

# **FINAL REPORT**

## **ROOFS FOR YOUTH**

**Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia**

**Funded by Commonwealth Department of Family and Community  
Services**

Disclaimer: The opinions, findings and proposals contained in this report represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the attitudes or opinions of the commonwealth, State or Territory Governments.

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## **1. Introduction**

The Roofs for Youth project was conducted in Perth, Western Australia by the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia. Project funding was provided by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services and formed part of the National Homelessness Strategy demonstration projects. The duration of the project was June 2002 to September 2003.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

This project has been the result of the effort of a number of people whose input and ideas have been greatly appreciated. I would like to sincerely thank:

### **Reference group members:**

Bev Bennett – Consultant  
Adrian Gimpel – Salvation Army Crossroads West  
Lisa Brown - MercyCare  
Sylvia Mollasi – Salvation Army Crossroads West  
Heather Dalziel - MercyCare

### **Agencies supplying information and forms:**

Tenants Advice Service  
Real Estate Institute of Western Australia  
Department of Housing and Works  
Department of Consumer and Employment Protection  
Rockingham Youth External Accommodation Project  
Queensland Youth Housing Coalition  
Service to Youth Council Rent Club  
Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service

### **Proof reading and feedback on Roofs for Youth manual:**

Camille Inifer – Tenants Advice Service  
Louise Weaver – Volunteering Western Australia  
Robyn Spinley – Real Estate Institute of Western Australia

### **Roofs for Youth workshop attendees:**

Young people and workers who attended the Roofs for Youth workshops

### **Agencies providing Roofs for Youth training opportunities:**

Great Mates  
Mission Australia  
Anglicare  
Victoria Park Youth Accommodation

### **Project support:**

Midge Turnbull – Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

### **3. Project Outline**

The following is the original project outline as described in the funding application. Throughout the course of this action research project, substantial changes were made to the original project outline.

**Title:**                    **Roofs for Youth**

**NHS Priority Area:** Developing information and education tools for young people.

**Target Group/s:**     Young people between the ages of 16 and 21 accessing private rental housing in metropolitan Perth.

#### **Objectives of the Proposal:**

- ❖ Increasing awareness of rights and responsibilities regarding private rental properties for
  - Young people
  - Real Estate Agents
- ❖ Increasing the success rate of young people successfully accessing private rental housing in the above area.
- ❖ Increasing the retention rate of young people in private rental properties.
- ❖ Decreasing the number of evictions of young people from private rental properties.

#### **Description:**

By far the largest number of young people will need to access private rental housing, as opposed to Homeswest accommodation or Community Housing. There is, however, reluctance on the part of many real estate agents to offer properties to young people.

Anecdotal evidence collected from Youth SAAP services suggests that of those young people seeking private rental, only a small percentage have successful private rental agreements without training and support. This creates a further strain on Homeswest Housing and increases the numbers of young people seeking crisis accommodation and resorting to friends' lounge room floors and living on the streets.

This project will build on two projects conducted in two areas of Perth that suggest that, with appropriate pre-tenancy training, young people are better able to secure and sustain a private tenancy/rental arrangement. This project will develop training for young people that is endorsed by the Real Estate Institute of WA (REIWA). Training materials will be available for use by workers and organizations in other areas and locations after the conclusion of this project.

While the project and expenditure will be the responsibility of YACWA, the management of the day-to-day aspects of the project will be by a management committee drawn from YACCOMM members and other identified key stakeholders, including young people. This group will also be responsible for action research within the project. Qualitative research methods will be used including case studies of the majority of the young people involved in the pilot.

**Output/s:** *Product or service arising from the proposal e.g. research report or delivery of client service.*

- ❖ A training manual for workers and organisations will be produced and piloted (this “manual” could be in the form of a video, a manual and/or internet based).
- ❖ Action research report produced.
- ❖ Development of an adaptable model of linking young people with private rental housing.

**Performance Indicators:** *Performance measures that indicate quality and quantity of output/s e.g. number of clients, client feedback (action research), rigorous methodology.*

Measured against the objectives, performance indicators will be:

- ❖ 20 young people attending the training.
- ❖ 15 of those who complete the training successfully gaining housing.
- ❖ 12 of those accessing housing still in successful tenancy after 6 months.
- ❖ Training material that is adaptable to other localities produced and being sourced by others.

**Stakeholders:** *Who will be either involved or affected by this proposal.*

- ❖ Youth SAAP services
- ❖ Real Estate Institute of Western Australia
- ❖ YACCOMM members
- ❖ Tenants Advice Service
- ❖ Landlords Advisory Service
- ❖ Homeswest
- ❖ Department of Community Development
- ❖ Young homeless people

**Timeline:**

*Stage One Months 1-2*  
Development of training materials.  
Building of relationships with key stakeholders as part of this process.

