



LIFE AFTER THE OASIS

These lesson plans have been reviewed by young people who have experienced homelessness

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A STUDY GUIDE BY
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believed she could build a better future. **Owen** doggedly pursued a music career. **Darren** emerged from acute mental illness. **Haley** retained her ambition. And the lives of Majors **Paul** and **Robbin Moulds**’ their mentors, took a different path.

Implicit within the stories are the failures of society and government to protect and support our society’s most vulnerable. But while *‘Life After The Oasis’* exposes a decade of government inaction on homelessness, its emotional heart is the personal stories, not the troubling statistics.

This film celebrates the strength of the human spirit and the prospect that lives can change, even after long, hard years in darkness. It also questions the direction contemporary Australian society is taking, and where the failure to invest in young vulnerable Australians will lead us.

» SYNOPSIS

In 2008, feature documentary *‘The Oasis’* shocked Australia with its gritty insight into the lives of wayward teens at a chaotic youth refuge in inner-city Sydney. Drug psychoses, emotional breakdowns, teenage pregnancies and the dangers of street life were writ large for a national audience.

Released with an independent report by the National Youth Commission, the film generated an outpouring of social and political goodwill, with the then-Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, pledging to halve homelessness by 2020. Ten years and six Prime Ministers later, with social inequality and homelessness worse than ever, *‘Life After The Oasis’* revisits the original participants who share how their lives have evolved since those fraught times.

Transitioning seamlessly between never-seen-before material from 2008 and contemporary footage, this film builds a rare, longitudinal portrait of these inspirational, disadvantaged young Australians. Now in their late 20s and 30s, they have weathered difficult and intense passages into adulthood, coming of age in a world rife with violence, poverty, addiction and mental illness. Yet their stories, though plagued by adversity, are stories of incredible resilience and survival.

With remarkable capacity for self-reflection, these young adults muse over the trauma of the past, and how, against the odds, they salvaged themselves. **Chris** didn’t want to be a bank robber like his dad. **Emma**

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» CURRICULUM LINKS

'Life After The Oasis' can be linked to the following subject areas with the Australian Curriculum:

- Year 9 and 10 Civics and Citizenship
- Year 9 and 10 English
- Year 9 and 10 Health and Physical Education
- Media Arts

Please Note: There is occasional course language and some confronting scenes in 'Life After The Oasis'; as such, the documentary is recommended for study in Years 9 and above. Students may have their own personal experiences with some of the issues presented in 'Life After The Oasis' and teacher discretion is advised.

Relevant Content Descriptions for Year 9 and 10 Civics and Citizenship:

- How and why individuals and groups, including religious groups, participate in and contribute to civic life (ACHCK079)
- The influence of a range of media, including social media, in shaping identities and attitudes to diversity (ACHCK080)
- Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australian, regional and global contexts (ACHCS102)
- Recognise and consider multiple perspectives and ambiguities, and use strategies to negotiate and resolve contentious issues (ACHCS099)

Relevant Content Descriptions for Year 9 and 10 English

- Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812)
- Create literary texts with a sustained 'voice', selecting and adapting appropriate text structures, literary devices, language, auditory and visual structures and features for a specific purpose and intended audience (ACELT1815)
- Create imaginative texts that make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts (ACELT1644)

Relevant Content Descriptions for Year 9 and 10 Health and Physical Education

- Evaluate factors that shape identities and critically analyse how individuals impact the identities of others (ACPPS089)
- Investigate how empathy and ethical decision making contribute to respectful relationships (ACPPS093)
- Plan, implement and critique strategies to enhance health, safety and wellbeing of their communities (ACPPS096)
- Plan and evaluate new and creative interventions that promote their own and others' connection to community and natural and built environments (ACPPS097)
- Critique behaviours and contextual factors that influence health and wellbeing of diverse communities (ACPPS098)

Relevant Content Descriptions for Year 9 and 10 Media Arts

- Plan and design media artworks for a range of purposes that challenge the expectations of specific audiences by particular use of production processes (ACAMAM076)
- Evaluate how technical and symbolic elements are manipulated in media artworks to create and challenge representations framed by media conventions, social beliefs and values for a range of audiences (ACAMAR078)

