullivan 2006; Ransley and Drummond 2001).

A recent newspaper article, *Refugees Caught in Poor Underbelly of Boom City* (*West Australian*, March 25 2008, p9), reported that the WA property boom has caused a new underclass in Perth. Significantly, it claimed that 'humanitarian refugees are becoming unwitting new members of this underclass, marginalised by cultural differences and becoming increasingly isolated in Perth's northern suburbs'. In it, an adult female humanitarian entrant described how: "People don't want to let their houses to a large family, particularly if these people are of a different colour, different race, can't speak English and haven't got a job".

Ransley and Drummond (2001) identified societal, economic and cultural barriers as among the main causes contributing to homelessness for newly arrived youth. These structural inequities include limited affordable housing, restricted access to affordable housing, unemployment and poorly paid employment, low-income support and poverty. In addition, public housing is culturally inappropriate for most humanitarian entrants' families in terms of the size of the house. O'Neil (cited in Brough et al 2003, p196) asserts that difficulties in resettlement have 'less to do with change per se and more to do with the political and economic structures which constrain individual and community attempts to construct meaningful and rewarding social environments'.

Additional elements increasing the occurrence of homelessness or the risk of being homeless for newly arrived youth include the breakdown of family and social networks, social exclusion and discrimination, poor health, mental illness and substance abuse. These problems are compounded by difficulties in accessing services. In their research on refugee young people and homelessness in Victoria, Ransley and Drummond (2001) as well as Couch and Francis (2006), established that newly arrived youth experience greater barriers in accessing services and navigating their way around the service systems. Their difficulties included language/communication barriers, limited understanding about the service system,

lack of knowledge about the services available, and problems in understanding processes such as waiting lists.

4.5 The impact of homelessness on newly arrived youth

For newly arrived youths, any type of homelessness reduces their standard of living, impacting on them and their family, and their ability to thrive in a country, culture and language that is foreign. It is critical to take into account how the combination of these elements has the potential to affect their future. Olliff (2007, p1) highlights the risk for young refugee people who face social exclusion and disconnection, maintaining that the consequences include 'homelessness, family breakdown, poor health, crime, drug and alcohol use and other social problems'. Couch and Francis (2006) argue that addressing these issues now is likely to assist in preventing future problems for minority groups by decreasing their experience of ongoing identity and social exclusion struggles, and by increasing their capacity to participate fully in Australian society (Couch and Francis 2006).

Identity is related to self-determination, autonomy, participation and the right to full and active citizenship (Couch and Francis 2006). If citizenship is a set of rights and entitlements, against which individuals formulate their sense of who they are, what they deserve, and what they hope for, then barriers to it, as experienced by newly arrived youth, leads to social exclusion (Dalton et al 1996). This can occur on a group or community as well as an individual basis. Cook and Marjoribanks (2005, p8) suggest that social exclusion can be said to occur 'when individuals or areas experience linked problems, such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and/or family breakdown.'

Concerns for the future for newly arrived youth and their families has been recognised by the Federal Government in their 'Review of Settlement Services' where it is acknowledged that:

Without early, effective intervention, there is a risk that the initial disadvantages of humanitarian entrants and some of the more 'at risk' family arrivals could become entrenched. Over the longer-term, a combination of interrelated problems such as unemployment, continuing reliance on income support, health issues and physical and social isolation can create a cumulative effect on social and economic exclusion from mainstream Australian society. (Commonwealth of Australia 2003,pg 320-1)

Having emphasised these problems, it is also critical to recognise the valuable role newly arrived youth have already fulfilled and will continue to fulfil in Australian society. This is in recognition of their ability to survive and participate despite the obstacles and challenges they have confronted before their arrival in Australia and on top of this, the experiences associated with their resettlement.

4.5 Considerations for addressing homeless issues for newly arrived youth

The increase in young persons coming to Australia suggests an increase in the need for services that support the resettlement process for youth. However, Oliff and Mohamed (2007, p4) describe how service providers, in their submission to the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (2005-2006), reported a 'lack of youth focus in the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) program', emphasising that 'the family-focused assessment without specific focus on young people means that their needs are often not recognised at an early stage'.

Further considerations are highlighted by Aly and Gaba (2007), who suggest the lack of cross-cultural awareness and understanding of humanitarian issues by some service providers is an issue for newly arrived youth. This is despite the fact that the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994* (No. 162) states that services 'should be provided in a way that respects clients' cultural backgrounds and beliefs'. In consideration of this, *No Place to Go* recommends that there be services that focus on the cultural specifics and dynamics of newly arrived youth.

Ransley and Drummond (2001, p13) argue that the incorporation of essential services for newly arrived youth such as education, employment and training services 'must be an integral part of housing and settlement services in order to assist them to establish new lives'. To facilitate this they recommend that specialised youth support workers be employed at English language centres, schools and adult migrant English programs. The purpose of this is to ensure that the services are meeting their needs and to assess any risks of homelessness and to prevent homelessness from occurring.

In summary, this review of the literature highlights that homelessness and the risk of being homeless are strong possibilities for newly arrived youth. The resettlement experience can lead to homelessness issues that subsequently impact on a variety of elements in their lives.

The following section details the specific issues raised by the newly arrived youth and stakeholders who participated in this study and explores some of the issues identified above on the basis of their knowledge and experiences.

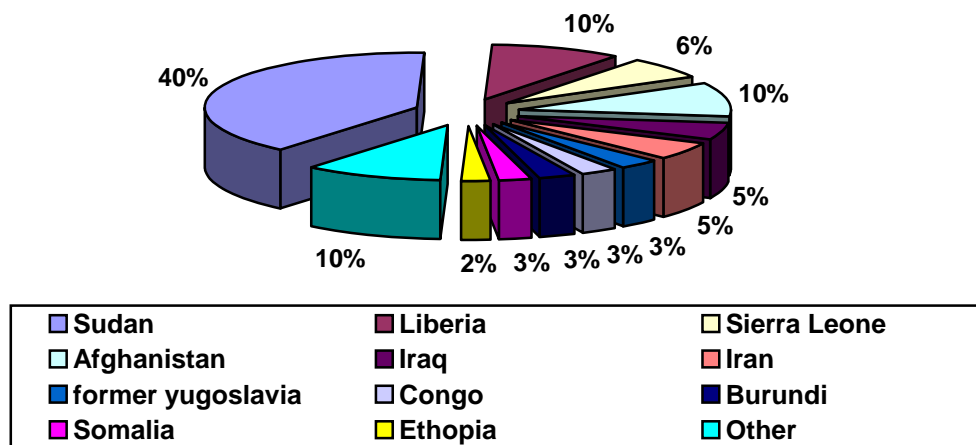
5. The Study and its Findings

The findings described here are a result of the interviews and focus groups described in the Methodology Section of this Report.

