



# **The revolving doors of youth homelessness and (re)offending**

**Kirsten Sandstrom and Leanne Cornell-March**



*“Desperate times call for desperate measures; we held up service stations and stole food from supermarkets. Trying to get money when you don’t have anywhere to stay is really hard...”*

(Robbie, aged 15, IRJPR Murdoch University Research Project)

# The revolving door of youth homelessness and (re)offending



1. SYC's model of service delivery for young people exiting youth detention.
2. Personal and systemic barriers: the revolving door.
3. Recommendations to break the offending-homelessness cycle.

# Current Services



## **Homelessness Support Services:**

Trace-A-Place®, Get-A-Place®, Hocking Court units, Street Soccer

## **School Retention Services:**

Youth Pathways Program, Flexible Learning Options

## **Pre-Employment Services:**

Job Placement Employment & Training Program, Personal Support Program

## **Youth Justice:**

Specialist Juvenile Justice JPET, Pre-release programs

## **Sport and Recreation:**

Get Rec, Rec the North, Bronzed Up, Getting Fit

## **Volunteer Youth Mentor Services:**

Helping Young People Achieve

Trace-A-Place®



...is the central assessment, referral and case management service into the Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program – a model unique to Australia.

# Triple JPET



...is a Specialist *Juvenile Justice Job* Placement Employment and Training (JPET) Program.

- A collaboration with Department of Education and Childrens' Services (Youth Education Centre) and Department for Families and Communities (Youth Justice).

# Integrated response to offending/homelessness



SYC's multidisciplinary case management approach:

- Pre-release Life Skills program.
- Lead case management from Triple JPET.
- Connected with Trace-A-Place Assessment Worker.
- Involvement in group programs in accordance with case plan.
- Pro-social support through SYC's Volunteer Youth Mentor Service.
- Legal advice and support.
- Collaboration with broader youth justice sector: DFC Case Management Teams, Home Detention, Breaking the Cycle, Special Programs for Youth, OARS.
- Referral to specialist providers: education, vocational training, employment service providers.

# Youth Homelessness – a different experience

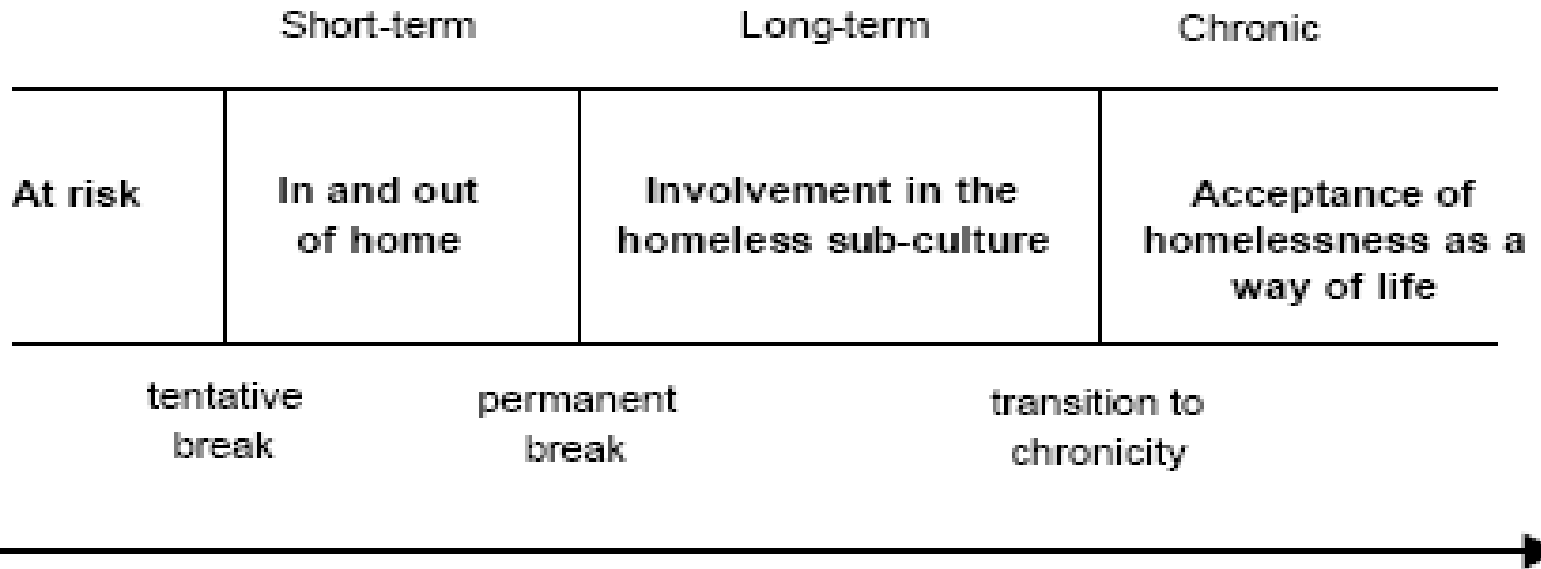


- Most common reason: family breakdown
- Developmental stage:
  - Identity formation
  - Centrality of peers
- Triple JPET client experiences:
  - 53% exiting detention experienced accommodation breakdown within 6 months of release
  - 65% reoffended within 6 months of release

# Homeless career



- Homelessness as a process rather than an event:



Chamberlain, C. and Mackenzie, D. (1998) *Youth Homelessness: Early Intervention and Prevention*

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# Peer Influence Model



1. Lack of suitable accommodation can result in homelessness = young person links in with peers for support.
2. One person in the peer group (“tenant”) obtains accommodation.
3. The influence of peers on the tenant increases: accommodation is placed at risk.
4. Tenant is evicted or detained due to further offending.
5. The peer group disperses.

Tenant is released and the cycle repeats...

# Criminalisation of Homelessness



- Survival crime.
- Public space offences.
- Transport fines.
- Transience breaches judicial orders.
- Lack of suitable accommodation options.

# Recommendations to shut the revolving door



1. Therapeutic interventions to address young people's pathway into homelessness, and the risk factors which cause them to repeatedly offend.

# Recommendations to shut the revolving door



2. Supportive, long term, community based accommodation.

# Recommendations to shut the revolving door



3. Evidence based, consistent and comprehensive model of case management.

# Recommendations to shut the revolving door



4. Independent living skills program.
  - In detention and post release.
  - Detailed assessment.
  - Modules: Interpersonal relationships, problem solving, managing anger, isolation, conflict resolution, negotiation skills, practical living skills.

# Recommendations to shut the revolving door



4. (cont...) Peer influence model is embedded into the independent living skills program.

NYC Report Recommendation 18.6:

- Stronger post-release programs
- Case management support
- Brokerage funds
- Accommodation
- Follow up for at least 12 months
- Client data collection system

Contact details for  
more information...



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