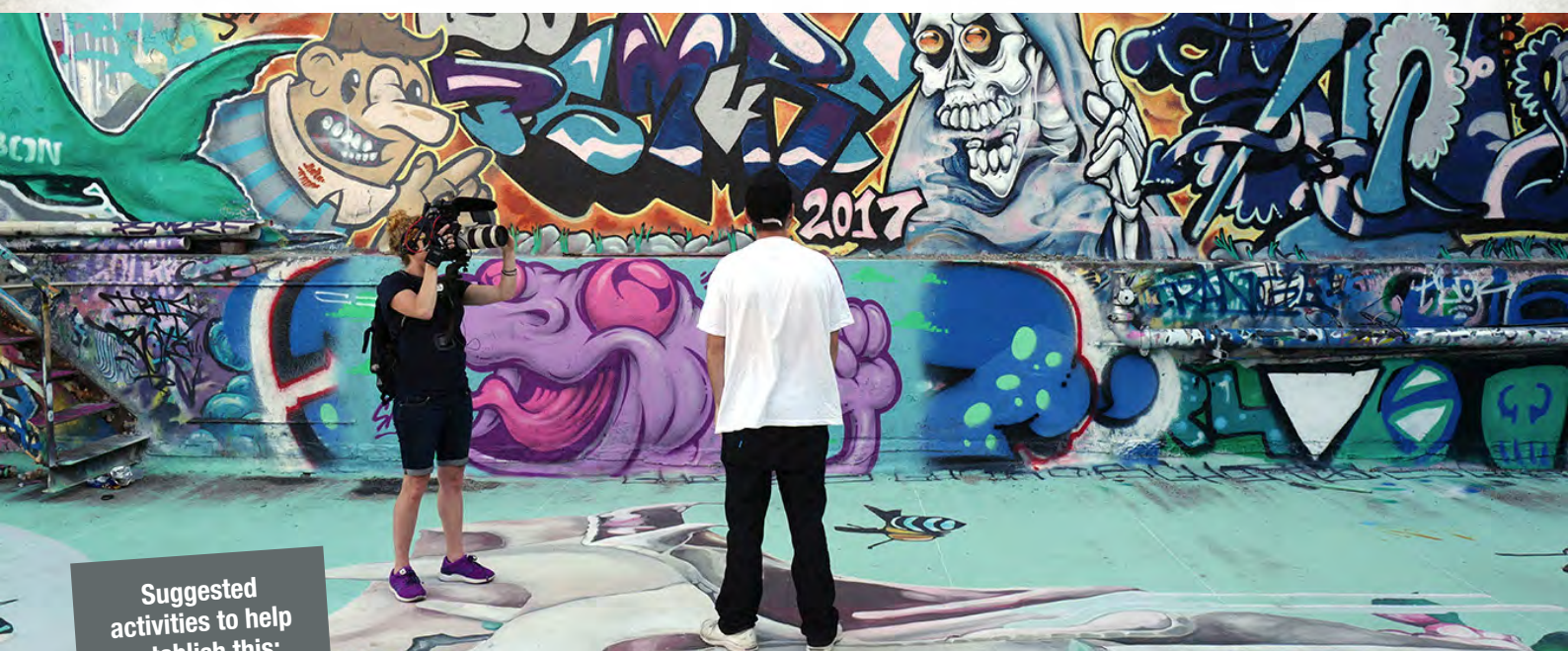
'Life After The Oasis' can also be used as a supplementary text when studying a range of Senior School subjects, including:

- Ethics
- Legal Studies
- Health and Human Development
- Politics
- Psychology

» PREPARATORY ACTIVITY

Teachers are advised to conduct the following preparatory activity before studying *'Life After The Oasis'*. Talking about homelessness, mental illness, asylum seekers, discrimination, the importance of inclusivity and related ideas requires maturity and understanding of others. While the documentary *'Life After The Oasis'* and the activities contained in this Study Guide clearly aim to increase students' awareness of the importance of equality and inclusion in a diverse society, certain discussions may result in differing opinions and cause existing biases and stereotypes to surface.