5.1 Composition of newly arrived youth population

In order to better understand the impact of homelessness on newly arrived youth it is important to understand their demographic composition in Western Australia. Between 2002 and 2007, 1640 humanitarian entrants aged 16-24 were resettled in Western Australia. The young people originated from 34 countries with the majority arriving from Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, former Yugoslavia, Congo, Burundi, Somalia and Ethiopia (DIAC, 2007).

Figure 2: Newly arrived youth resettled in Western Australia 2002-2007



Through the literature review and analysis of the data collected, it became evident that there are many issues around homelessness and resettlement shared by all newly arrived youth. It emerged that there are two distinct sub-groups within this population - namely, *unaccompanied* and *accompanied* youth. These groups, though experiencing similar issues in some respects, face distinct differences in other areas.

Unaccompanied youth

These are young people who have been resettled in Australia with no parents, guardians or close relative able or willing to take care of them. This category also includes unaccompanied minors (under 18) and youth (over 18) who have parental responsibilities and full guardianship of their younger siblings. Often the initial separation would have been as a result of conscription of the young person in to the army or escape from war or other traumatic situations. However, other separations take place in the initial countries of the refugee.

“I am 25years old and take care of my four siblings all less than 18 years. When our application for resettlement to Australia was successful my mother refused to come saying that she was very old to go to a western Country. She gave me her blessing and asked me to take good care of my siblings.”

(Sudanese, Male, 25yearst)

In our study, 12 newly arrived youth fell into this category.

Accompanied youth

Unlike the unaccompanied youth, these young people have been resettled with their biological parents or guardians. This category also includes minors (under 18) and youth who have been resettled with their extended family members or unrelated guardians. In many of the new and emerging communities originally from collective societies the raising of a relative, a friend’s child or someone you met at the refugee camp is a common practice.

“In my community I know many families that are in full guardianship of children that are not biologically theirs. This is very common in my community. In our culture my friends or relatives child is my child.”

Religious and community leader (Congolese community)

In our study 44 newly arrived youth fell into this category.

5.2 Torture and trauma issues among newly arrived youth

During the research consultations participants from the community emphasised that many newly arrived youth had experienced situations that would be considered acutely distressing to all people, regardless of age. They highlighted the need for service providers and other members of the community to have a general understanding and appreciation of these experiences and the influence they had on the young people and their families. There were no specific questions on torture and trauma directly targeting newly arrived youth, however many referred to their past experiences in the discussions.

.....many of our children..... what they have seen no parent would wish for their children to see. Some were soldiers trained on how to use guns and very often used them. Some young people were given drugs and forced in to the militia.

Parent and community member (Congolese community)

Trauma or a traumatic event is defined as an incident outside the range of ordinary human experience that causes profound stress (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). The impact of traumatic events and experiences varies from person to person and may be experienced as an individual or in a group setting (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). The traumatic experiences relevant to this group include:

- Imprisonment and torture
- Witnessing of death squads and mass murder
- Disappearances
- Forceful conscription into the army
- Persistent and long-term political repression, deprivation of human rights and harassment
- Removal of shelter, forced displacement from home and perilous flight or escape
- Separation from family members
- Sexual assault and rape
- Becoming fugitives in own country

An article on education and refugee students from Southern Sudan by Foundation House (2005) emphasised that although all children were affected by the war in the region, adolescents were often especially targeted by government and rebel forces. This was through

conscription as child soldiers, sex slaves and labourers. Although this does not necessarily pertain to the experiences of all newly arrived youth, it provides an insight into the experience of many.

Intense psychological distress may be triggered when a person is exposed to situations that symbolise the traumatic event (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). For example, the stress of newly arrived youth experiencing primary homelessness or sleeping rough may be linked to previous experiences of the young person in a refugee camp or escaping from war. Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is commonly diagnosed in people who have experienced torture and trauma. For some people these experiences may last for months or even years after the trauma, affecting their daily life and functioning (STARTTS, 2003).

PTSD can occur at any age, including children and youth. Its common symptoms include anxiety, difficulty in establishing trusting relationships, low self-esteem, depression, sleeping problems and intrusive and recurring thoughts (Vikram, 2003). Young people with PTSD may also suffer additional physical symptoms such as headache, stomach ache or withdrawal from family and friends (Yapa, 2006). Whilst not all newly arrived youth have developed clinical symptoms, and despite the remarkable resilience and resourcefulness they display in managing negative life events, their past experiences are likely to remain profoundly influential on their wellbeing and that of their family.

Little, in fact, is known about their coping mechanisms, particularly those not accessing the available services. Longitudinal research on how this group deals with torture and trauma issues is essential.

5.3 Participants' understandings of homelessness

Consultations with newly arrived youth revealed that the term 'homelessness' was a concept that though not foreign, took on different forms and meanings. Fifty five out of the 70 young people who participated identified homelessness in its primary form and defined it as not having a house or shelter. They also connected it with sleeping rough, being ragged? and not having clothes.

When you say homeless I think of someone who has dirty torn clothes and doesn't have money. They sleep in the park. When I sleep with my friend I don't think I am homeless.

Afghanistan, Male, 19years

5.4 Homelessness within the target group (Newly arrived youth)

Two participants explicitly defined homelessness as something that was more than a house or shelter. They saw it as a lack of connection with their family, community members, friends and other support networks.

For me homelessness is just not about houses or sleeping in the streets it is also about not having friends and other family members. In my country I had many friends and a big family but now I don't have many friends and my cousins are still in Afghanistan. To me this is homelessness because I still don't feel at home. (Afghanistan, Male 20)

The refugee experience was identified as a process that introduced some young people to homelessness.

