



## SUBMISSION TO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

### Karinya Overview

Karinya Young Women's Service is an independent, not for profit organisation based in Launceston, Tasmania that provides short term crisis accommodation to young women aged 13 to 20. The service also has a separate Young Mums and Bubs program (KYM) for young pregnant women and young parents aged 16 to 19 and a Community Tenancy Management program that manages the tenancies for 29 properties including 1 refuge transitional property, 16 KYM properties and 12 Northern Youth Accommodation Coalition (NYAC) properties.

Karinya was founded in 1979 and was originally established as a feminist-based collective model. The service altered its management structure in the 1990's to establish separation between the Management Committee and worker team. Governance responsibility for the organisation sits with the Management Committee which meets monthly to over-see the management of the service and programs, with Karinya continuing to function with a flat-structured work team of 5.5 FTE and a casual pool. The day to day operation of the service is coordinated by the full time refuge workers who take shared responsibility for all administration and the overall co-ordination of all programs.

Karinya is funded under the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) directive to provide crisis accommodation and support. The refuge provides accommodation for up to six young women in a purpose built facility. A separate onsite unit allows for extended crisis stays, with a maximum of 7 young women accommodated in the refuge at any given time.

The crisis accommodation maintains a worker on duty 24 hours a day and supports refuge clients to find longer term stable accommodation or reunification with family where possible and appropriate. The organisation works with both government and non-government services in the region to deliver a cooperative approach for individual clients. Many of Karinya's clients have high and complex needs and have difficulty in accessing and/or maintaining affordable accommodation and support.



young women's service

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### **KYM – Karinya Young Mums’n’Bubs**

KYM is a program that has been making a positive difference in Northern Tasmania since 2012. It is currently funded for 1.8 FTE case managers through a three-year funding agreement with the Tasmanian State Government and an additional .2 FTE is funded through the Kimberly Foundation until September 2019. The KYM program addresses the needs of young parents and pregnant young women 16-19-year-old in northern Tasmania by providing an early intervention service that includes supported accommodation with intensive wrap-around support, targeting the individual needs of parents and their children. The program offers secure housing, providing them with the opportunity to look for work or start education, as well as establish a safe environment for their family.

### **Karinya Community Tenancy Management**

Karinya is the primary lease holder with Housing Tasmania for 29 properties across three programs KYM, NYAC and Karinya refuge.

The tenancy worker and support workers work closely together so that any issues with the tenancy can be flagged early and a coordinated support approach provided to ensure positive client outcomes are achieved.



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## RESPONSE TO ASPECTS OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

### (a) *the experiences of Tasmanians in housing stress or homelessness;*

- Youth allowance has not increased in real terms for the last 20 years and has not kept up with the increase in cost of living. It is considered that youth allowance rates are some 30% below the poverty line. There are no affordable private rentals anywhere in the state for young people receiving youth allowance according to Social Action Research Centre, Rental Affordability Snapshot 2018.
- Due to the limited supply of youth specific housing and lack of affordable housing overall, Karinya has seen a significant change in length of stay in crisis accommodation over the years. This issue is compounded for clients under 16 where there are no exit points at all. Karinya regularly accommodates 15 year olds for extended periods of time. Despite these young people being referred to Child Protection, or sometimes have a long history with Child Safety, they are not taken into the Out of Home Care system. Under 16's are not able to join waiting lists for transitional or public housing, which means that after months in the shelter they can finally go on waiting lists after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, from which point they still face a significant waiting time before they can move on to more stable accommodation.
- Punitive measures by Centrelink such as cutting income for missed phone appointments also has significant impact on housing stability. Young people on low income often lack a reliable phone or have no access to internet and are often unaware of not having met obligations until their payment has been cut off. This results in not being able to pay rent and puts their accommodation at risk.
- The main exit points for young people in Launceston are transitional housing through the Northern Youth Accommodation Coalition (NYAC) and Thyne House or public housing. They are rarely accepted by Community Housing providers due to their low income. Waiting lists are long for these options and time limited transitional housing means they potentially remain at risk of homelessness unless they are offered public housing.
- Rental assistance for youth allowance recipients is inadequate and results that even some transitional housing options costs in excess of 35% of their already very low income. Their capacity for affording food, power and personal necessities is limited. The cost of transport is unaffordable for independent young people which impacts on their ability to engage in education and training or work.



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- (i) *the relationship between housing, health and education; AND*  
(e) *effectiveness of current strategies and services*

- New developments such as Education First Foyer Model (Thyne House is adopting this model) although great for some young people will not provide greater accommodation options for many young people in the sector as they will not fit the intake criteria of these programs.
- Due to the lack of appropriate accommodation options for young people, they are facing much longer stays in crisis accommodation services. Whereas a few years ago the benchmark was 6 weeks for emergency accommodation, average stays are now 4 months or longer. Partly this is also due to the length of time it takes to secure Centrelink benefits. Lengthy periods of insecure housing has implications for mental/physical health and wellbeing. It also impacts on their ability to remain engaged in education or reconnecting with family and community.
- Many young people resort to couch surfing, often living in unacceptable conditions, engaging in negative activities which impacts on their overall wellbeing.

- (f) *any other matters incidental thereto.*

- The need for medium to long term accommodation options for under 16's has been raised continuously over the years. Extra crisis accommodation services for this age group will not address the lack of stable accommodation and support for this cohort.
- There is also a great need for supported accommodation facilities for young people with high and complex needs. This is an emerging need for a growing number of young people who do not have the capacity to successfully maintain an independent tenancy such as NYAC and do not fit the criteria for an Education First Foyer model due to their lack of engagement in education and complexities, such as mental health, trauma background and behavioural issues.

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