



**“MAKING IT HOME – WELL AT  
LEAST PART OF THE WAY....”  
WHY FAMILY ENGAGEMENT  
MATTERS IN YOUTH  
HOMELESSNESS**

**Council to Homeless Persons  
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## BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PAST

- The Focus on early intervention, homelessness and young people emerges. Post Burdekin family mediation and student at risk services emerge, followed by YHPP, Reconnect, and a range of state early intervention strategies. SAAP services engage in examining their role in EI.
- Shift from individualised to 'connected' frame for young people, mirroring young people's changing relationship to work, school & family
- Several programs focus on young people at risk across several funding streams emerge



# SOME EXISTING PROGRAMS AND THEIR FUNDING SOURCE

- Reconnect (FaCHSIA)
  - 12 – 18
  - At risk of or newly homeless
  - National focus
- SAAP Family Reconciliation Workers (ooH)
  - 15 – 25
  - Based in number of settings (youth & family, refuge)
  - Maintain connections
- School Focused Youth Service (DECD)
  - 10 – 18
  - Maintain connection to school to reduce mental health issues, self harm
  - Brokerage funding
- Finding Solutions (FaCS, FVSAS)
  - 12 – 16
  - Out of home care divisionary program
  - CP referral
- Family Reconciliation Mediation Program (OoH)
  - 15 – 25
  - Focus on capacity building of the homelessness sector
  - Brokerage funding
- And there's more....



# MAKING FAMILY COUNT

- Statistical data tells us family breakdown is a significant cause of homelessness (2<sup>nd</sup> most common reason given from people seeking assistance from HSS)
- Latest census data suggests early intervention type programs like Reconnect have contributed to falling numbers of young homeless people (-16%) (12 – 18)
- Whilst the connection to family may be significantly fractured, young people tell us family is still very important (their own or emerging). (“yeah, I don’t live with my folks any longer – things got pretty screwed – just don’t seem to be able to live together but I still want to know them – want them to know I’m ok and just get along without having to fight all the time. They still matter....and I miss my dog” (Young male, 17, FRMP feedback)
- The Road Home points to a significant focus on prevention & early intervention – stopping people becoming homeless or a swift intervention out of homelessness
- Recent Victorian Homelessness strategy suggest early intervention prevention most effective in addressing homelessness



# FAMILY – DIFFERENT MEANINGS FOR ALL

- Traditionally viewed as the biological parents
- Different context needs different interpretation and different response
- Intervention could mean a return home if safe and appropriate
- Intervention could support a connection to (other significant members)
- Intervention could mean a “reconciling” of “past hurt” to improve current and future “families”
- Typical formal interventions may include family mediation, individual counselling, family counselling, family group conferencing, family meetings or may just be as informal as having a chat & “really listening”



## BUT IT CAN BE DIFFICULT....

- But it doesn't have to be
- Youth rights based approach
- Focused on facilitating access to accommodation – rarely involved consideration of family or maintaining connection to (loss of place, school, peers)
- Shift in policy and practice – evidence suggests inclusion of family works
- Assessment, assessment, assessment – we have to ask the questions
- Have to be an investigator
- Capacity for assertive referral - if we are unable to deliver then who can
- The lived experience of a young person's family breakdown – needs to be validated, acknowledged and legitimised



# THANKS

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