*Stage Two Months 3-9*  
Delivery of training package.  
Ongoing liaison with key stakeholders and young people participating in project.  
Support for young people moving into private accommodation for a minimum of 3 months.

Formative evaluation.

*Stage Three Months 10-12*

Summative evaluation of project including follow up of training participants.  
Preparation of final report.  
Marketing of training materials.  
Discussions with funding bodies for ongoing funding.

## **4. Acronyms**

The following is a list of acronyms used throughout this report:

YACWA	Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia
TAS	Tenants Advice Service
REIWA	Real Estate Institute of Western Australia
FACS	Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services

## **5. Research Methodology**

The Roofs for Youth project utilized action research methodology to conduct the research. Action research methodology is based on community development principles and follows a cycle of “plan, act, observe, reflect then plan, act, observe, reflect” (Muirhead 2002). By following action research methodology, the project design was able to be adjusted to meet the challenges that presented during the research and enabled the Project Officer to modify the project in accordance with the information gathered during the research project. By incorporating the cycle of “plan, act, observe, reflect then plan, act, observe, reflect” (Muirhead 2002), aspects of the original project design that initially appeared to be feasible but were later deemed to be impractical were able to be altered and the project emphasis changed to ensure more successful outcomes.

A Project Officer was employed on a part time basis to conduct the Roofs for Youth research project. The initial Project Officer was engaged with the project for a period of four months before leaving the project due to unforeseen personal circumstances. This situation created a delay in the project whilst a second Project Officer was employed, thus the extension in the project dates.

The Roofs for Youth project utilized a reference group to provide feedback, direction and input on the research conducted. The reference group consisted of three members, along with the Project Officer. Reference group members were drawn from three non-government, not for profit agencies that work with young people in the Perth metropolitan area, each with extensive experience in the field of youth work. The reference group members altered throughout the duration of the project due to two members taking long service leave. Reference group members met on a monthly basis.

A consultant was also employed throughout the Roofs for Youth project, performing the dual role of consultant and reference group member. Input received from the consultant included attending reference group meetings, providing feedback on the Roofs for Youth manual, conducting Roofs for Youth training sessions in conjunction with the Project Officer and networking to access young people and workers to attend Roofs for Youth training.

Quantitative research methodology was also utilized in the Roofs for Youth project. Young people and youth workers who attended the Roofs for Youth workshops were asked to complete “Roofs for Youth Training Feedback” forms (see Appendix 3). By obtaining feedback from those who participated in the Roofs for Youth workshops, the Project Officer, reference group and consultant were able to integrate any feedback into the design of the workshop sessions and the content of the manual.

Another facet of the research methodology involved Roofs for Youth workshop participants completing a “Research Consent Form” (see Appendix 2). This form accompanied an explanation of the purpose of the research and the format and purpose of Roofs for Youth workshops; informed participants that all information will be kept confidential; and notified research participants that they may withdraw their consent at any time without explanation. Informed consent of research participants is a necessary part of ethical research.

The Roofs for Youth project began attempting to adhere to the project outline as set out in the funding application. However, it soon became apparent that there were some inherent problems with the project design that required changes in the approach to the Roofs for Youth project. The following information details some of the difficulties experienced in the project design and the approaches taken to rectify problems.

## **Timelines**

The project timelines as set out in the project outline were particularly problematic. According to the project timeline, within the first one to two months, the Project Officer was to have completed the training materials and established relationships with key stakeholders. When the project was taken over at the five month mark by the second Project Officer, the training manual was not complete. Whilst relationships had been established with many stakeholders in the first few months of the project, as per the project outline, it was obvious that those who designed the Roofs for Youth project had grossly underestimated the amount of time it takes to produce a quality training manual.

The bulk of the time consumed on this project related to the production of the training manual, including researching, writing, trialing the manual through training sessions, consulting with other community agencies in relation to the content of the manual, receiving feedback from reference group members, making amendments to the manual, proof reading and graphic design consultation. A time period of one to two months to produce a substantial training manual is unrealistic, especially given that the Project Officer was employed on a part time basis.

## **Direct Service Provision to Young People**

One of the major obstacles in the project outline was in relation to the provision of direct service to young people through assistance in finding private rental accommodation and support for a three month period. The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) has a mandate to operate as a peak body for the non government, not for profit youth sector. Its major focus is in the area of policy reform. YACWA does not provide direct service to young people but rather has a membership base that is serviced through forums and policy lobbying.