With this in mind, it is crucial to spend time creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment. It is, however, also important for teachers to be mindful and not shut down ideas or opinions which may appear to perpetuate stereotypes or come from a negative bias. Rather, encourage a space where people are curious and find out the 'why' motivating someone's opinion or idea first in order to reach a nuanced, empathetic and productive discussion.



ACTIVITY: ESTABLISHING 'CLASS GROUND RULES'

The aim is to establish a classroom environment that encourages openness, positive behaviour and expected standards of interaction with other class members. Teachers are to lead a discussion that invites students to develop a series of Class Ground Rules. Ideas to include:

1. **RESPECT OTHERS:** You may hear ideas and opinions that may differ from your own. Try and take in new information without judgement and keep an open mind. Be mindful of your words and body language and ensure these reflect a respectful attitude. Learn by listening to others.
2. **OWN YOUR OWN VALUES:** Speak from the personal (e.g. "I feel...." Or "In my experience...."). Avoid overtly negative, accusatory or generalised statements when interacting with others in your class. If you disagree with a class member, remember to challenge their opinion not the person.
3. **BE OPEN AND HONEST:** All students have the right to ask questions without fear of judgement. It is important

that everyone be given the opportunity to learn as much as possible; if you are not confident in asking a question in front of the class, make sure you approach your teacher personally.

4. **RESPECT AND CONFIDENTIALITY:** Everything said in the classroom stays in the classroom. When sharing personal anecdotes, avoid using real names and carefully consider what personal information you choose to share with the class.

5. **SHARE 'AIR TIME':** Every student is encouraged to express their ideas and opinions. Allow others to share and don't monopolise discussion. You are not obligated to speak; it is fine to say 'pass'.

Once the class has established their 'Ground Rules' together, teachers should formalise these and display/make copies available to all students. These can be referred to during your study of *'Life After The Oasis'*.



PAUL AND ROBBIN MOULDS

- Where do Paul and Robbin now work? How does this work differ, and how is it similar to the work they undertook at The Oasis?
- How did Paul and Robbin's time on Manus Island and Nauru impact them personally and professionally?
- Why does Robbin believe it's important to share the stories and personalise the people she and Paul work with at the Auburn Community Centre?
- Write a reflection on Robbin's ongoing journey to remain in touch with and support Haley and her daughter. How is Paul involved in this?
- At the end of the documentary Paul visits Ken, a former volunteer at The Oasis. Despite the obvious difficulties they experienced working at The Oasis, how would you describe their overall recollections of their time there?
- Paul reflects on his own experience as an adoptee – how does he feel this has impacted him as a person and the path he has taken with his work?
- Consider Paul's quote: "To people, from every nation in every language, no matter what you're going through, there is hope." Reflect on what deeper message Paul is conveying here in relation to the work he and Robbin continue to do and what this indicates about their character.
- In small groups, discuss and decide upon 3 – 5 words that you think best sum up Paul and Robbin. Share and discuss as a class.

Articles to assist with the above activities:

<<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/conversations/conversations-paul-mould/9992962>>

<<https://www.smh.com.au/business/profile-paul-moulds-20080507-gdscex.html>>

» CHARACTER PROFILES

The following activities relate to the characters and events depicted in *'Life After The Oasis'*.

'The Oasis' was released in 2008 and captured two years in the lives of teenagers at a youth refuge in inner-city Sydney. Launched with the independent National Youth Commission report, the film generated a groundswell of social and political interest in youth homelessness across Australia. Ten years and six prime ministers later, with youth homelessness increasing to record levels, *'Life After The Oasis'* revisits the original participants.