.... For me homelessness did not just start in Australia but from back in Sierra Leone. Before the war many young people had their own places or lived with their parents but when the war started houses were burnt so we all ran and left everything behind.... Everyone was left homeless. (Sierra Leone)

Similarly to the newly arrived youth, 9 community members and leaders identified homelessness in its primary form. There was an emphasis on homelessness as a state of being without shelter or a place to sleep over night. Other responses talked of people who are undervalued within the community or the family home and of the loss of connection with support networks.

Homelessness is when people get lost whether in big or small community. This happens when they lose their capacity to adapt with others.

Participant 4 (Iraqi community)

Many of the young people spoke of their understanding of homelessness from a third person perspective. As was highlighted by one of the participants, though it is an issue faced by many youth and members of their communities, it is not something that they want to openly talk about. Those who did speak about it in the first person indicated that they would find it difficult to discuss it with other members of the community. This was because the experience of homelessness could be a source of further marginalisation. In many cases, this was related to the cause of homelessness. For example, family conflict would have more serious

consequences to the young person than the inability to pay rent on a regular basis due to a hike in rental price.

Service providers believed the recognition of homelessness among newly arrived youth was low. This was because young people did not consider themselves as homeless when they were couch surfing or experiencing other forms of secondary homelessness.

Well in my experience with young people in the school setting who are at risk of homelessness or may be considered homeless don't see themselves as homeless as such. This is simply because they can go and sleep over at a friend's house and stay there for a few nights. And they move from one place to another and don't see that as homelessness.

Service provider 5 (Youth worker)

5.4 Extent and nature of homelessness among newly arrived youth

As highlighted in the literature review, there are very few statistics on homelessness among newly arrived youth. The ABS and SAAP service data are of limited use because the target group are categorised under CaLD youth, which also represents first and second generation Australian youth from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, the data does not specify the time spent in the country and the type of visa used to gain entry into the country. In addition to this, the pattern of homelessness among newly arrived youth increases the difficulty of obtaining accurate data.

Though there was no clear indication of the absolute numbers of homeless newly arrived youth, the data indicates a steady increase in the numbers seeking assistance with housing or other accommodation related issues. Service providers also said that there was an increase in the number of newly arrived youth accessing their services. Often those who managed to do so would do it only after exhausting all other options. It was believed that many other youths, who were homeless or at risk of homelessness, were hidden from view. Wallace (cited in Coventry, Guerra, McKenzie and Pinkney, 2002) suggests that homelessness within this target group takes the form of gross overcrowding in suburban or inner city houses.

I can tell you that this is a problem with some students in my school. They don't live with their parents. (Burundi, Female 19years)

“Youth (newly arrived youth) homelessness is very much an issue; there is a lot of couch surfing from place to place. The money that they get from Centrelink is not enough for them to access private accommodation. We deal with many cases but I suspect that there are a lot more youth that are technically homeless that we don’t deal with.” (Service provider 1 Accommodation support worker)

I can tell you from personal experience that I have had quite a number of young people come to see me and they say well I don’t have a place to sleep for that night. The issue becomes ringing around different crisis accommodation services until you find a place for them to go.

Service provider 2(crisis and transitional housing worker)

Service providers identified secondary homelessness as the major form of homelessness for newly arrived youth. Some also remarked on their experience in working with newly arrived youth who were either sleeping rough or had no place to sleep. In some cases it happened when a young person had overstayed their welcome and didn’t have any other place to go. Overall, this was believed to have occurred only over a short time. In many cases a support person or organization known to the young person would assist with temporary accommodation (couch, spare room or sometimes the floor) until a stable place could be found.

In line with this, discussions with the young people revealed that couch surfing was a common practice. However, their accounts also indicated that while primary homelessness was not common, cases of sleeping rough did exist.

I really didn’t understand the meaning of homelessness until I became homeless. Following the continuous increase in my rent it reached a stage where I was not able to pay for it. As a result I had to move out but didn’t have a place to move into. Some nights we would park the car at friend’s house and sleep. Other nights we would just drive around and park the car somewhere and sleep. In some occasions we slept at friend’s house but they too did not have enough resources and means to support us. (Sudan, Male, 25years)

From the consultations it was apparent that newly arrived youth relied on a range of networks to assist them - networks they had developed or were closely known to them through the

community. Friends and relatives were identified as the first source of support for many. Those who had not personally experienced homelessness also identified friends as the first source of support if they were to be in a position where they had no place to go. Other support networks included churches and mosques, school support workers, teachers and service providers. Those that mentioned service providers could only name a few.

Sedu's Story

Sedu a Sudanese male aged 24 arrived in Australia from Egypt in 2005. He was accommodated into a private property paying a weekly rent of \$200. When his initial lease expired in 6 months his weekly rent went up by \$30. Fearing that he would not be able to afford the rent he applied for public housing but was unsuccessful. Having no other option he agreed to sign a new lease. In the following six months his weekly rent went up by another \$20. Knowing that he was not able to pay for the rent he started looking for other available properties but to no avail. Every property that was in his price range was highly competitive, with up to 15 other people vying for the same property.

He vacated the property and moved in with friends who had little themselves in a small overcrowded unit.

5.5 Factors contributing to homelessness or at risk of homelessness

All participants acknowledged that homelessness or being at risk of homelessness was not tied to one particular cause but to a multitude of social, structural and financial complexities. These factors are outlined in four different categories. Their main factors include: relationship difficulties and family conflict, financial difficulties, and shortage of public and low cost private accommodation.

Relationship difficulties and family conflict

Family conflict was seen to be a key factor attributing to homelessness among newly arrived youth. This was particularly common for accompanied youth who had been resettled into the country with their biological parents, relatives, extended family members or even unrelated guardians. The consultations indicated that though some of these issues were similar to those experienced by mainstream youth, newly arrived youth were faced with complex family dynamics that further exacerbated the triggers of conflict within the family.

Firstly, the more speedy acculturation of newly arrived youth than their elders has led to a role change where young people support their parents with general settlement issues and interpreting information relating to housing, employment and education. In some cases they are required to accompany their parents or guardians to appointments and other services. These additional responsibilities impinge on their time to participate in social and sporting activities and even their time to concentrate on their studies. Though many are happy to assist when required, some rebel and as a result trigger conflict or disagreements which may lead to the young person having an ultimatum to either assist or leave the parents property.

