



**NEWS ALERT**  
**22 December 2008**

**OPEN FAMILY AUSTRALIA CALLS ON RUDD TO DO MORE FOR HOMELESS YOUTH**

Open Family Australia has welcomed the federal government's commitment to funding outlined in the White Paper but believes that building houses and refuges is not the answer to solving youth homelessness.

"We commend the Prime Minister on the government's investment in the issue. However we don't want this to be a band-aid response. In order for the Australian community to resolve this significant problem we need to look at the underlying issues that result in young people becoming homeless," says Sue Renkin, Chief Executive Officer of Open Family Australia.

Open Family Australia is working in partnership with government and businesses to link young people back into communities. This proven model recognised by the World Bank and the United Nations works at reconnecting young people into services and education to prevent long term homelessness.

Open Family Australia is one of the few agencies who are able to reach many young people not identified by other youth agencies, as they do not work within a 9 to 5 framework. The Specialist Street outreach workers go to where young people are, often out of hours and often in areas identified as high risk.

Ms Renkin says: "We know that young people do not want to be homeless and that they want to be a part of the community however issues such as family conflict and abuse, disengagement from school, poverty and disenfranchisement can result in a young person leaving home and living on the streets. By addressing these issues, we believe it is possible to reduce the flow-on effect of being homeless and dependency on the welfare state as whole.

"We welcome the opportunity to help develop a broad range of strategies that address these issues, and create effective programs that enable street outreach workers to be the first point of contact with young people.

"We call on the government to ensure that the funding resulting from the White Paper is broad ranging and focuses on more than just housing," Ms Renkin said.

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