A major concern of this project related to the project outline indicating that direct service provision would occur as part of the Roofs for Youth project. As an agency that does not provide direct service provision to young people, there were concerns raised about the unethical nature of providing support and service provision to young people for a limited time. Not only is YACWA not set up to provide this type of service, the project design indicated that the Project Officer would provide support for a three month period only, and then withdraw support. After this three month period of support, there was no other support available to the young person at YACWA. The Project Officer felt it was not ethical to provide support for a limited period through an agency that could not provide any follow-up in the event that a young person needed assistance in the future.

Another difficulty in the project design related to the number of young people a part time Project Officer was expected to support. The original project design indicated that the Project Officer would train twenty young people, assist training participants to find private rental accommodation (with fifteen of those successfully gaining accommodation), provide support for three months to those fifteen young people and gauge their success after six months. The reference group members indicated that from their experience in youth work, supporting fifteen young people was a higher caseload than a *full time* youth worker would normally carry. Further to this, it was raised that the amount of time it takes to find private rental accommodation for individuals is excessive, and not within the time available to a part time Project Officer, especially if the expectation is that the Project Officer would be attempting to find accommodation for at least fifteen young people. The reference group also pointed out that if a young person experiences a crisis, this can consume a large amount of time, thus not making it possible to support as many young people at one time as the project outline indicated.

A solution that was purported to this difficulty of direct service provision was to partner with agencies that were already working with young people, rather than YACWA providing support. By networking with agencies that were already working with young people, the Roofs for Youth project managed to access a number of young people that were connected with youth workers. These young people attended Roofs for Youth workshops and were followed up by youth workers they already had relationship with through JPET programmes, crisis accommodation or supported accommodation.



## Direct Referrals to YACWA

In the early stages of the Roofs for Youth project, there was an attempt to follow the project outline in its original format. This involved attempting to encourage young people to attend Roofs for Youth training at YACWA through advertising fliers or referrals from youth workers. In December 2002, an advertising flier was inserted in YACWA's *Bulletin*, a publication sent to over 200 youth agencies and individual members within Western Australia. The flier advertised the free Roofs for Youth workshops and also indicated that there would be a free pizza lunch, along with the offer of assistance and support to find private rental accommodation.

Out of the 200+ fliers that were sent out, YACWA only received five enquiries about young people possibly interested in participating in the Roofs for Youth workshops. One couple aged 16 and 18 years had recently arrived in Perth and were referred by a youth worker to YACWA. When asked if they would be prepared to participate in the Roofs for Youth workshop, they indicated they just wanted accommodation and did not want to attend the workshop. Eventually it was discovered that one member of the couple could not read or write and this may have contributed to their lack of interest in participating in the workshop.

Another young person aged 17 rang to enquire about the Roofs for Youth workshop. A date and time was organized for the workshop but the person did not attend. An enquiry was received by a young person who had seen the Roofs for Youth advertising flier at a Centrelink office. The young person's call was returned, a couple of messages left but the young person did not make contact again with YACWA. Another young person living in emergency accommodation was contacted about participating in the Roofs for Youth workshop. This person indicated that they did not want to participate, and if they got into any difficulties when they were renting, they would ask their friends.

Another enquiry was received by a mother wanting her 18 year old to attend the Roofs for Youth training. A number of telephone calls were made to try to encourage the young person to attend but this did not eventuate.

From these experiences, it became evident that young people were not going to access the Roofs for Youth workshops if they were to approach YACWA independently. It was decided through discussions with the reference group that it would be necessary to approach youth agencies already working with young people so that young people had the support and motivation to attend Roofs for Youth training. If young people were to access Roofs for Youth training, it appeared necessary to involve key youth workers in the process.

As a result, the consultant made contact with a number of youth agencies in Perth and enquired as to whether they would be interested in encouraging their young people to attend Roofs for Youth training. Support for the Roofs for Youth workshops was positive, to the point where a number of youth workers attended training also.

## **Training**

Through the previous experiences of attempting to get young people involved in Roofs for Youth training, it became evident that it would be preferable to train young people in groups, rather than conducting individual training. The original project outline indicated that training would occur individually, however, as the project progressed, it appeared obvious that group training would be a better option for a number of reasons.

One reason for choosing to train young people in groups was the amount of time it would take to train young people individually. As the workshops were of a substantial length (10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.), it would take approximately 100 hours to train young people individually. Secondly, the Project Officer considered that as there was no previous level of relationship with the young person prior to the Roofs for Youth training, the young person may feel uncomfortable in a one-to-one training situation and this may hinder the young person's learning. Thirdly, a group situation was deemed to be more conducive to discussion and a more enjoyable atmosphere for young people to participate in, enhancing the young person's learning experience.

