

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **13-15 Year Olds Slipping Through the Gaps Into Homelessness**

The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs in the ACT, welcomes an initiative that will bring together 120 workers from community and government youth, housing, family support, and out of home care services to explore current and future options available to support young people aged 13 to 15 years old who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The Care and Accommodation Forum, to be held at Olims Hotel from 9am-4.30pm, 10 November 2009, is a cross sectoral partnership which aims to develop strategies to address an identified gap in supports for this vulnerable group of young people.

"Young people in this age range are currently falling through the gaps in the service system. Youth services continue to report that they are seeing people under the age of 15 years who are seeking help to find accommodation", said Emma Robertson, Director of the Youth Coalition.

"While it may not always be appropriate for Care and Protection Services to engage with a young person at risk of or experiencing homelessness, youth homelessness services generally can only be accessed by young people over the age of 15 years. This leaves young people aged under 15 years, and their families, with few options for support to address basic shelter and then the issues and factors that have contributed to the young person becoming homeless in the first place."

"Youth homelessness is a complex issue, and requires an integrated, evidenced and coordinated response."

"The Youth Coalition continues to identify that appropriate, stable, affordable and safe accommodation options for young people remains one of the highest priorities for young people in the ACT. Lack of secure accommodation can undermine young people's health, their relationships and their prospects in education and employment. Housing is one of the fundamental of determinants of the wellbeing of young people and should be given extremely high importance in any government policy development."

"We look forward to working with the ACT Government and the community youth and family support sectors to further progress this issue."

**For further comment please contact Emma Robertson on 0422 665 469**