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REPORT ON OUTCOMES OF THE INNER CITY YOUTH AT RISK PROJECT 2012

The most recent Australian Census conducted in 2011 highlighted that 105,000 people were homeless in Australia on Census night, with 25 per cent of the overall Australian homeless population aged between 12 - 24.

In Sydney, Kings Cross and surrounding areas attract significant numbers of young people (up to 25 years of age) who are at risk of becoming entrenched in a high risk lifestyle involving long term homelessness, substance abuse issues, mental health, violence, problematic sex work, criminal activity and self-harm.

The NSW- based Inner City Youth at Risk (ICYAR) Project partners with 21 mainstream health services, other government agencies, local government, a range of youth and homelessness support agencies and non-government organisations, to target and respond to young people who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness in Kings Cross and surrounding inner-city Sydney areas.

The ICYAR Project last week launched a report, *Outcomes of the Inner City Youth at Risk Project 2012* (Report), which describes the activities and achievements of the Project and the costs of providing services, based on the ICYAR database between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2012.

Commissioned by the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD), the Report was prepared by the Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales. The Report provides a snapshot of the key issues of young people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and found the ICYAR Project is reaching its target client group of highly disadvantaged young people.

A quarter of all clients identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. The average age at which clients first had contact with ICYAR was 22, and young men and women were equally represented.

The majority of clients assessed as part of the Report had presented with multiple issues and experienced unstable accommodation (82.9 per cent). Around a third had mental health issues and almost a third of clients had alcohol and other drug issues.

Dr Greg Stewart, Director, Operations, Primary and Ambulatory Health said the Project brokers essential services and resources for young people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, such as food, emergency accommodation and longer-term housing, access to health services and assistance with education and vocational services.

"The Report found that in the last two years, the Project has exceeded its targets by providing 1145 instances of brokerage to 487 clients. This includes providing 190 food vouchers, 157 housing set-up costs, 142 instances of emergency accommodation.

"Of the 487 clients assessed as part of the Report, 82 returned home to their families and 116 received financial and non-financial contributions towards their education and vocation," Dr Stewart said.

A key finding of the Report was that access to brokerage funds, communication and co-operation between agencies were strongly identified as critical to the success of ICYAR, and these should be maintained and incorporated into future service models. The service model is regarded by partner agencies as effective and efficient, and their sustained participation over the life of the project reflects this.

"The Report builds the evidence base describing successful responses to young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. It also highlights the value of its intersectoral model of service delivery," Dr Stewart said.

The ICYAR Project is part of the *National Partnership on Homelessness NSW Implementation Plan* and the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009-2014* and builds upon the successful Kings Cross Youth at Risk Project.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District
Media contact: Poppy Diamantis 02 9382 8398 or 0411 730 842