I like helping my parents but at times it is too much for me. I have often missed school because there was no one to help my mother when she went to the hospital. Sometimes we argue because of this. I can't do this forever. I need to do things for myself.

(Burundi, Male 19years)

I left the house for a while because my responsibilities were too many. I had a fight with my step mother because she thought that I was not helping enough around the house. So as to keep the peace I decided to leave the house.

(Ethiopia, Male, 19years)

Secondly, the process of settling into Australia, though exciting in the first few months, was widely acknowledged as a source of stress for many families. For some young people this is exacerbated by the need to form relationships and sometimes better familiarise themselves with the relatives, unrelated guardians or even parents that they had not seen or been in contact with for years prior to the resettlement process and now have to live together cohesively.

My father sponsored me to Australia. Before coming I had not seen him for 10 years. I was happy to see him at first but after sometime it was difficult for me to relate to him.

(Newly arrived youth, Ethiopia)

The westernisation of the young people was also a source of conflict within the family. Many of the practices and life styles learned from their peer groups were identified by parents and

community members as foreign and not previously practiced. Some young people comply with their parents' demands but many rebel and as a result have to leave home or become at risk of homelessness.

Our children talk about having girl friends or boy friends; sometimes they go out to the night clubs and don't come back until morning. If you say something they say that they are over 18. If you squeeze them a little they say they will call the police. This did not happen before we came to Australia.

(Parent and community member Congolese community)

Finally, while parents and community members and leaders identified education as an important building block to securing a bright future for their children, some of their expectations were a stressor or a cause of conflict for the young people. Examples provided to illustrate this point included arguments about taking a break from school to work as labourers or other odd jobs or even taking up an apprenticeship in a technical field e.g. painting, plumbing or mechanics.

Financial difficulties

Financial difficulties were also seen as a precipitant to homelessness for newly arrived youth. These were experienced in numerous ways including lack of employment, lack of stable income, the availability of easy loans with high interest rates and inadequate welfare payments. During the consultations it was evident that the newly arrived youth were all grateful for the welfare payments they received while undertaking their studies or participating in a Centrelink approved activity. However, they believed that the money received was not sufficient, particularly for those who were not living with their parents or guardians. Subsequently the pressure to leave school or the Centrelink approved activity was extremely high.

I am happy that I get money from Centrelink but the money I get is not enough. Sometimes when I pay for the transport to and from school for the two weeks and my lunch I don't have enough to pay for my rent. (Sudanese, male 19years)

The basic rates for youth allowance are \$194.50 per fortnight for young people under 18 years living at home and \$233.50 for those over 18 years and living at home or \$355.40 for those living away from home (Centrelink, 20 March-30 June 2008). To receive the full independent rate, some young people will have to be assessed by a social worker on the grounds of their application. It was apparent that some young people who had been assessed as living at home were actually living with friends or independently and consequently having to live on inadequate welfare payments, insufficient for rent or other basic needs.

I tried to apply to be paid as an independent person with Centrelink but my application was declined on the grounds that extreme family breakdown was not established. I don't get along with my parents and don't live at home. I share with one other person but the house costs \$400 per fortnight but I only receive \$233.90 per fortnight. Once I have paid the rent I don't have any money for food or transport to school. (Ethiopian, Male, 18years)

Debts as a consequence of easily accessible car loans with high interest rates or hire purchase on 6 months to 2 years interest free periods have resulted in some young people accumulating debts from default in their repayments. Many of the newly arrived young people could easily get the credit as they did not have any bad credit ratings showing on the system. For many young people caught in these situations, a build up of arrears of their rental payments was not uncommon. This in turn leads to evictions or issuing of lease termination notices, further placing the youth at risk of homelessness.

I got a loan to buy a car. After a few months I missed two repayments because I did not have enough money to pay for the car, the rent, buy food and pay for the other bills. One agency helped me but they could not do it all the time. So sometimes I would miss on paying my rent or pay it late. (Sudanese, Male, 24 years)

Lack of employment or unsustainable working conditions for newly arrived youth were also identified as contributing to the financial difficulties experienced by youth and thus leading to homelessness. It was acknowledged by all stakeholders that many youth were in need of work and those that had been employed were in casual positions working as labourers or factory

hands. The terms governing these positions deny workers sick leave, annual leave and other benefits awarded to permanent employees. If the holders of these casual positions are sick or not able to attend work for any particular reason, the shortfall could leave them unable to pay rent.

Shortage of public and low cost private accommodation

It is acknowledged that a combination of shortages in both public and private accommodation and high rental prices have contributed to profound housing stress among many Western Australians. The Perth metropolitan area has seen a 60% increase in rental prices in the period of June 2001 to September 2006 and a steady increase to date (Department of Treasury and Finance, 2007). These increases, as well as long waiting lists for public housing, have continued to be an additional factor contributing to homelessness within newly arrived youth.

In a joint community sector report highlighting the gaps in housing and support for humanitarian entrants, it was recognised that many newly arrived families arriving in Western Australia from war-torn countries and with personal experiences of torture and trauma were highly affected by the housing crisis. It further argued that the uncertainty of securing and maintaining appropriate and affordable housing could be particularly detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing (Burgermeister, Kitching, Stewart and Iscel 2008).

Newly arrived youth and service providers alike stressed that the long waiting lists for priority housing were particularly difficult to deal with especially when a young person was at high risk of homelessness.

To get a priority interview is quite difficult because you have to prove your client is really homeless or meets a certain criteria and after the hard work of doing all that the young person is put on a waiting list for 6-12 months (Service provider 4)

I went to Homeswest and explained my situation but they told me that they will put me on a waiting list for 3 years. I was very angry and refused to leave so they said that they will call the police. (Sudanese Male 25years.)

A number of young people and a youth leader shared their personal experiences of, and knowledge about, the consequences of the housing crisis. They emphasised that many young people were living in overcrowded conditions in small units and suburban houses as a result of the shortage in public housing and the difficulty in accessing private rentals.

