



# About the campaign

## RAISING AWARENESS OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRALIA

### THE ISSUE

Nearly 42,000 young people across Australia asked for support from homelessness services in 2020–21.

One in every 3 had experienced couch surfing, a form of homelessness that can cause substantial harm to young people's health and wellbeing.

Since the homelessness experienced by couch surfers is less visible than the 'rooflessness' of rough sleepers, it's a problem that's largely hidden from public view.

Young couch surfers can often struggle to ask for the support they need, but their experiences are real and traumatic – and without early intervention can lead to longer-term homelessness.

### WHO WE ARE

Youth Off The Streets is a not-for-profit youth organisation. We work with young people, their families and communities to create safety, offer support and provide opportunities to build a positive future.

Since being founded by Father Chris Riley in 1991, we have grown to deliver a range of wraparound supports for young people. These include crisis accommodation and housing services, independent high schools, alcohol and other drugs counselling, youth justice support, life skills and employment programs, cultural support and community engagement, among other services.

### THE GREAT COUCH SLEEPOUT

Youth Homelessness Matters Day on 20 April 2022 is an Australia-wide initiative to raise awareness of youth homelessness.

It is an opportunity to start public conversations about youth homelessness and the urgent need for innovative and sustainable solutions.

That's why Youth Off The Streets has launched a world-first public awareness campaign, The Great Couch Sleepout.

Our goal is to 'unhide' youth homelessness by inspiring everyday Australians to sign up to sleep on their couch for one night – 20 April 2022 – and use their social media to raise awareness of youth homelessness at the same time.



# A couch is not a home.

## HOW IT WORKS

- 1 Sign up at [youthoffthestreets.com.au/greatcouchsleepout](https://youthoffthestreets.com.au/greatcouchsleepout)
- 2 Start raising awareness of youth homelessness by sharing the ready-made social media posts with friends, family and other social followers
- 3 On the night of 20 April, swap your bed for the couch and share the experience on social media using our posts or your own

Friends and family can also be encouraged to donate to support Youth Off The Streets' life-changing programs for young people experiencing homelessness.

### **"Every waking moment is painful." Luke, 18**

Imagine not knowing where you're going to sleep each night.

Living out of a single backpack and relying on the kindness of others for a place to stay – or just a couch to crash on.

You feel like you don't belong anywhere. You have no privacy. No stability to make plans for your future.

Every day you worry about being a burden to the people letting you stay – for tonight, anyway.

This is the reality for thousands of young people experiencing homelessness in Australia.

And it's largely hidden from view.

### **In Australia in 2020-21\*:**

41,700 young people presented alone for support from homelessness services

64% were young women aged 15–24

1 in 3 had experienced couch surfing

The main drivers of youth homelessness:

- family and domestic violence
- housing crisis (e.g. eviction)
- family breakdown

\* <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/young-people-presenting-alone>

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