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For immediate release

Media Release

Young people don't leave home unless it is serious

Youth Homelessness Matters Day, Wednesday 13th April 2015

Youth Homelessness Matters Day is an annual national awareness day aimed at raising awareness and understanding around youth homelessness; how it can happen, the stigmas attached to homelessness and the ways we can all help.

For Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2016, The Family Centre and Northern Rivers Social Development Council through their Connecting Home program, have partnered to raise awareness of youth homelessness in our region.

“By participating in Youth Homelessness Matters Day we hope to help break the common stereotypes that are associated with youth homelessness and the stigma attached to homelessness which can prevent young people from seeking help” says NRSDC organiser Jennifer Parke.

This Youth Homelessness Matters Day we are asking people to consider the benefits of a safe home environment. On Wednesday 13th April in Grafton, Lismore, Byron Bay, Ballina and Tweed Heads, there will be a door displayed in a prominent public space. On that door will be keys with tags attached posing the question, “*Having a safe home allows me to.....*” The community will help us to build the installation as they write their own messages on the key tags and place them on the doors.

“We hope these installations will give people the chance to reflect on the benefits afforded by having somewhere safe and comfortable to live, and the realisation that there are many people, and far too many young people, who do not enjoy the same privileges,” says organiser, says Jennifer.

“Many people would be shocked to know just how many Australian youth are homeless. Currently on any given day in Australia, more than 26,000 young people between the ages of 12-25 years are experiencing homelessness. And this issue isn't limited to metropolitan areas – it is a very real issue facing people in the Northern Rivers region,” states Jennifer.

“The majority of youth leave home due to domestic and family violence, child abuse or family breakdown because it is too dangerous for them to stay. Young people don't leave home unless it is serious” says Jennifer.

“While we can't always prevent the situations which force young people out of their homes, we can help to ensure that they have access to support. We need well-resourced services which can work with young people to build pathways away from homelessness and toward stable and positive futures for themselves” says Jennifer, “so by raising awareness about

these issues we also hope to encourage greater support for specialist homelessness services.”

Connecting Home works with young people, their families and community partners to address the causes of youth homelessness, and helps people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve long term housing goals. This may be through supporting people to reconnect with their families or to find secure accommodation options. Connecting Home also provides crisis response through emergency short term accommodation in collaboration with Housing NSW and the state-wide Link2Home Service.

The Connecting Home program is delivered in Tweed Heads, Byron Bay and Ballina regions by The Family Centre and in Lismore, Casino, Kyogle and the Clarence region by The Northern Rivers Social Development Council.

If you or someone you know is homeless or at risk of being homeless, you can contact Connecting Home on 1800 048 310 or email firstresponse@connectinghome.com.au or you can call the Link2Home Service on 1800 152 152.

You can find out more about youth homelessness matters day by visiting www.youthhomelessnessmatters.info

Quick Facts:

- 42% of the homelessness population is under 25 years old
- 26,000 young Australian between 12-25 years old are experiencing homelessness every night
- 70% left home to escape family violence, child abuse or family breakdown
- The first and most common way young people experience homelessness is couch surfing

Ref: National Youth Coalition for Housing, 2016 www.youthhomelessnessmatters.info

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Northern Rivers Social Development Council (NRSDC)

A community-based not-for-profit organisation that promotes fairness and social inclusion in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

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