



PRIME MINISTER

PRIME MINISTERIAL YOUTH HOMELESS TASKFORCE

In my address to the ACOSS National Conference last October, I announced that a Coalition Government would establish a Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme.

Today I am pleased to announce the terms of reference and the membership of a Prime Ministerial Youth Homeless Taskforce which will oversee the implementation of this important election commitment.

The major elements of this two year voluntary Pilot Programme include:

- a) an enhanced role for community organisations which will advise on eligibility for longer term income support, whilst the final decision about income support will remain with the relevant government agency;
- b) an increased emphasis on the importance of early intervention, mediation and wherever possible reconciliation with family members; and
- c) a commitment to improve the co-ordination between the various State and Commonwealth agencies which provide services for young people and their families.

On 26 March, the Ministers for Family Services, Social Security, and Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs and I met with community leaders to discuss the implementation of the Government's Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme.

At that meeting it was decided to establish a Prime Ministerial Taskforce which will have the job of overseeing the development and operation of the Pilot Programme.

The Taskforce will be chaired by Captain David Eldridge who is the Chairman of the Salvation Army's Eastern Division in Melbourne. Captain Eldridge has many years of experience in providing services for young homeless people and their families.

Captain Eldridge will be assisted by a Taskforce which includes people from both the voluntary welfare and the SAAP sectors with proven experience and expertise in the delivery of services to the young homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless.

It is anticipated that the Taskforce will hold its initial meeting within the next fortnight and will report on the framework for the pilots by the end of June 1996. The Minister for Family Services, Mrs Moylan, has primary responsibility for the Pilot Programme.

I will also shortly be writing to the Premiers and Chief Ministers asking them to cooperate with the Commonwealth in the implementation of this Programme which we envisage will entail the establishment of Pilots in a number of States and Territories.

1 May 1996

PRIME MINISTERIAL YOUTH HOMELESS TASKFORCE

Terms of Reference

Having regard to the Government's stated commitment to a Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme (the Pilot Programme) aimed at re-engaging young homeless people in family, work, education, training and community through:

- early intervention, mediation and, wherever practicable, reconciliation with family members;
- ensuring that income support at the independent homeless rate is made available to people who are properly entitled to it; and
- using the expertise and skills of voluntary welfare organisations to assist in achieving the above

the Prime Minister has established a Youth Homeless Taskforce which will:

1. Advise the Prime Minister and the relevant Ministers on the Pilot Programme including:
 - the most appropriate form for the pilots, taking into account the range and co-ordination of existing services for the target group;
 - a framework for the focus, location and funding of the pilots, specification of the outcomes which can reasonably be expected to be achieved from the pilots, and appropriate evaluation and accountability mechanisms;
 - the most productive and appropriate role for voluntary agencies in advising on entitlement for income support at the independent homeless rate;
 - ways in which the pilots can improve co-ordination between the various State and Commonwealth agencies which provide services for the homeless thereby enabling existing resources to be used more efficiently in assisting young people and their families;
 - the capacity of the pilots to achieve linkages with existing services and to develop a more effective partnership between the government and non-government sectors;
 - any gaps in existing service provision for young people which will need to be addressed in the context of the operation of the pilots; and
2. In conjunction with the pilots, develop an action research programme which will have the purpose of identifying best practice in: service provision; the assessment of eligibility for income support; and early intervention and mediation strategies for young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

3. Monitor the operation of the pilots and their progress and advise the Prime Minister and the relevant Ministers on an ongoing basis on the achievement or otherwise of the outcomes specified for the pilots.

4. Use the evaluation of the pilots and the findings arising from the action research programme to advise the Prime Minister and the relevant Ministers on a broad and ongoing response to the needs of young homeless people and their families by way of a final report to be completed by 30 October 1998.

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Roles and responsibilities

The Taskforce will develop and oversee the framework for the pilots and advise the Prime Minister and relevant Ministers as specified in the terms of reference.

The Department of Health and Family Services will have administrative and functional responsibility for the Pilot Programme and will implement it in concert with the Departments of Social Security; and Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

The Department of Social Security (DSS) has responsibility for determining eligibility for the Youth Training Allowance entitlements. The pilots will provide advice to DSS on participants' eligibility for payment at the independent homeless rate.

The Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) has responsibility for determining eligibility for Austudy/Abstudy entitlements. The pilots will provide advice to DEETYA on participants' eligibility for payment at the independent homeless rate.

State and Territory governments have a range of responsibilities in assisting young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Improving the co-ordination between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories in the area of youth homelessness will be an important objective of the Pilot Programme. The Prime Minister will write to the Premiers and Chief Ministers seeking their support in implementing the pilots. This will be followed up at the Ministerial and official level.

Timeframe

It is envisaged that the Taskforce will complete its initial deliberations and report to the Prime Minister and relevant Ministers on the framework for the pilots by the end of June 1996. It is envisaged that the pilots will be established by the end of August 1996 and will run for two years.

The Taskforce will have the task of monitoring the pilots in concert with the relevant Commonwealth agencies. Once the Pilots are established, it is envisaged that the Taskforce will continue to meet at least once every six months. There will be an interim report on the first twelve months operation of the pilots.

Principles of the Pilot Programme

The Pilot Programme is based on the principle of early intervention with special emphasis on the importance of mediation and, wherever practicable, reconciliation with family members. Community agencies will provide counselling, assessment, advice on entitlement for income support and a long term support plan where appropriate. Participation by young people in the pilots will be entirely voluntary.

ATTACHMENT**Membership of the Prime Ministerial Youth Homeless Taskforce**

Captain David Eldridge, Salvation Army, Eastern Division (Chairman)

Ms Gill Tasker, Brotherhood of St Laurence

Reverend Gordon Moyes, Wesley Central Mission

Mr Bryan Clutterbuck, St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW

Archdeacon Barry Martin, Anglicare, Brisbane

Ms Johanna Wilcox, President, Independent City Missions of Australia

Ms Narelle Clay, Wollongong Youth Accommodation and Support Association

Mr Philip Crane, Social Researcher, Queensland University of Technology

Dr Meredith Edwards, Deputy Secretary, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Ms Mary Murnane, Deputy Secretary, Department of Health and Family Services

Dr Jeff Harmer, Deputy Secretary, Department of Social Security

Ms Frances Davies, Assistant Secretary, Youth Bureau, DEETYA

Mr David Quilty, Prime Minister's office (ex officio)