Ask students if they have viewed the original documentary *'The Oasis.'* Depending on time, it would be valuable to view the documentary as a class. Links to the documentary and related resources can be found at: <<https://www.theoasismovie.com.au>>

Read the following article which looks at the impact of the original documentary and answer the questions that follow: <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/jun/10/if-it-wasnt-for-the-oasis-i-dont-think-id-be-alive-inside-the-lives-of-homeless-teens>>

1. What were the notable political and social impacts of *'The Oasis'* documentary?
2. What was *'The Road Home'* paper and have its aims been met?
3. What factors motivated director Sascha Ettinger-Epstein and producers Ian Darling and Mary Macrae to make *'Life After The Oasis'*?
4. How does the mood and tone of the two documentaries differ, and why?

Use notes from your viewing of *'Life After The Oasis'* to complete the Character Profiles on the right.



Complete **Table 1** (page 15) for the other characters we encounter in '*Life After The Oasis*'.

Consider the following quote from Owen:
"It's like a vicious cycle that never ends until somebody stands up and says I've had enough. I'm not going to be a sheep, I'm going to be a wolf, I'm going to make my own destiny."

What supports do you think have helped Owen take charge of his own destiny?
What personality traits and characteristics do you think have also helped Owen?

Consider the following quote from Darren:
"I don't know who I am at the moment."
How has moving away from drugs impacted him socially, and what advice does Paul offer him around this?

As a class, share and discuss your notes on each of the characters above. What are the similarities and differences in their journeys over the past decade? What factors have proven most beneficial to those who are doing well, and what factors do you think have posed the largest obstacles to their respective wellbeing? Write a review of '*Life After The Oasis*'. Reviews should include:

- Title of the documentary and the key players (directors/producers)
- Where and when it was made
- A brief synopsis and intention of the documentary (with reference to 2008's '*The Oasis*')
- Key themes and messages
- Most memorable lines of dialogue, as well as most memorable scenes/sequences
- Describe the types of camera shots/music/lighting/editing. Mood and atmosphere these elements combine to create in terms of an overall feel
- Highlights and areas of strength
- Particular audiences to whom you would recommend the documentary





» FOCUS ON HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRALIA

ACTIVITY: THINKING ABOUT 'HOME' AND 'HOMELESSNESS'

Students are to write a list of words or draw images to represent what home means to them. In pairs they preview each other's list and determine whether the list includes attributes of 'houses' or 'homes' or both. Combine pairs of students into groups of four and discuss whether having a home is more than just having a roof over your head.

