



# MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Critical Support Needed for WA Children**

The community services sector is warning that more children and young people are going to fall into poverty and homelessness in Western Australia if the major political parties don't make funding for services a priority.

The sector has launched the 'What If It Was Me?' state election campaign, which calls for greater social equality, including more support for children and young people.

WA Council of Social Service CEO Louise Giollito said an investment in children and young people was an investment in the state's future.

"At the moment, there is a significant segment of that population that we are failing as a society," she said.

"Child poverty rates across Australia are increasing, with nearly three quarters of a million children growing up in poverty.

"The number of children being taken into state care in WA continues to grow, and 53% of those children are Aboriginal."

"The State has a direct responsibility to support young people transitioning from state care and detention, and commencing their journey into adulthood.

"Yet we know that these young people face a significantly higher chance of finding themselves homeless or coming into contact with the justice system.

"All children deserve to be safe, treated with dignity and respect and be nurtured to grow to their full potential."

Youth Affairs Council of WA CEO Ross Wortham said connected, collaborative wrap around systems of support were vital to addressing inequality and disadvantage among children and young people.

"We need effective early intervention and prevention programs that work with vulnerable children and their families to address underlying risk factors in order to reduce ongoing contact with the justice and child protection systems," he said.

"We need to make employment opportunities accessible to young people. Many are leaving school, university or TAFE feeling underprepared and anxious about the employment process.

"And we need to make sure that young people have access to non-judgemental and supportive services and service providers.

"We know that LGBTIQ young people have the highest rates of suicide of any population in Australia due to the discrimination and exclusion they face.

"As part of the campaign we've launched, we want people to ask themselves: if it was you, or a young person in your life, wouldn't you want them to have the best possible chance of a healthy and happy future?"

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