

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Acting Minister for Youth  
The Hon. Linda Burney MP**



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**Monday, 10 August 2009**

### **YOUTH HOMELESSNESS FORUM A SUCCESS**

Young people gathered in Sydney last week to find solutions to youth homelessness and develop ideas to present to the NSW Government to help solve one of the state's biggest issues, said Acting Minister for Youth Linda Burney.

The Youth Homelessness Forum is an initiative driven by the 12 members of the NSW Youth Advisory Council and the Commission for Children and Young People.

“Around 50 young people from around NSW came together to find solutions to the issue of youth homelessness. The majority of these young people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.

“The forum was youth-focused and youth-driven. They spent the day as a group and broke out into workshops, where they expressed their views on homelessness and discussed ideas that might help solve the issue.

“As a group, they were driven by a common goal to find solutions to the issue of homelessness. Their aim is to reduce the number of young people living in unstable housing and on the street,” said Ms Burney.

Mr Burney said prior to the forum, NSW Youth Advisory Council and the Commission for Children and Young People conducted state-wide consultations with young people and held an online forum.

“The consultation leading up to the forum ensured the event's agenda covered significant issues on youth homelessness, and gave the organisers a clear understanding on what homelessness meant to young people and what help they feel is necessary when homeless or in a refuge,” said Ms Burney.

“The consultation revealed the importance of the home to a young person. They said it was a place where there are people who care, a place where they can talk, and seek help.

“Some young people in unstable housing said they had trouble identifying what made a home.

“They stressed the importance of help in sorting out their issues, including better access to health care, mental health and drug and alcohol services,” said Mr West.

According to the latest Census data, an estimated eight per 1,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 18 years are homeless.

“Homelessness is one of biggest concerns facing young people in NSW today,” said Ms Burney.

“We will receive the findings of the Youth Homelessness Forum in September and consider the steps necessary to support our young people.”

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The Commission for Children and Young People was set up in June 1999 to act as a bridge between children and government, business and local communities. The commission oversees the operations of the Youth Advisory Council, which was set up in 1989 under the Youth Advisory Council Act. NSW is the only Australian state or territory to provide a statutory basis for its youth advisory structure.

Ms Burney said, “The role of the Youth Advisory Council is to advise the government on issues of concern, government policies relating to young people, and youth-related programs they would like developed for their peer group.

“The forum is a great example of involving young people in issues affecting them. This can only lead to the Government achieving better outcomes for young people in NSW”.

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