Training was originally to be conducted in a number of sessions, held over different days. However, through contact with The Rent Club in South Australia, it was realized that it is particularly difficult to get young people to attend training for more than one day. Thus, the format was changed to conduct training in one day, rather than over separate days. Training was successful in this mode, with all young people attending for the entire day. Training was held at three organizations: Great Mates, Mission Australia and Anglicare. A fourth training workshop was also organized but was cancelled due unforeseen circumstances. Fourteen young people and five youth workers attended the Roofs for Youth workshops.

## **Incentives**

It was considered by some people originally involved in the project that it would not be necessary to provide incentives for young people to attend Roofs for Youth training. However, the reference group and the Project Officer were of the opinion that it would be necessary to provide some form of incentive to young people to attend the Roofs for Youth workshops, both as a reward for attendance and as a thank you to young people for participating in the research project. Young people were provided with pizza for lunch, along with refreshments, chocolates and confectionary throughout the day. Workshops attendees were also given free folders to put their information in and a file to hold bills etc. At the end of the day workshop participants were given two movie passes each as a thank you for their involvement. These were extremely well received.

## **Follow-up**

The original project outline indicated that young people should participate in the Roofs for Youth training, be given assistance to find private rental accommodation, be provided support for three months and then have their success gauged after six months. There were a number of inherent problems with this and as a result, young people were not followed up after they had completed their Roofs for Youth training.

One difficulty lay in the time lines proposed for the project. There was an inadequate amount of time allowed for the researching, writing and trialing of the Roofs for Youth training manual. The time allowed for this was 1-2 months, when in fact the production of the manual took many months beyond this time and this impacted on the amount of time available to follow up on young people, had the original project design had been adhered to.

A second difficulty in the follow-up process involved having access to young people after they had completed training. Some of the young people who participated in the Roofs for Youth workshop moved on from their accommodation shortly after they had participated in the training. Youth workers associated with the young people did not always know where the young people had moved onto, thus it was extremely difficult to follow up these young people.

A third reason that young people were not followed up on after completing the Roofs for Youth training was that some of the young people were not in a position to be looking for private rental accommodation. In order to trial the Roofs for Youth training manual, it was decided to access any young people who were interested in tenancy training, not just those who were looking to access private rental accommodation immediately. It was recognized that young people could benefit from the training, regardless of what stage they were at in their search for accommodation. For this reason, the young people who attended the Roofs for Youth workshops were in various stages of independence from crisis accommodation to supported housing, with one being a Homeswest tenant. Some were in process into independent living but many were not yet ready to access private rental accommodation. For this reason, it was not practical to follow up young people after they had participated in the Roofs for Youth workshop.

One of the major reasons for the decision not to follow young people up after they had attended Roofs for Youth training was that there was no previous data available to gauge if the Roofs for Youth training had made any difference to their success in private rental accommodation. According to the original project outline, the Roofs for Youth project objectives included:

- Increasing the success rate of young people successfully accessing private rental housing in the above area.
- Increasing the retention rate of young people in private rental properties.
- Decreasing the number of evictions of young people from private rental properties.

Whilst these appear to be worthwhile objectives, the success of the Roofs for Youth project cannot be gauged against these objectives without the provision of data to compare previous figures with. Also, there are a vast number of variables that can affect a young person's success in the private rental market, many of which have nothing to do with tenancy training. For example, a young person may experience a personal crisis, they may become unemployed or they may move into their rental property with someone who has not attended the Roofs for Youth training and this person's behaviour may affect their tenancy. The three objectives indicated above in the Roofs for Youth project outline were therefore not assessable, given the lack of previous data.

## **Real Estate Institute of Western Australia**

According to the original project outline, “This project will develop training for young people that is endorsed by the Real Estate Institute of WA (REIWA)”. This statement is in itself presumptuous as it is REIWA’s decision as to whether they will provide their endorsement and this cannot be a guaranteed outcome of the Roofs for Youth project. Throughout the project, REIWA was consulted in an effort to obtain endorsement of the Roofs for Youth training. A meeting was held between REIWA, ShelterWA, YACWA and Department of Housing and Works regarding youth accommodation issues in December 2002. The issue of young people accessing private rental accommodation was raised. It became apparent that REIWA was concerned about damage to properties by young people and raised the issue of a guarantor (either private or government) to ensure that private rental properties would be covered in the event of damage. A REIWA representative present at this meeting offered to read the Roofs for Youth tenancy training manual. This was provided in 2003 to the REIWA representative for feedback. By providing the manual to REIWA for feedback, it was hoped that this might encourage REIWA’s endorsement of the Roofs for Youth tenancy training.