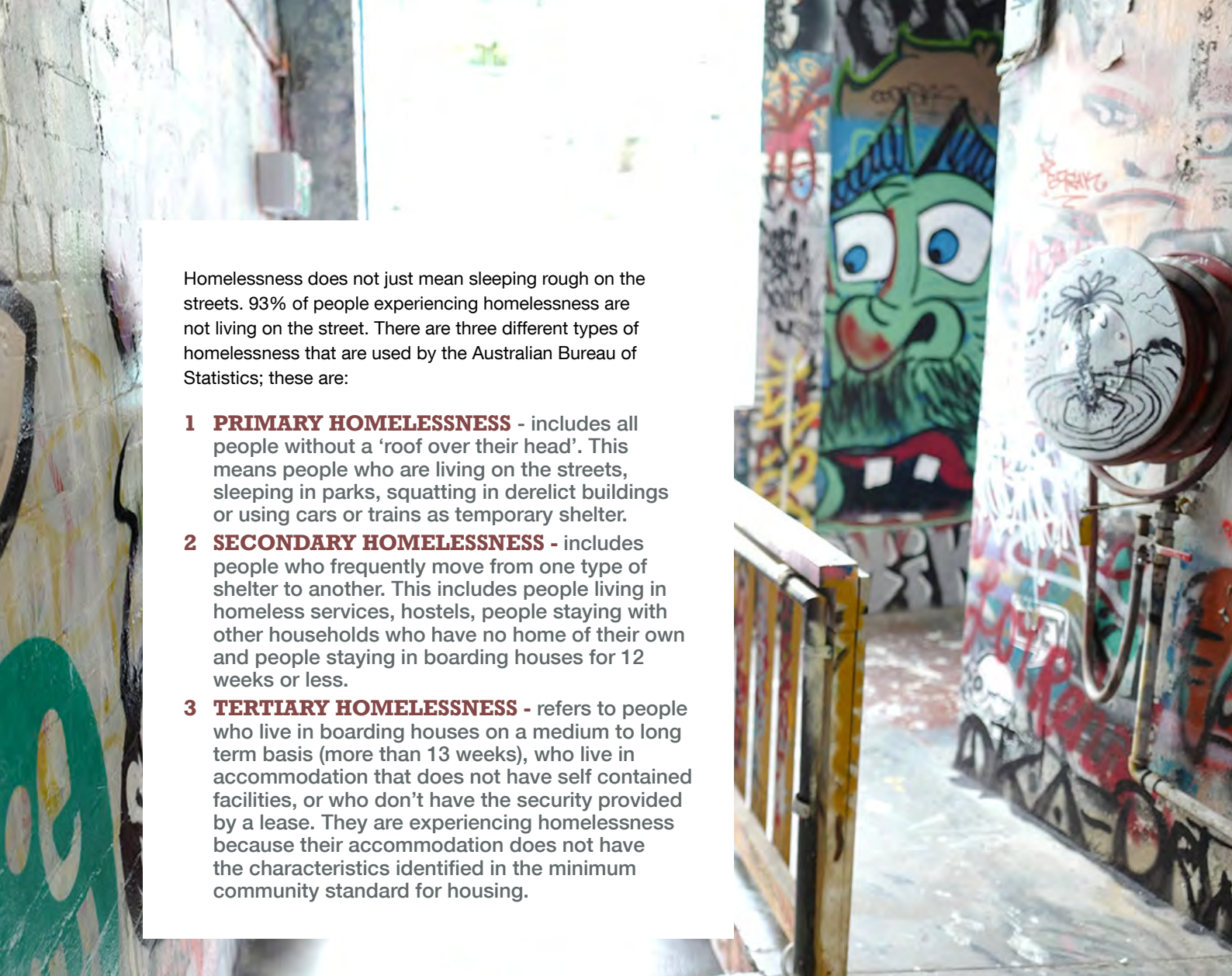
Provide groups with butcher's paper and ask them to draw a Venn diagram with three circles overlapping. Write one of the following terms in each circle: home, shelter, house. In the areas that overlap write those words that are common for each term, in those areas that do not overlap write those terms that are different for each term. Students are to then use a thesaurus to find synonyms for home, shelter, and house and, in groups, map a series of words along a continuum from positive to negative connotations: for example 'dump', 'house', 'home', 'abode', 'haven', etc.

Review each term in relation to synonyms, connotations, emotive language, euphemisms and politically correct language. As a class, discuss the questions: "What makes a house a home?"

Consider the idea that homelessness is not just about being houseless.

You will note that throughout this Study Guide, we talk about 'people experiencing homelessness' rather than the term 'the homeless'. Why do you think this distinction is important, particularly in relation to those experiencing homelessness? Can you think of other examples of often marginalised groups in society where the language used in reference to them needs to be carefully considered, and in some cases, reviewed? Share and discuss as a class.





Homelessness does not just mean sleeping rough on the streets. 93% of people experiencing homelessness are not living on the street. There are three different types of homelessness that are used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics; these are:

- 1 PRIMARY HOMELESSNESS** - includes all people without a 'roof over their head'. This means people who are living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings or using cars or trains as temporary shelter.
- 2 SECONDARY HOMELESSNESS** - includes people who frequently move from one type of shelter to another. This includes people living in homeless services, hostels, people staying with other households who have no home of their own and people staying in boarding houses for 12 weeks or less.
- 3 TERTIARY HOMELESSNESS** - refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long term basis (more than 13 weeks), who live in accommodation that does not have self contained facilities, or who don't have the security provided by a lease. They are experiencing homelessness because their accommodation does not have the characteristics identified in the minimum community standard for housing.