Imagine, I know of a case in the community where a group of 11 people were sharing a two bedroom unit. Some sharing the bedrooms and others sleeping in the lounge. How can you live like that? (Youth leader)

I have applied for over 17 private properties in the last 1 year but all my applications have been rejected. (Burundi, male, 22)

Some community members/leaders pointed out that the housing situation were not only faced by the youth but also many other members of the community. They also said that young people in a family unit were automatically at risk of homelessness when the whole family had no place to go or sleep.

If I have been asked to leave from my house and don't have any place to go that means that my children also don't have a place to go so we all become homeless.

(Community member Congolese community)

DHW representatives acknowledged the effects of the shortage in public housing and the long waiting lists and emphasised that this was an issue faced by many Western Australians. They added that to ease the pressure on public housing other support mechanisms were needed such as assistance with the bond payment and the two weeks rent in advance upon securing a private rental was in place.

5.6 Impact of homelessness on target group

As already indicated, the discussions with participants did not reveal significant numbers of chronic and long term primary homelessness. But the consultations emphasised that secondary homelessness within the target group had significant impacts on both newly arrived youth and their families and the community. These are discussed below.

Disruption in their already disrupted schooling life

Many young people whose lives have been characterised by long periods of civil war and unrest would have seen schools destroyed and had to flee to safety and as a result spent long periods of time without schooling. Experiences of starting school in the host country can be daunting and usually takes time to adapt. The experience of homelessness leads to absenteeism, making the process even more difficult.

In Africa when the war started I stopped going to school until I came to Australia ... before when I was living with my friends I did not come to school from many days because the house was too far from my school. **(Ethiopia, Male, 19years)**

Added to this, homelessness and/or poor living conditions undermines the young person's capacity to adjust to the new education system, adding to the barriers they have already had to overcome in terms of English language skills and significant gaps in formal education.

Overcrowding in small units and suburban houses

Stakeholders pointed out that friends and relatives played a vital role in assisting newly arrived youth when faced with the risk of not having a place to sleep. The consequences of these acts of charity are increased overcrowding in small units and suburban houses with the additional risk for more evictions as a result.

Triggering previous traumatic experiences

The experience of homelessness can trigger past traumatic events. The consequences of this can include re-living the traumatic event, major sleep disturbance and temper flare-ups.

Negative impact on future productivity

Newly arrived youth have much to offer their new host countries. Any form of homelessness will significantly impact on their ability to thrive in a country, culture and language that is foreign. Any underlying obstacle that may contribute to, or exacerbate, housing concerns, has the potential to affect their ability to become future productive citizens.

5.7 Barriers to accessing available homelessness services

As outlined in the discussions above, it is widely acknowledged that many newly arrived youth are not accessing the relevant services. The reasons are multi-factorial and complex.

Shame and negative connotation attached to the concept of homelessness

The concept of homelessness, though not foreign to the young people, has strong negative connotations attached to it. Many newly arrived youth and their families directly refrain from accessing any service that identifies them with homelessness. Often the terminology is associated with destitution and helplessness. It was noted that some community members perceive easy accessibility of crisis accommodation and other housing services as the basis of their children leaving home.

Limited resources within the housing sector and lack of culturally appropriate services

Many service providers acknowledged that the mainstream services lacked sufficient resources to appropriately cater for the complex needs of newly arrived youth. The lack of allocated funds within budgets for interpreting services or gender specific services to cater for the cultural and religious needs of newly arrived youth was also seen as a problem. It was further stressed that the set-up of the accommodation services was unfriendly to many youth.

Often we take some of our clients to crisis accommodation services when they have no place to sleep and they have one look at the place and say that they are going to get their cloths but never come back (Service provider 1 Accommodation support worker)

I know our services are quite rundown and not very attractive it's just that we don't get a lot of funding. So it is really hard to effectively and appropriately support newly arrived youth. (Service provider 9, Crisis Accommodation worker)

Lack of a rental history and suitable referees

All private rental applications and tenancy agreements require a provision of a reliable referee and in many cases an untainted rental history. For many newly arrived youth, the length of time spent in the country makes it difficult to attain these requirements. This further creates barriers for them in accessing available services. Some service providers have taken the role

of acting as referees for the young people. This assistance is only received by those lucky enough to access the appropriate services.

Limited language skills and knowledge of available services

Though most newly arrived youth acculturate quicker than their parents, many will only have a basic grasp of English in the first few years. To effectively navigate the available housing systems both a sound command of language and knowledge of the way the system works are vital. For many of these youth there is virtually little or no knowledge of the available services, resulting in an inability to successfully access the available housing services.

If I did not have a place to sleep I don't know where I would go for help other than my friends or my teacher in the school. (Somali Female 18years)

Some of my friends say that there are places that help people when they want to find a house but I have never heard of them. (Burundi, Male, 20years)

It is significant that 60% of the newly arrived youth that participated in the study had no knowledge of housing and homelessness services.

Dissatisfaction and distrust due to a negative experience from a service provider

The initial contact with a service provider is the most important stage in establishing a good rapport and fundamental step towards building trusting relationships. During this stage a blunder on the part of one service provider can reflect on all. It was noted that where a young person had previously accessed a service and was not appropriately attended to, he or she often vowed not to go to any other.

When I was looking of place to rent I went to one office that my teacher had told me about but when I got there even before they found out why I was there they asked me to sign and fill in many forms and they didn't talk much. They said they will call me but they didn't. I don't trust this people. (Congolese. Male 19years)

This chapter has described the participants' responses over a range of issues, including their understanding of homelessness, its causes and impact on their population. The next chapter draws on these findings to discuss future directions.

6. Future directions

This study provided both the primary target group and other stakeholders with an opportunity to identify how best to address homelessness and the associated obstacles experienced by participants. The considerations listed below have been drawn from consultations with newly arrived youth, service providers, community members and leaders and have been categorised to highlight the considerations for government, service providers and community leaders.

Considerations for FaHCSIA

Education and awareness of available services

The consultations and workshops identified the need for:

- Specifically designed orientation programs for newly arrived youth to equip them with the skills and knowledge to access housing information and support.
- More appropriate publications, better training resources and workshops focused towards homelessness prevention for newly arrived youth.

