



**The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP  
Minister for Housing  
Minister for the Status of Women**

MC09-026116

Mrs Julia Irwin MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin

Thank you for your letter of 19 November 2009 to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, about the petition regarding housing for young people at risk of homelessness. Minister Macklin has asked me to respond to you on her behalf as this issue is in my area of responsibility.

I appreciate the concerns of the people who have signed the petition about the number of youth who are homeless. Young people are particularly vulnerable as identified in the petition.

The Government has invested \$48 million over the next two years for the Reconnect program. Reconnect provides early intervention support for young people aged between 12 and 18 years who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and aims to improve the level of engagement with their families, education, training, employment and the community. Reconnect is delivered by Local Government, and non-government providers, offering services such as counselling, group work, mediation and practical support to both the young person and their family.

There are currently 107 Reconnect services in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations around Australia.

More broadly on homelessness, I was proud to launch the White Paper on Homelessness with the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, in December 2008. Called *The Road Home*, the White Paper is the Government's plan to reduce homelessness.

The Government has set two ambitious but achievable goals: to halve overall homelessness by 2020 and offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it by 2020. State and Territory Governments have also committed to these targets through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, States and Territories and the Commonwealth have agreed to spend \$1.1 billion to implement support services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The State and Territory Governments are responsible for the distribution of funding for homelessness support and service delivery in their jurisdictions. The States and Territories have agreed to the goals and targets set in the National Partnership on Homelessness to reduce homelessness and are required to spend the funding on initiatives to achieve these goals.

Young people feature significantly in these agreements.

This new funding includes \$300 million announced with the States and Territories last year for the purchase of 731 new homes across Australia for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

In addition, under the Social Housing Initiative, as part of the National Building Economic Stimulus Plan, the Commonwealth Government has committed \$5.64 billion to allow the construction of over 19,300 dwellings and to renovate more than 60,000 existing dwellings. This will help us to achieve the goals set out in the White Paper on Homelessness by providing more opportunities for people to access stable accommodation.

The Commonwealth Government is determined to reduce homelessness, not just through extra funding, but through reform. A different approach is required to assist people to get back on their feet and into secure housing, with the support they need for mainstream social and economic participation. We also aim to significantly reduce the number of people becoming homeless in the first place, or cycling in and out of homelessness.

I trust that this information demonstrates the commitment the Commonwealth Government has in facilitating a real reduction in homelessness. I genuinely appreciate the good work being done by the many individuals and organisations like the St John of God Foundation and their Horizon House in supporting homeless young people in our community.

Once again, thank you for writing on this important issue.

Yours sincerely

**Tanya Plibersek**

14.12.09