Another approach utilized during the Roofs for Youth project was to submit an article in the REIWA Magazine (Appendix 1). This appeared in the March 2003 edition of the magazine. The article entitled “Roofs for Youth” explained the original project outline, the benefits of young people receiving tenancy training and asked for real estate agents to contact the Roofs for Youth Project Officer if they wanted to know more about the project or had private rental properties available for young people to rent. No response was received from this article, possibly reflecting real estate agents’ general reluctance towards renting properties to young people.

To date, REIWA’s endorsement of the Roofs for Youth training has not been received. REIWA indicated that they were hesitant to endorse this training. This hesitancy has been contributed to by their history of young tenants creating difficulties and their obligation to protect owners’ properties. This situation has not been resolved and it appears that endorsement of the Roofs for Youth tenancy training will not be forthcoming during this project.

## **6. Outcomes**

Whilst there were a number of obstacles to the Roofs for Youth project, some positive outcomes were achieved.

### **Training**

The response to the Roofs for Youth training was extremely positive. Roofs for Youth workshops were held in three locations (Great Mates, Mission Australia Cannington and Anglicare Perth) and ran from 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. The young people who attended the Roofs for Youth workshops participated enthusiastically and were keen to share their own experiences of accessing the private rental market and those of their friends. The format of the workshops was interactive, to ensure that the interest level of young people was maintained.

The content of the workshop sessions included:

1. Finding a Home
2. Applying for a Place
3. Moving In
4. Surviving

Training incorporated information regarding the processes one would need to go through when finding a private rental property e.g. where to find accommodation, applying for a rental property (i.e. applications, leases etc.), bond(s) payable, connecting utilities, property condition reports; and also information necessary to maintain a tenancy e.g. tenants rights and responsibilities, shared tenancies, how to manage friends when renting etc.

Workshop participants completed “Roofs for Youth Training Feedback” forms (see Appendix 3). This information was used to adjust training sessions, where necessary, and to provide feedback for the content of the Roofs for Youth tenancy training manual. The number of workshops participants totaled 19. This included 14 young people and 5 workers. Young people were aged between 16 years and 22 years of age.

From the workshop participants, fifteen feedback forms were received. Some feedback forms were not completed due to workers and one young person having to leave the workshop session prior to feedback forms being distributed. Results from the 15 feedback forms indicated:

#### Question 1

Do you know more about renting after today’s workshop?

Response: Yes 100%  
No 0%

#### Question 2

Did you find the workshop interesting?

Response: Yes 100%  
No 0%

#### Question 3

Was the information easy to understand?

Response Yes 93.3%  
No 0%  
6.7% (“A little bit” – box created by respondent)

#### Question 4

What was the most important thing you learnt from the workshop?

Responses included:

“Read your letters.”

“Do not throw letters in the bin before reading.”

“Landlords are not your best friends. They do rip you off.”

“Information re: eviction and landlord rights.”

“The rights & responsibilities of the tenant & owners.”

“You can’t get kicked out without warning.”  
“Your legal rights and responsibilities.”  
“I learnt more about bonds than I knew.”  
“I learnt more about the rights and responsibilities of renting.”  
“If you put your mind to it you can do it.”  
“About everything.”  
“About going into the house and all the fees.”  
“You can get help paying bills that I didn’t know.”

#### Question 5

Do you think the information will be useful to you NOW?

Yes	93.3%
No	0%
	6.7% (“Some of it” – box created by respondent)

#### Question 6

Do you think the information will be useful to you in the FUTURE?

Yes	100%
No	0%

#### Question 7

How do you think the workshop could be improved?

Responses included:

“Group exercises – more input from young people.”  
“DO NOT change anything.”  
“It was pretty good. Maybe do more examples like fill sample forms out with us and just clarify more with us.”  
”Workshop was very informative and informal. Setting would be hard to improve. Well done!”  
“Stop people interrupting sooo much so the workshop goes quicker.”  
“Make it shorter.”  
“It can’t.”  
“Nothing really needs to be improved. Although the amount of people attending could be larger.”  
“I don’t know it was a pretty good workshop.”  
“It is pretty good the way it is.”  
“Yes to make the information a little bit more to understand.”

