



press clip

21-year-old speaks out on youth homelessness

# No home, but have a heart

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AT 15 years old, Madison Collings had no home or family to turn to for help.

She spent some time living on friends' couches before giving birth to her son, trying two other living arrangements, and ending up in a motel.

"I don't know where I'd be now if there weren't services like Connecting Home," Ms Collings, now 21, said.

"My Connecting Home case worker is my main support in life ... she comes with me to everything."

Connecting Home works with people aged 16-24 years old who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve long-term housing goals.

"It's transitional housing so my case worker is helping me find my own rental through a real estate agent," she said.

"Not many real estate agents or landlords will give you a chance at renting if you don't have a rental

history, so it's good to rent these places first because you've got references.

"Connecting Home don't just give you a house and then not talk to you, you meet up with your case worker once a week, but I

speak to mine through text three to four days a week."

Connecting Home is run by the Northern Rivers Social Development Council.

The NRSDC is partnering with The Family Centre to bring an activity to different areas of the Northern Rivers to raise awareness of youth homelessness today.

There will be doors displayed in public spaces of Lismore, Byron Bay and Ballina and on the doors will be keys with tags attached, asking the question: "Having a safe home allows me to ..."

Community members are invited to write their own messages on the tags and place them on the doors.

NRSDC organiser Jennifer Parke said it would help to raise awareness of youth homelessness.

"We hope these installations give people the chance to reflect on the benefits afforded by having somewhere safe and comfortable to live, and the realisation there are many people ... who do not enjoy the same privileges," she said.

There are 26,000 young homeless Australians and 70% of them are in that situation because they left

home to escape family violence, abuse or family breakdown.

That's why each year on April 13 the nation recognises Youth Homelessness Matters Day.

Ms Collings said she would advise anyone facing homelessness to speak with services such as Connecting Home and to get connected with a social worker.

If you or someone you know is homeless or at risk of being homeless, you can contact Connecting Home on 1800 048 310, email [firstresponse@connectinghome.com.au](mailto:firstresponse@connectinghome.com.au).



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**LIFE SAVER: Madison Collings of Casino is grateful to Connecting Home for helping her find somewhere to live. PHOTO: CATHY ADAMS**