Funding

- It is requested that FaHCSIA continue and extend its long term funding for early intervention programs for newly arrived youth. The Newly Arrived Youth Support Service (NAYSS), funded by FaHCSIA, is widely recognised as a good example of a culturally appropriate early intervention program and has been in high demand among many service providers. However, it is limited to servicing one geographical area in the northern metro area of Perth.
- The cultural and religious mores of many newly arrived youth forbid the sharing of accommodation between male and female clients who are not related. Consequently it is requested that government provide funding for the establishment of gender specific crisis accommodation.
- It is suggested that government and other funding bodies consider incorporating “best practice” service delivery models in their funding agreements (see below under ‘considerations for service providers’)

Further research

- Regular ongoing research is necessary to evaluate the extent of homelessness within newly arrived youth over time. We ask FaHCSIA to provide funding for this. We also recommend that longitudinal research be undertaken on the coping mechanisms of newly arrived youth who have experienced torture and trauma.

Considerations for service providers

Service delivery:

- It is recommended that service providers adopt proactive and flexible service delivery models to support newly arrived youth with complex needs - in particular, outreach services that would assist with the navigation of the system and directly work with family members as well as the young people themselves. It is suggested that government and other funding bodies could incorporate these service delivery models in their funding agreements.
- It is recognised that there are a number of youth networking groups that play a vital role in raising awareness and dealing with issues faced by newly arrived youth. However, there is a need for a regular state wide youth networking meeting with sound representation from all services within the sector, to share information, lobby relevant government bodies and where possible share available resources and expertise. It is recommended that efforts be made by all service providers working with newly arrived youth to establish this networking group.

Professional development and training

- Crisis accommodation services staff are highly skilled, nevertheless it is vital to ensure that the staff are culturally competent and understand the complex needs of newly arrived youth. It is recommended that regular training and professional development for crisis accommodation workers be provided by ASeTTS or other relevant agencies with well developed training modules on working with newly arrived youth, as part of ongoing work force development.

Data collection

- To effectively establish planning and implementation processes, accurate data concerning the number of newly arrived youth accessing housing or accommodation services is essential. It is requested that all service providers regularly collect such

data. This data should consist of the country of origin; visa type (TPV or PPV); type of homelessness- primary, secondary, tertiary, or at risk; length of time spent in Australia and other relevant demographics. It is acknowledged that this may create more work for staff but it will enhance service delivery and the development of strategies for the prevention of homelessness. The data should be used in policy development and improving service delivery.

Considerations for community members/leaders

- Community members, elders and religious leaders play a vital role in the prevention of homelessness through mediating between young people and their families. They often work long hours with no pay. It is recommended that strong working partnerships between these individuals and service providers be formed in dealing with homelessness issues and where possible financial remuneration for their time and knowledge be provided to them. This should predominately be undertaken by the service providers, with financial input from the relevant funding bodies, both state and federal.

7. Dissemination of findings and workshops delivery

The findings of the study were disseminated in a total of four workshops (two for service providers and two for newly arrived youth). In addition an information brochure was developed for service providers based on the findings of the study. The brochure also outlined ethical considerations on how to effectively support and engage newly arrived youth. It further provided details of early intervention and crisis accommodation services around the Perth metropolitan area and information on how to access free interpreting services for service providers that did not receive interpreter provisions in their funding.

Service providers' workshop

The two service providers' workshops were held on the 24th April 2008 and 27th May 2008 respectively. The first saw a total of 14 service providers attend (out of 24 invited). The main aims of the workshop were to:

- Draw on participants' experiences and the findings of the research to discuss the preliminary findings
- Highlight the impact of homelessness on newly arrived young people and members of the community
- Highlight gaps in service delivery with reference to the research findings and expertise of the participants.

Feedback from all the participants was positive, with many service providers validating that the preliminary findings were a portrait of what they were experiencing. Discussions highlighted the need for collaboration between services.

The second workshop was attended by 10 service providers (out of 20 invited). The main aims of the workshop were to:

- Identify torture and trauma issues related to newly arrived youth
- Identify and promote good practice and service delivery models and the levels of support for newly arrived youth
- Explain and encourage information sharing and networking between relevant agencies
- Draw on participants' experiences and findings of the research to raise awareness of issues related to homelessness and its causes and effects on young refugees.

Feedback from the evaluation forms indicated that the workshop was well presented and the content relevant to the work of the participants. The small nature of the group was seen as a positive where people had ample time to share their personal experiences and also comment on the information provided. Some participants suggested that they would have liked to see a higher representation of crisis accommodation workers at the final workshop as they would have benefited most.

Overall both workshops generated useful discussion and a positive networking environment for those involved.

Youth workshops

Two youth workshops were held on the 29th May 2008 and 15th June 2008. A total of 25 young people participated. Unlike the service providers meeting, the contents of both workshops were the same. Initial plans were to run the workshops at the two main post-compulsory Intensive English Centres, which are a hub for many newly, arrived youth. Following discussions with the respective deputy principals it was agreed that it would only be run at one of the schools. As a result the other workshop was run at ASeTTS.

The aim of the workshops were to:

- Draw on the participants' knowledge and experiences on issues related to homelessness and discuss how best to deal with them. A variety of different activities and discussion formats were used to achieve this.
- Equip participants with information about the available services and the correct process of accessing them
- Explore the idea of rights and responsibilities of young people within the family context.

The workshops generated a wealth of information for both the facilitators and participants. The young people immersed themselves into the discussions and the different activities. The case study format and the rights and responsibility exercise were valuable as young people drew on their personal experiences to compare and suggest possible solutions to solving problems.

Feedback provided both verbally and from the evaluation forms indicated that the young people would like to have more of the workshops. Participants said they found the workshops very informative and useful. They suggested that having the case study acted out on video would be an even more effective tool for discussions and highlighting the issues. Overall both workshops were well received with requests for more in the future.

Development of a brochure

An information brochure on effectively engaging and supporting newly arrived youth has been developed based on the findings and consultations of youth and community members/leaders. This will be distributed to all service providers to make available information on ethical considerations when working with newly arrived youth. Contact details for community organizations for support and referrals in Perth metropolitan area have also been provided.