- As a class, discuss the three different types of homelessness above. Think back to the characters we revisit in 'Life after The Oasis' and consider their current living arrangements. Which category do they fall into? In what ways did the Oasis Youth Network provide them with a sense of 'home'?
- Consider the ways that people experiencing homelessness are represented in mainstream media. Brainstorm specific examples and discuss the negative stereotypes that can emerge around such representations. Have you encountered positive representations that challenge these? Why do you think it's important to consider the ways in

which the media portrays and represents people experiencing homelessness?

- Looking at the three types of homelessness above, are you able to further unpack these? Consider, for example, that tertiary homelessness includes people in 'overcrowded dwellings', yet for some communities this may not actually be considered homelessness. Share and discuss as a class.
- Women aged over 55 are now the fastest growing group in terms of experiencing homelessness in Australia. What factors do you think may be attributing to this? How can we help address this?

Suggested sites to assist with research:

<<https://www.afr.com/property/women-over-55-years-now-the-fastest-growing-homeless-people-in-australia-20180820-h146r2>>

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc_ow_homelessness2019.pdf>

ACTIVITY: CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Divide students into small groups and have them brainstorm the main causes of homelessness, with groups then reporting back to class. You may direct students to some of the following factors if they do not include them:

- Family or relationship breakdown
- Family or partner violence
- Abuse and/or neglect
- Unemployment and poverty
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of sufficient income
- Mental health issues
- Drug and alcohol abuse

Have students refer back to their Viewing Notes and Character Charts and consider which factors most contributed to the experience of homelessness for the people we revisit in *'Life After The Oasis'*.

The cycle of disadvantage often underlies homelessness. What do you think this phrase means, and how can you see this cycle in play in relation to the factors discussed above and the experiences of the people we encounter in *'Life After The Oasis'*?

Divide the class into debating teams and assign the following topic:

'Homelessness isn't primarily a problem about a lack of homes.'

Assign one team the affirmative and one the negative and have them research and deliver a debate on this topic. Ensure each team includes specific reference to ideas, events and people from *'Life After The Oasis'*.

ACTIVITY: FOCUS ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

On any given night in Australia 105,000 people are experiencing homelessness and nearly half of these are under the age of 25.

Divide students into five groups and assign one of the following statements regarding youth homelessness to each group. Have them conduct research into their statement, explaining what it means, its impact and suggested solutions at a local, state and national level.

1. Youth homelessness is invisible
2. Nearly half of all homeless Australians are children and young people under the age of 25
3. Homelessness can affect any young person
4. A job alone is not the solution for youth homelessness
5. How would you cope with school if you were homeless?

The National Youth Commission (NYC) released its report, *Australia's Homeless Youth*, and recommendations in 2008. A copy of the report (and a summary of key findings and recommendations) can be accessed here: <http://www.theoasismovie.com.au/report/report.php>

Also released in 2008, *'The Road Home'* was launched by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, where he set out a national approach to reducing homelessness in

Australia, including a plan to halve the number of homeless nationally by 2020: <https://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/4895838/data/the-road-home---a-national-approach-to-reducing-homelessness-data.pdf>

Working in small groups, students are to conduct research into the National Youth Commission 2008 report and *'The Road Home'*. What were each report's aims and pledges? Have these been met? Support answers with references to the latest statistics around homelessness in Australia (and specifically youth homelessness).

Suggested sites to begin research:

<https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/about/homelessness-statistics>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-14/homelessness-in-australia-jumps-14pc-over-five-year-period/9547786>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/may/17/national-obscenity-australias-story-of-housing-boom-and-homelessness>

<https://www.cis.org.au/app/uploads/2018/12/r38.pdf>

<http://theconversation.com/homelessness-australias-shameful-story-of-policy-complacency-and-failure-continues-95376>

The National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness in 2008 recommended four key areas in terms of taking action in regard to tackling youth homelessness:

1. Preventing youth Homelessness
2. Intervening early
3. Supporting young people in need
4. Stopping those assisted from falling back into homelessness

Break students into four groups and assign one of these action areas to each group. Students are to conduct research into how their action can be best achieved, with particular reference to their local capital city/state. Groups are to prepare a digital presentation (e.g. PowerPoint) that presents their findings and share with the class.