The results and comments on the “Roofs for Youth Training Feedback” form indicated that the workshop content was interesting to the young people and workers who participated and that the information presented was useful. The response from young people is particularly interesting, given that most of these young people are currently not attending any form of education and are not accustomed to sitting in a “class” for a whole day. The fact that they found the information interesting and useful indicates that training young people in tenancy rights and responsibilities and living skills is worthwhile and is a topic that captures young person’s attention.

However, it is also interesting to note, in light of the positive response to the Roofs for Youth workshops, that it was necessary to link up with agencies working with young

people in order to motivate young people to attend the Roofs for Youth training. As previously mentioned, young people directly referred to YACWA did not attend training. It was only when networks with youth workers were utilized that young people attended training. Without the support of youth workers, it is doubtful whether any of the young people who attended the Roofs for Youth workshops would have participated. It is evident, therefore, from this research, that the role of the youth worker in encouraging young people to attend training in tenancy related areas is crucial.

## **Training Manual**

A “Roofs for Youth” training manual for workers has been produced as an outcome of this project. The aim of the manual is to provide a tool for workers to train young people in the many aspects of living in private rental accommodation including finding private rental accommodation, tenancy rights and responsibilities and living with others. We envisage that the training provided through this manual will assist young people who are looking for, or already living in private rental accommodation by providing information and resources to help them succeed in their accommodation.

The manual is divided into four sections:

1. Finding a Home
2. Applying for a Place
3. Moving In
4. Surviving

Each section is divided into the following three parts:

**Session Outline:** This contains session outlines that workers can use when training young people. These are set out in a logical, progressive order. Session outlines cover the basic framework to follow when teaching young people, along with activities young people can participate in to enhance their learning. Some session outlines include scenarios for use in workshops, however we have found that young people often prefer to share their own experiences or those of their friends, rather than discussing a scenario.

**Session Information:** This contains detailed information necessary to teach the content of each session outline. Whilst the manual contains a broad range of topics relevant to young people renting privately, it does not cover every aspect of tenancy law. (It is recommended that if workers require more extensive training in this area, they can contact Tenants Advice Service and enquire about the ‘Course in Tenancy Law for Community Workers’.)

**Session Resources:** This section contains information sheets and other resources to hand out to young people during training sessions. Resources include a glossary of terms, lists of items to remember when looking at rental properties, tenancy forms, scenarios, lists of emergency relief agencies, tenancy questions and lists of agencies that can provide assistance if a young person has a problem with their tenancy. Resources are numbered to correspond to the session being conducted. Some

resources, such as *Tenants and the Law*, are not available in the manual but can be obtained through organisations such as Tenants Advice Service.

The format of training consists of:

Duration: 4 x 1 hour sessions OR 1 day training 10.00 a.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Format: Small groups or one-to-one.

The session outlines are designed to be conducted in small groups however, the information can be adapted for use in one-to-one situations and tailored to suit the needs of the individual/group being trained. The activities are varied so as to provide different learning experiences for young people, as individuals learn in a variety of ways. We also recognised in writing the manual that the young people who participate in the Roofs for Youth training will be different ages and have varied levels of experience. Some of the suggested activities will be more appropriate for some young people than others, therefore it will be necessary for workers to choose activities from the manual that are appropriate for the individual/group being trained. The suggested activities serve as a guide only, and workers may use their own activities in place of those in the manual.

The training manual has an emphasis on living with others, as young people are often required to share accommodation due to the costs involved in renting privately. The manual provides information on ways to minimize conflict when sharing a house and if conflict does arise, how to deal with this. The Roofs for Youth tenancy training manual also has information on how young people should deal with friends who are creating difficulties for them in their rental accommodation. This section was deemed to be necessary as young people's tenancies are often jeopardized by the behaviour of friends who are not aware that their behaviour can threaten a young person's rental accommodation. The intention of the Roofs for Youth training manual was not to create a negative concept around young people renting but rather create awareness about some of the issues young people face when living in private rental accommodation.

## **Applications of Roofs for Youth Training Manual**

Throughout the Roofs for Youth project, conversations with youth workers indicated a need for a training manual to teach young people their tenancy rights and responsibilities and to address issues relating to living with others and friends' behaviour. Youth workers indicated that whilst they attempted to educate young people in information relevant to private tenancies, this was often done in an ad-hoc way, due to the lack of formal materials to conduct this training. Youth workers stated that, if a manual was available that was similar to the Roofs for Youth tenancy training manual, they would utilize this in their work with young people.

Whilst the Roofs for Youth manual has been written with the view to training young people, the manual can be used in a number of other applications. The material in the Roofs for Youth manual can be used to train older adults in tenancy rights and responsibilities. This is particularly fitting for organizations that have recently been funded through the Department for Community Development to provide support and intervention to tenancies that are in threat of eviction.



