



**FOYER**  
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### **Submission on Directions Paper for the 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness**

The Foyer Oxford Consortium (Anglicare WA, Foundation Housing Ltd, North Metropolitan TAFE) are delighted to make this submission to the Department of Communities on the *Directions Paper for the 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness: Western Australia 2019-2029*.

We provide this submission in order to particularly highlight the relevance of the Foyer Oxford model to the priority areas of the Directions Paper. Given Foyer Oxford's substantial scale, significant impact, ground breaking innovation and replicability, we would strongly advocate for the inclusion of Foyer Oxford and the Foyer Model within the future 10-year strategy.

#### **Foyer Oxford:**

Foyer Oxford is an award winning, nationally accredited transitional housing service for young people founded on the idea that ending youth homelessness can be achieved through education, training and sustainable employment. Foyer Oxford is the largest program of its kind in the world, offering 98 high-quality, self-contained apartments in the heart of the vibrant Leederville community. Five years of operation have demonstrated that Foyer Oxford is the right solution in the right place.

Since opening in February 2014 (to December 2018), a total of 442 young people, including 53 children have been housed at Foyer Oxford, and over 90% of residents left to stable, secure housing. This is defined as an accommodation option likely to last more than 12 months, in an environment that enables future goals. Over 90% maintained their housing option 12 months after exit.

The Foyer Oxford program has been independently evaluated by KPMG, PwC, and Painted Dog Research, and the Foyer model has been extensively evaluated as part of an international approach to tackling youth homelessness. In every case it has been shown to make a significant difference to the lives of young people experiencing homelessness, and achieve sustainable impact in long-term outcomes for young people. The positive impact on the reduction of state and federal government expenditure as a result of successful Foyer interventions has been recognised in Sydney, where the first Social Impact Bond has been issued for a Foyer program.

The Foyer approach is now expanding rapidly across Australia: in Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and the Northern Territory, there is a strong commitment from state, territory, and federal governments to do what they know works. Foyer Oxford is the only Foyer project in Western Australia, and is currently without a long term funding commitment from the WA State Government beyond June 30 2020, despite the overwhelming level of public support and the strength of the evidence demonstrating its impact. The Foyer approach "helps to educate the community about homelessness to reduce stigma and shame" through its intentional approach to community engagement and high quality design.

CONSORTIUM



MAJOR SUPPORTERS



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Communities

We share a similar vision to that outlined in the Directions Paper, that every young person has a place to call home and is supported to achieve stable and independent lives. Foyer Oxford is recognised as playing a critical role in achieving this vision and, as a consortium of three leading organisations in their respective fields, we agree that ending homelessness is everyone's responsibility.

## **1. Sustainable Pathways out of Homelessness**

### ***1.1 Accommodation that addresses diverse needs***

Foyer Oxford provides accommodation for young people aged 16-26 who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or experiencing disadvantage. Of all the young people housed to December 2018, 20% Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), 19% were from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) background, coming from 37 different countries. Over 60% of young people accommodated at Foyer Oxford have a formal mental health diagnosis, and a significant percentage identify as having Diverse Sexuality or Gender (DSG). There is a pathway for young people with disabilities to access supported living at Foyer Oxford, and many have taken this up through the NDIS. Around 25% of young people come to Foyer Oxford from State and Out-Of-Home Care. The diversity of the population, and the intentionally balanced community, is one of the key success factors of the large-scale model, where significant risk and complexity is well-managed through sophisticated intake assessments and person-centred, trauma-informed approach to practice.

### ***1.2 Make more beds available in low-barrier crisis and short-term transitional accommodation***

7% of young people who live at Foyer Oxford were sleeping rough prior to entry, 25% were in unstable accommodation, and 68% were in short term or emergency housing. With a longer term strategic commitment to the model in WA, Foyer Oxford will continue to create substantial positive impact with young people across all levels of the homelessness continuum, and would prevent more than 95 young people per year from accessing sustainable pathways out of homelessness, which would otherwise place further strain on crisis and short-term transitional accommodation services.

### ***1.3 Innovation and collaboration***

Foyer Oxford represents innovation through its model, its scale, the purpose-built design and construction, and the duration of stay. Young people in WA and across the country consistently report that the duration of stay was one of the most important factors in their successful transition out of homelessness. Young people are offered an opportunity to stay for up to two years, with the option to consider extending this where it assists a young person to meet their goals without creating a service dependency.

Collaboration is at the heart of the Foyer Oxford model. An intentional community engagement strategy ensures excellent relationships with the Leederville and Vincent communities, including the City of Vincent and the Transition Town Movement. The inclusion of successful commercial tenancies at street level ensures the building presents a positive public face, and contributes to the local community and its economy. The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia is co-located inside the building, along with program staff from the three consortium organisations.

Partnerships with Mission Australia's DAYS program, Youth Focus, and Youth Reach South and established relationships with the Fiona Stanley Hospital Mental Health Unit ensure young people are appropriately supported when their circumstances become more complicated, helping to sustain tenancies and avoid young people cycling through the system. This provides a more integrated and accessible mental health and drug and alcohol response, avoiding the duplication of services, and making use of what works.

Relationships with all of the services supporting young people experiencing homelessness are critical to the success of Foyer Oxford as referral pathways in and out. Second layer institutions like schools also provide an entry point for young people into Foyer Oxford, and many young people have successfully continued in high school education throughout their stay.

We would argue that Foyer Oxford represents the most significant innovation in the WA homelessness and housing sectors over the past 10 years. Sustainability of this outstanding model and its results is now critical.

## **2. Prevention and Early Intervention**

### ***2.1 Focus on families and young people to break cycles of homelessness***

The focus of Foyer Oxford is to support young people experiencing homelessness to break the cycle and exit into independence. This includes providing accommodation for up to 24 young parents with their children. Foyer Oxford, and the Foyer model nationally and internationally, have consistently been evaluated and all evaluations indicate that the model successfully prevents young people experiencing homelessness as an adult, and the children of those young people from experiencing trauma from living in unstable or unsafe conditions.

### **Are these the principles we would like to see in the strategy?**

Foyer Oxford is a critical pathway out of homelessness for young people, and has demonstrated that it successfully exits young people from the crisis system and into private housing. A Consortium of three leading organisations shows that we have always recognised that “ending homelessness is everyone’s responsibility”. “Homelessness is more than a housing problem” and the aspirational, person-centred approach contained in the Foyer model is essential to young people’s successful transition to independence. “Housing is a foundation for life” but it is not the only factor necessary for young people to break the cycle of homelessness. Foyer Oxford fills that gap, by delivering a model based on supporting “individual strengths” through a nationally recognised advantaged thinking, or strengths-based, approach.

Through a collaborative approach with Anglicare WA’s housing and homelessness services, and all of the other services supporting young people, we form part of the “no wrong door” approach to service delivery, where young people are always supported to find the right opportunity for them.

A thorough design process, intentional community engagement, and a responsive and evolving model, ensures that foyer Oxford is “the right solution delivered in the right place”.

It has been independently and rigorously evaluated as a best practice approach to youth homelessness. It provides an evidence base for what works for young people based on data and outcomes. We are proud to hold ourselves accountable to the ambitious targets we set.

Continued support of Foyer Oxford, and the addition of new Foyer models to WA should feature as an important component of the 10-year strategy, and would provide significant future impact on homelessness across the community of Western Australia. Without it, significant and increased demand on untested new social housing models would likely result, a loss of a critical leverage point for systemic reform, and perhaps leave more than 800 young people over the next 10 years waiting for ‘a place to call home.’

Yours Faithfully



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