Suggested site to begin research:

<https://www.theoasismovie.com.au/pdfs/Homeless_summary.pdf>

Each year, Australians observe National Homeless Persons' Week. During this week, dozens of events are held all over the country to address the causes of homelessness, to bring attention to problems faced by the homeless, and to formulate plans to tackle the issue. As a class, think of an event you could do during National Homeless Persons' Week to educate your community and address issues of homelessness. How might you involve people who have or are experiencing homelessness in the design and delivery of the event? e.g. connect with a local service and ask if they have young people who might want to be involved?

Visit <www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au> for information and consider ways you could involve your school and local community.

Organise a 'Winter Sleep-Out' or pyjama day at your school to raise money and awareness around the issue of homelessness. In Victoria, Melbourne City Mission helps host such events, whilst in NSW St. Vinnie's CEO Sleepout is an excellent resource. Visit their respective sites for further information, or source one for your relevant state or territory:

<www.melbournecitymission.org.au>

<www.ceosleepout.org.au>



NB. When considering the above, students should:

- Carefully consider where they will donate the money raised. Work as a class to come to a consensus about a local service provider that you feel would best suit the purpose of your fundraising.
- Discuss as a class any potential problems or shortcomings that such an event may pose in terms of truly achieving its aims regarding awareness raising? Are there ways you could ensure the tone and purpose of your event best helps explore issues surrounding homelessness in Australia (and your local community in particular?).

Consider all of the above activities you have undertaken regarding Youth Homelessness in Australia. Working together in small groups, students are to plan, storyboard, script and film a short documentary that explores their growing awareness around the issue of Youth Homelessness in Australia and their ideas for how to best tackle this situation.

Students should refer to both the original documentary *'The Oasis'* and *'Life After The Oasis'* in their own work, in terms of the impact it has had on their own understanding of this issue. Students are encouraged to include research into Youth Homelessness (and the services and support networks) in their own area/capital city to augment their exploration. Reference Paul's reflection at the end of the documentary around early intervention / prevention, and aim to have this message as a key focus of your own documentaries.



ACTIVITY: INCREASING UNDERSTANDING AROUND HOMELESSNESS VIA 'MAKING ENDS MEET'

<www.playspent.org> is an American based interactive website where participants can see what it is like to live on the edge of poverty with homelessness threatening. This game provides a budget for a month and a series of situations in which players have to make difficult decisions for themselves and their families.

In this activity students will gain an appreciation of the complexities that lie behind simple daily decisions for people on the poverty line.

Brief students about the navigation of the site. Draw their attention to the account balance in the top left of the screen, the job strikes and cash loans in the lower left, the sidebar graph that charts what is spent.

- Distribute to students a copy of the Log (page 16) on which they will chart their decisions. In pairs, students then work through the site.

Upon complete, have students discuss the following questions as a class:

- What have you learned about homelessness?
- What pressures does a single parent face in creating a home for their family?
- During this activity which decisions triggered most concern for you? Why?
- What layers of meaning can you see in the title of the site 'Spent'?
- In what ways do you think a family's identity is shaped by the place and circumstances in which they find themselves?
- What aspects of the decision making did you find most confronting? Most surprising? Why?
- If you were at risk of experiencing homelessness which of the choices in Playspent, if any, would be of main concern to you? What would your main concerns be?



» FOCUS ON YOUTH AND HOMELESS SUPPORT NETWORKS

We see the incredible work that the Salvation Army provide to a range of groups in need Australian society. Working in small groups, students are to research and prepare a digital presentation/brochure that outlines the programs and support services provided by the following organisations, with specific reference to those experiencing homelessness:

- **THE SALVATION ARMY**
- **MISSION AUSTRALIA**
- **ANGLICARE**
- **ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY**
- **THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE**
- **OPEN FAMILY**
- **WESLEY CENTRAL MISSION**
- **GOOD SHEPHERD YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**
- **SACRED HEART MISSION ST KILDA**

You could research an organisation in their state or local area. Present and discuss as a class, noting the similarities and differences between these organisations and the ways you think communities could increase awareness and public support of these services.