Other applications for the Roofs for Youth tenancy training manual have been suggested. These include prisons, schools, programmes that support young people leaving care, churches working with young people, crisis accommodation agencies and supported accommodation organisations. Contact has been made with workers in a number of these settings to inform them of the availability of the Roofs for Youth tenancy manual. At the close of this project, workers at these agencies were being followed up by the Roofs for Youth consultant and a number of workers were waiting to obtain a copy of the Roofs for Youth manual for use in their particular situation.

## 7. Recommendations

As secure accommodation is foundational to so many facets of life, for example, education, employment and health, providing information to young people to assist them maintain their accommodation is essential. From the information provided through the Roofs for Youth training feedback forms, it was clear that young people found the tenancy training to be useful, interesting and relevant to their lives. On the basis of this information and the conversations held with youth workers throughout the Roofs for Youth project, a number of recommendations can be made:

1. Funding is needed to be able to provide training to youth workers in the use of the Roofs for Youth tenancy training manual. Conversations with youth workers in the field indicated that they were aware of the value of tenancy training to young people and would use a resource such as the Roofs for Youth manual. However, they did indicate that they would feel more confident in using the manual if they could access training in the content of the Roofs for Youth manual. One Coordinator of an agency providing assistance to young people indicated that she would like all of her youth workers to receive training in the Roofs for Youth workshops so that they could assist young people access tenancy information.
2. As the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987* is currently under review in Western Australia, funding will be required to update the Roofs for Youth manual when changes are made to the current Act. At the completion of the Roofs for Youth project, a date had not been set for the review of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987* to be completed. However, it will be imperative that funding be provided when changes are made to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987* so that the information is current in the Roofs for Youth manual.
3. From the research conducted throughout the Roofs for Youth project, it became evident that youth workers play a crucial role in supporting young people who are homeless, in crisis situations or in need of supported accommodation. It is therefore necessary that increased, ongoing funding be given to agencies that provide this supportive role to young people, in order to address the issue of homelessness. Throughout the Roofs for Youth project, it became obvious that the role of the youth worker was integral to young people accessing tenancy training. Individual referrals of young people to YACWA to participate in Roofs for Youth tenancy training resulted in young people choosing not to participate in training or if they did indicate they would attend, young people did not arrive on

the day. Success in training young people in the Roofs for Youth workshops was only achieved when the support of youth workers was utilized. Through the input of youth workers in terms of encouraging young people to attend training, providing transport or accompanying the young person to the workshops, young people were able to access the Roofs for Youth training. Without this support, young people did not avail themselves of the opportunity to participate in Roofs for Youth training. Ongoing funding to allow youth workers to continue this role is therefore essential.

4. As previously mentioned, secure accommodation is foundational to the lives of young people. From the research conducted, it is recommended that young people receive tenancy training as part of their “life skills”. Tenancy training needs to be conducted in a formal process, rather than be delivered in an ad-hoc basis. Youth workers indicated that it is often difficult to ensure that tenancy training is given to young people in a structured manner, as there are a range of issues that youth workers are attempting to deal with when assisting young people, and tenancy training is just one more area to try to incorporate in the limited time they have available. Youth worker time constraints are often caused through high caseloads or the amount of time required when assisting a young person in crisis.

By incorporating Roofs for Youth tenancy training into the “life skills” training that young people receive, young people can be assisted in maintaining secure accommodation. This, in turn, assists with a number of other areas of life such as education, employment and health. By providing a stable environment for a young person to live, a platform is created for developing other areas of their life. Without stable accommodation, it is very difficult to achieve education, employment or maintain physical or mental health.

5. There is still a vast amount of work to be done in relation to attitudes of real estate agents renting properties to young people. Education needs to take place with real estate agents in relation to young people under the age of 18 years being able to sign a lease. The generally held perception by real estate agents is that young people under the age of 18 cannot sign a lease. This, however, is not correct as accommodation is deemed to be a ‘necessity of life’ and young people under the age of 18 years can sign a lease for a rental property.

Further to this, the aim of this project, to receive endorsement from the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia for the Roofs for Youth tenancy training was not achieved. Further discussions need to be held with REIWA regarding ways to improve young people’s opportunity to rent privately, as it is the attitude of such organizations and their members that can impact upon young people’s access to private rental accommodation. Renting to young people is still seen as high risk by real estate agents in general and the priority of protecting an owner’s property often takes precedent over the young person’s need for accommodation. Coupled with this, the young person’s lack of rental references due to not having rented privately before, further disadvantages them in their quest to access private rental accommodation.

