



# Youth homelessness in regional and rural New South Wales

## Yfoundations position paper

### The issue

While youth homelessness is more visible in metropolitan areas, young people in regional and rural NSW face serious disadvantages, which in turn puts them at a heightened risk of homelessness. Living outside of a major centre means that a young person is more likely to experience [poverty and unemployment](#), [poorer health outcomes](#) and [early school leaving](#) than their counterparts in the city.

These issues are compounded by the fact that there are significant [gaps in the local service system](#) in country and remote areas, with a dire lack of youth crisis accommodation, residential rehabilitation facilities and intensive mental health services. Facing these limited options, vulnerable young people who are at risk of homelessness are forced into dangerous situations – couch surfing, sleeping rough, staying in violent homes or living in overcrowded housing – with few pathways out.

Unfortunately, the past two years has only increased the pressure on young people living outside of city and town centres. Taking advantage of the changing work arrangements due to COVID-19, many workers have migrated from metropolitan areas to country NSW, increasing rental competition and pushing prices up. At the same time, the past five years have seen a rapid growth in online holiday rental platforms (such as AirBnB), which has severely reduced the number of properties available for longer-term, low-income renters. Together, these factors meant that in 2021, regional and rural areas saw rental increases of [up to 28%](#), while vacancy rates plummeted to historic lows of [just under 1%](#). The 2019-20 bushfires and 2020-21 floods also hit regional NSW particularly hard, highlighting the desperate need for more affordable housing and support services.

## Our asks

The NSW Government must fund more youth specific crisis accommodation in regional and rural areas.

Certain areas of the state, such as far western and north-western NSW, have no youth-specific crisis accommodation whatsoever. This means that homeless young people have to travel considerable distances to access specialised support or stay in inappropriate and unsafe accommodation where they are at risk of exploitation and violence. To address this, Yfoundations is calling on the NSW Government to increase the number of youth-specific refuges in regional and rural areas, ensuring that every population centre has specialised crisis accommodation.

The NSW Government must implement the recommendations set out in the Regional Housing Taskforce.

In June 2021, the NSW Government launched the Regional Housing Taskforce to investigate solutions to the regional housing crisis. The Taskforce's final [report](#) includes five recommendations to increase supply, promote affordable and diverse housing and better monitor housing outcomes. Yfoundations urges the NSW Government to implement these recommendations and address the serious lack of accessible housing outside of metropolitan areas.

The NSW Government must increase housing options and services for young people in regional areas, particularly for those with complex needs.

In addition to there being very few youth homelessness services in rural areas, there is also a lack of specialist services for young people with severe mental health, behavioural and/or alcohol and drug issues. To address this, Yfoundations is calling on the NSW Government to increase the number of placements and services for young people with complex needs, such as therapeutic residential and foster care placements, specialised mental health facilities and drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs.



[See our housing for young people with complex needs position paper](#)

The NSW Government must build at least 5,000 new social housing properties per year for the next ten years, including new youth-specific social housing in regional areas.



[See our Position Paper on Barriers to Young People Renting](#)

The NSW Government should fund seven new medium-term accommodation services in regional and country areas and top up funding for the five existing services.



[See our Position Paper on 16 and 17-year-olds](#)



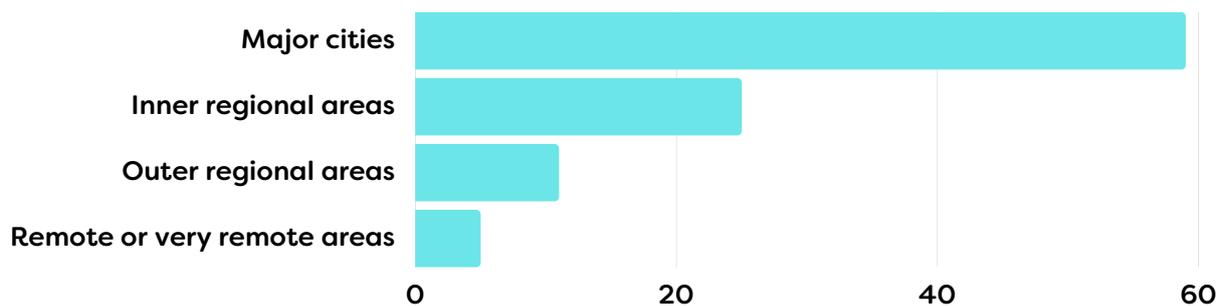
[See our Fact Sheet on medium-term accommodation services](#)

## The evidence

More than a third (36%) of 12 to 25-year-olds who accessed homelessness services in NSW in [2019-20](#) lived in rural or regional areas.



Amongst [all 15 to 24-year-olds](#) who accessed specialist homelessness services in Australia in 2019-20, the majority lived in major cities (59%), followed by inner regional areas (25%), outer regional areas (11%) and remote or very remote areas (5%).



The [2016 census](#) revealed that the rate of homelessness amongst 15 to 24-year-olds living in remote and very remote areas in Australia (6.2% or 3,600 young people) was substantially higher than for those living in major cities (0.8% or 16,700), inner regional areas (0.5% or 2,300) and outer regional areas (0.7% or 1,500).



This [difference can be largely explained](#) by the higher rates of severe overcrowding amongst young people in these areas (5.6% for remote and very remote compared with 0.4% for major cities).

Although they account for a small percentage of the total young people in Australia (5%), the 2016 Census revealed that Indigenous young people accounted for [32% of all young homeless people](#) across the country.

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In [2016](#), Indigenous 10 to 24-year-olds represented a greater proportion (67%) of the total youth population that lived in less urban areas in Australia, such as remote and very remote parts of the country.

In [2011](#), 60% of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness were in very remote areas. Nearly all (97%) Indigenous homeless people in very remote areas were living in severely crowded dwellings.

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