5th National homelessness conference (May 21-23rd 2008)

A short presentation and a poster and were presented at the 5th National Homelessness Conference in Adelaide outlining a summary of the project aims, methodology, findings and some future directions.

Report Launch

Finally, a launch for the report has been scheduled 26th August 2008. The main aim is to provide feedback to participants and other stakeholders.

8. Conclusion

The issues facing all newly arrived youth place them at a distinct risk of homelessness. If they are not effectively supported, they can easily descend into a pattern of chronic homelessness. The exposure to past traumatic events as well as current effects of homelessness can result in long-term physical and psychological harm.

The pattern of homelessness among newly arrived youth should be a cause for concern to the government, policy makers and service providers alike as their consequences are serious and long term. A commitment and obligation has been made by the Australian Government to accepting humanitarian entrants and in doing so, it has a duty of care to provide a resettlement program that fosters, supports and offers our newly arrived youth the best possible opportunities, and encourages their participation and inclusion in a society that will enable them to prosper. It is acknowledged that the government has made an effort in providing and funding services to assist newly arrived youth but further support as outlined in the future directions for the prevention of homelessness within the target group is vital.

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Appendix A: Participant Information and Consent Form

This participant information guide contains details of the homelessness prevention program for newly arrived youth (HPPNAY) research project. Its purpose is to clarify the procedures involved in the project in order to assist with an informed decision to participate.

Please read this participant information carefully and feel free to ask questions about any information in the document. Should you wish to participate in the project, you will need to sign the consent form. By signing the consent form, you indicate that you understand the information and that you give your consent to participate in the research project.

Purpose and background

The homelessness prevention program is a one year action-research project seeking to engage stakeholders in group dialogue (focus groups) and individual interviews.

The goal is to develop practical recommendations and identify strategies to assist in preventing homelessness among newly arrived young people of refugee background. The primary stakeholders include; newly arrived youth, service providers and community members, including family members of the youth.

Overall, the project aims to:

- Identify best practice models, which can be promoted and replicated, that will enhance existing homelessness policies and programs.
- Build the capacity of the community sector to improve links and networks
- Raise awareness of homelessness throughout all levels of government and in the community.

At the end of the research the findings will be disseminated through workshops targeted to service providers, youth and community members.

Procedures

Your participation in this project will involve a 30min to 1 hour interview on your thoughts on a number of set questions regarding the project.

Privacy confidentiality and disclosure of information

Any information obtained in the project that may identify you will remain confidential. Discussions will be audio taped or notes will be taken only to assist with collection of the information. Your name will not appear in the report or in any other materials relating to the

project. Any information obtained in connection to this project that can identify you will remain confidential. It will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. In any publication, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified.

Results of Project

The results of the research will be disseminated through a number of workshops targeting young people, service providers and community members. A research report and brochure detailing the outcomes of the project will also be produced. Where possible, the participants will be informed of the results prior to all other research stakeholders.

Further information

If you require further information about the research project or would like an opportunity to further contribute to the research, please contact:

Issihaka Toure, Issihaka.Toure@asetts.org.au 286 Beaufort St, Perth, WA 6000 Direct: 9227 2740 Switchboard: 9227 2700 Fax: 9227 2777

Homelessness Prevention Program for Newly Arrived Youth

Consent Form

I have read, or have had read to and I understand the participant information guide for the homelessness prevention for newly arrived youth.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the participant information guide.

I will be given a copy of the participant information and consent form to keep

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details if information about this project is published or presented in any public form.

Participant's Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Declaration by researcher*: I have given a verbal explanation of the research project and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Researcher's Name (printed)

Signature

Date

The research is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs under the National Homelessness Strategy.

Appendix B:

Moderator's guide and discussion questions

Moderator:

- **Moderator introduction & thank you**
- **House keeping**
 1. Toilet locations
 2. Length of the session
 3. Lunch & Morning tea
- **Ground Rules**

To allow conversation to flow more freely I would like to go over some ground rules.

1. Please talk one at a time and avoid side conversations
2. Please respect everyone's opinion.
3. Everyone doesn't have to answer every single question, but I would like to hear from each one of you as the discussion progresses.
4. This will be an open discussion so feel free to comment on others remarks.
5. There are no wrong answers just difference of opinion.

Before discussing the overview of the project I would like to meet each of you. Please tell the group:

- **Introduction of participants** (Name, Age and country of Origin).
- **Purpose participant information guide and definition of key terms of the research.**
- **Explain to participants that the focus group will be audio tapped only to assist with recollection of information. Names will not be used.**

Discussion Questions

Newly arrived youth;

- In your opinion what do you understand by the term homelessness?
- Do you know or have you ever heard of a young person who has been homeless or at risk of being homeless?
- If yes, please explain the situation that led to there situation?
- What do you think are the main causes of homelessness among newly arrived young people?
- If you or friends where at risk of being homeless do you know where to seek help?
- What would you do if you were homeless?
- In your opinion if there was a perfect service that assists in preventing homeless among young people what would it look like?

Community Groups and Leaders;

- In your opinion what do you understand by the term homelessness?
- Do you know or have you ever heard of a young person who has been homeless or at risk of being homeless?
- If yes, explain what was the situation?
- What do you think are the main causes of homelessness within newly arrived young people?
- Do you think that the community leaders and members have a role in assisting to prevent homelessness among newly arrived youth?
- In your opinion if there was a perfect service that assists in preventing homeless among young people what would it look like?
- What do you think would be the best approach to preventing homelessness?

Service Providers

- Do you think that homelessness as outlined in the context of this research is an issue?
- From your experience and complexity of cases you deal with is homelessness currently an issue or is there a potential for it to be an issue in the future within Newly Arrived Youth?
- What are the main causes of homelessness or at risk of being homelessness?
- What restrictions do you currently have in delivering services to newly arrived youth?
- Do you have any Professional needs that may assist you/ your agency in working with the newly arrived youth?

Specific Questions

- Do you think there are any particular issues for newly arrived youth regarding homelessness different to other young people?
- What is the DHW policies on providing bond assistance to young people aged 16-17 years of age? What is the process of receiving this assistance? (**DHW Reps**)
- Does Centrelink provide financial assistance/ accessible loans to newly arrived youth at risk of being homeless? If so what are they and how accessible are they?(**Centrelink Rep**)

Closing Question:

- What strategies or future directions would you suggest to assists in preventing homelessness among young people?