## **8. Conclusion**

One of the major difficulties experienced in the Roofs for Youth project was the inability to promote the Roofs for Youth tenancy training to organizations such as the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia or the Landlords Advisory Service, due to the lack of ongoing funding. Whilst the Roofs for Youth training manual has been completed and made available to organizations for use, the limited project funding did not allow the Youth Affairs Council of WA to promote this training to organizations such as REIWA or the Landlords Advisory Service as there is no guarantee that Roofs for Youth training will occur, past the lifetime of this project. The Roofs for Youth project would have had a more successful outcome had there been ongoing funding to train youth workers in how to use the manual and publicity around the Roofs for Youth training so that organizations that are involved in renting private properties to young people were aware that the training existed and had an understanding of the information that young people had obtained through this training.

Through the Roofs for Youth project, it is evident that there is still a long way to go in breaking down barriers for young people to be able to access private rental accommodation. Whilst young people can be resourced with information to assist them access and successfully maintain their private rental accommodation, this information is redundant if they are not given the opportunity to obtain private rental accommodation. Barriers such as discrimination and prejudice still exist in the private rental market and these are the obstacles that young people face when attempting to secure private rental accommodation. Whilst housing is well recognized as a basic human right, it is still a right that young people are often denied in Western Australia and this continues to affect the well being and opportunities available to young people.

## REIWA ARTICLE

### Roofs for Youth

The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia is piloting a project aimed at increasing young people's understanding of their rights and responsibilities as tenants. The training programme, entitled *Roofs for Youth*, is part of the National Homelessness Strategy, funded by the Department of Family and Community Services.

The aim of the project is to assist young people to access private rental accommodation and provide knowledge and skills that will enable them to successfully maintain their private rental accommodation. The course covers a range of topics including how to find a rental property, putting together a rental portfolio, the process of applying for a rental property, the costs involved in moving into private rental accommodation, signing a lease, bond/s payable, property condition reports, tenants' rights and responsibilities, budgeting, cooking and cleaning, appropriate behaviour and more!

Once young people have participated in this course, support will be provided for a period of three months. During this time, assistance will be given in the areas of finding private rental accommodation, signing a lease and organizing moving in. Regular contact with the young person will be maintained to ensure they are managing in their rental accommodation. No financial assistance will be given to young people, as it is intended that the young person lives in a realistic, independent environment.

Project Officer for *Roofs for Youth*, Sally MacKay, acknowledged that historically it has been perceived that it is difficult for young people to access the private rental market. "This course aims at giving young people the appropriate skills and knowledge to help them not only find private rental accommodation but be a successful tenant. At the completion of this course, these young people will generally have more knowledge regarding renting in the private market than many adult tenants. By providing a combination of knowledge regarding tenants' rights and responsibilities, life skills and community supports, it is anticipated that these young people will be well equipped to maintain their private rental accommodation."

"What we are looking for, is people in the community who are willing to offer their rental property to young people. Providing young people with training is essential but if we have no private rental properties available for young people to access, we have a problem!"

If you would like more information on the *Roofs for Youth* project or have private rental properties that may be available for young people to rent, Sally MacKay would like to hear from you. Sally may be contacted by telephoning 9388 0640 (Tues, Thurs and Fri).

## RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

**Research Project: Roofs for Youth**

**Principal Investigator: Sally MacKay**

**Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia**

I am aware that this research is part of the Roofs for Youth project being conducted by Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia.

The purpose behind the research project has been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the research.

I am willing to participate in the above research project and understand that I may withdraw my involvement at any time, without reason.

I am aware that non-identifying information from training sessions that I attend will form part of this research.

If I am involved in this research project during the processes of looking for a rental property, the following three month support period and a later review of my progress in the rental property, I am aware that non-identifying information regarding my situation will be included in the research as a case study.

I have been informed that all personal details and information collected during this research are confidential and no identifying information will be published.

Name.....

Signed.....Date.....

- If you wish to read your case study before it is published in the final report, please tick the box.

## Roofs for Youth Training Feedback

1. Do you know more about renting after today's workshop?

- Yes
- No

2. Did you find the workshop interesting?

- Yes
- No

3. Was the information easy to understand?

- Yes
- No

4. What was the most important thing you learnt from the workshop?

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5. Do you think the information will be useful to you NOW?

- Yes
- No

6. Do you think the information will be useful to you in the FUTURE?

- Yes
- No

7. How do you think the workshop could be improved?

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## References

Muirhead, T. (2002) *Weaving Tapestries: a handbook for building communities*, The Association, Perth.