
Australia failing Kiwi teens facing homelessness

Kiwi teenagers are being left homeless on the streets of Australia's big cities because of a critical imbalance in trans-Tasman rights.

Children born in New Zealand but who moved to Australia after 2001 are being denied income support by the Australian Government, despite NZ extending similar support to Australians living in NZ.

“Kiwi and Pacific Islander kids living in Australia who experience a family breakdown or are fleeing a violent home are sadly finding themselves homeless; sleeping on friends’ couches, under bridges or in crisis accommodation,” Melbourne community lawyer Shorna Moore said.

“These kids can’t return aboard because Australia is the only life they’ve ever known. And yet the Australian Government is turning its back on them,” she said.

“The consequences of being homeless and denied income support—especially for young women and girls—are horrendous, including an increased risk of exploitation and sexual abuse.”

The issue is detailed in the report [*Couch Surfing Limbo*](#), prepared by Melbourne’s [WEstjustice community legal centre](#), where Ms Moore is Director of Policy and Community Development.

The cohorts in both countries are relatively small, but are arguably the most vulnerable members of society. As at the end of September 2017, 6,506 young Australians aged between 15 and 17 years were receiving the benefit given to homeless young people in Australia. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2.5% of Australia’s estimated resident population was born in New Zealand. If New Zealand teenagers living in Australia received a similar payment at the same rate as their Australian counterparts, about 160 young people would be expected to receive the benefit.

“New Zealand children are not being given a fair go in Australia,” Ms Moore said.

“Too often they’re being left to fend for themselves.”

Over 35 Australian community organisations are now publicly urging the New Zealand Government to formally raise the issue with Australia and find a joint solution.

The organisations have signed an **open letter to New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Adern**, *attached*.

“The status quo is simply unacceptable,” Ms Moore said.

“These kids are falling through the cracks and the governments of New Zealand and Australia must step-in.”

ENDS

Available for interview:

Melbourne Community Lawyer, Shorna Moore, WEstJustice

+61 3 9216 0023 +61 411146825 shorna@westjustice.org.au