Appendix C: Activity (Program) Plan

Item	Date
<p>Stage One</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify target group (within the broad community in Perth) ○ Outline action research Process to be undertaken during implementation of the project. ○ Devise questions for the consultation ○ Carry out consultations and focus group with broadly representative community group, youth specific groups and service providers ○ Undertake interviews and with selected individuals (e.g. service providers individual youth people and community representatives) ○ Collate research information and develop workshops for youth service providers and community groups (including families) 	<p>July 2007 – March 2008</p>
<p>Stage Two</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deliver four workshops ○ Review workshop content and style and amend as appropriate ○ Develop information brochure 	<p>April 2008 – May 2008</p>
<p>Stage Three</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Write up and evaluation based on action research ○ Run a seminar workshop to provide feedback to participants and other stakeholders. 	<p>June 2008</p>

Appendix D: Project workshops

Service providers workshop 1 (Session plan)

Time	Topic	Resources	Process
10.00	Welcome/ Housekeeping and acknowledgement of funding body		
10.10	Introduction of workshop participants.		(Group Activity) Self introduction, name and type of agency and the role of the participants.
10.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Presentation of Research methodology and Overview of preliminary findings. ○ Issues identified with reference to service delivery and access to newly arrived young people. 	PowerPoint Presentation	Presentation
11.30	Response and feedback from participants. Q & A Session		Open Discussion.
12.30	Lunch		
<p>Session aims and outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Draw on participants' field experiences and findings of the research to validate the preliminary findings. ○ Highlight the impact of homelessness on newly arrived young people and members of the community. ○ Highlight gaps in service delivery, with reference to the research findings and expertise of the participants. 			

Service providers workshop 2 (Session plan)

Time	Topic	Resources	Process
9.00	Welcome/ acknowledgement of funding body and house keeping.		
9.10	Introduction/expectations check	Photo language card	Photo language activity (Group activity)
9.30	Newly arrived youth, torture and trauma issues related to homelessness and access to current homelessness services. Good practice models and appropriate service delivery methods.	PowerPoint Presentation	Presentation & Discussion
10.45	Tea Break		
11.30	Case Study (Based on a young person interviewed for the research.)	Butchers paper	Group Discussion
12.00	Information sharing and the need for agencies and other stakeholders to work together to help prevent or better deal with homelessness issues.		Open Discussion.
1.00	Lunch		
<p>Session outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify and promote good practice and service delivery models and the levels of support for newly arrived youth. ○ Explain and encourage information sharing and networking between relevant agencies. ○ Draw on participants' experiences and findings of the research to raise awareness of issues related to homelessness, its causes and effects on young refugees. 			

Youth workshop (Session Plan)

Time	Topic	Resources	Process
10.00	Welcome/ Acknowledgement of funding body/ Outlining aims of the workshop and other house keeping instructions.		
10.15	Introduction/expectations check	Photo language card	<p style="text-align: center;">Group activity</p> <p>Photo language activity</p> <p>Using images to generate discussion around homelessness among newly arrived youth.</p> <p>Using images to tell stories about and explaining personal thoughts on Homelessness</p>
10.40	<p style="text-align: center;">(Case Study)</p> <p>Brief outline, discussion and activity around homelessness, Causes and solutions. The role of early intervention in homelessness prevention.</p>	Butchers paper.	<p style="text-align: center;">Group activity and discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Take time to listen to the activity ○ Appoint someone to take notes ○ As a group, work together to generate answers about the requested questions. ○ Appoint someone to report back to the main group.
11.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rights and responsibilities of young people activity. ○ Discussion around types of services available and how to access them? 		Group Activity
12.30	Lunch		
<p>Session aims/ outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Through a variety of activities and discussions, drawing on the participants knowledge and experiences on issues related to homelessness and how best to deal with them. ○ Equip participants with information and the available services about the available services and the correct process of accessing them. ○ Explore the idea of rights and responsibilities of young people within the family context and family conflict. 			

Homelessness prevention program Evaluation Forms Youth workshop

Please Tick (✓) in or color in ● the appropriate circle. Answer the questions as honestly as possible as there are no right or wrong answers.

(Strongly Disagree → Strongly Agree)

		1	2	3	4	5
1	The workshop provided an opportunity to talk and learn about issues around homelessness in Australia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	The activities were relevant to the workshop.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	The program facilitators were clear and gave us time to speak.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	There was enough time to do all the activities and fully participate in them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	I understood what the workshop was about prior to starting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	I felt comfortable talking about my experiences within the group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. What did you really enjoy about the workshop?

8. What things would you like us to add on to the workshop?

9. Additional comments?

Homelessness prevention program Evaluation Forms
Service provider's workshop

Please Tick (✓) in or color in ● the appropriate circle. Answer the questions as honestly as possible as there are no right or wrong answers.

(Strongly Disagree → Strongly Agree)

		1	2	3	4	5
1	The workshop provided an opportunity to talk and learn about newly arrived youth and homelessness, torture and trauma issues facing them and good service principles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	The activities were relevant to the workshop.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	The workshop facilitator was clear and gave us time to speak.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	There was enough time to do all the activities and fully participate in them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	I understood what the workshop was about prior to starting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. What did you really enjoy about the workshop?

8. What things would you like us to add on to the workshop?

9. Additional comments?

Hidden homelessness

The name of the report has been chosen to highlight the nature of homelessness faced by youth who have recently settled in Australia under the humanitarian program. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the rate of homelessness within this population is relatively high. This report indicates that it has taken the form of overcrowding in small units and suburban houses and of “couch surfing”; which is when young people sleep in homes of friends, relatives and others known to them on a rotating basis. As newly arrived youth try to stay as long as possible with relatives, friends and other people known to them, they continue to be invisible to the eye of the public and service providers thus making it difficult to quantify the number that are homeless. This, then, takes the form of hidden homelessness.



ASeTTS

**Assisting Torture
and Trauma Survivors**

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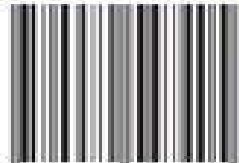
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