It is important to note that the above organisations are crisis focussed services. In your groups, research services that focus on the early intervention and prevention of homelessness. How do these differ from crisis focussed services and how do you think the profile of such organisations can best be raised?

» FOCUS ON REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN AUSTRALIA

We see that Paul and Robbin are now predominantly helping refugees and asylum seekers at the Auburn Community Centre in Sydney.

Australia's resident population increased from about 7 million in October 1945 to just under 24 million by August 2016, and from 1945 to 2016, more than 8.7 million people have permanently migrated to Australia. When discussing migration, there are a number of perspectives and key terms that are important to define. Students are to research definitions for the key terms listed in the table below.

In small groups, with reference to your research notes from the above activities, discuss the crucial differences between the terms 'refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'illegal immigrant'.

Migration is influenced by a combination of factors that cause people to leave their home country (push factors), as well as factors that draw people to a new location (pull factors). Students are to consider the summary table (right) of the main push and pull factors that can affect migration and discuss with reference to their own experience with/understanding of migration.

What 'pull factors' do places like the Auburn Community Centre help to provide for refugees, asylum seekers and new arrivals to Australia? Conduct research into similar centres and services in your capital city/local area.



PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
Lack of opportunities	Safety and security
War and conflict	Family connections
Famine or drought	Government incentives
Unemployment	Better employment opportunities
Lack of political or religious freedom	Better living standards
Natural disaster	Improved medical care
Poor medical care or education	Improved education opportunities
Lower standard of living	Political or religious freedom

Definition

Migrant	
Economic migrant	
Assisted migrant	
Skilled migrant	
Illegal migrant	
Displaced person	
Refugee	
Asylum seeker	

What problems do you think new arrivals (specifically refugees and asylum seekers) face when settling into a new community? Refer to examples you see in *'Life After The Oasis'*. What are the similarities and differences between these problems and those faced by the homeless people that Robbin and Paul worked with at The Oasis?

We learn that Robbin and Paul both spent time on Manus Island Nauru, working with people held in detention there. Working in pairs, conduct research into Australia's policy of off-shore detention. What is the rationale behind this policy and what ongoing problems does it present. Are there other options that the government could consider? Share and discuss findings as a class.

Suggested sites to assist with research:

<<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/teachers/>>

<<https://www.humanrights.gov.au>>

<<https://www.refugeeweek.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/TeachersResourceKit2019.pdf>>



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Students are to select any of the following prompts as the basis for an expository piece of writing that explores the theme of 'Identity and Belonging'.

Ensure there is direct reference to the people we meet in *'Life After The Oasis'*, using examples from the documentary to support their writing:

- 'A critical society makes it hard for people from minority cultures or groups to find a way to belong.'
- 'It can be hard to establish your identity when you feel different from those around you.'
- 'Through understanding differences we understand ourselves.'
- 'Identity and acceptance is a benchmark for understanding others.'
- 'Our sense of belonging is bound up in our own sense of identity.'
- 'Sameness and difference does not matter as long as there is belonging.'

Paul Moulds was a 2009 NSW Local Hero Nominee in The Australian of the Year Awards and he and Robbin were both recipients of the Order of Australia. Working in pairs, write a reflection on why you think Paul (and/or Robbin) are worthy recipients of such an honour. Include reference to the work they have undertaken both at The Oasis and The Auburn

Community Centre, as well as specific moments and people we encounter in *'Life After The Oasis'*.

Suggested sites to assist:

<<https://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/nominate/>>

<<https://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/honour-roll/?view=fullView&recipientID=301>>

Students are to write a letter to their local member of Parliament sharing their thoughts on youth homelessness in Australia and providing suggestions for local actions and support that can help homeless youth and work towards ending the cycle of disadvantage.

Select one of the people from *'Life After The Oasis'* and write a reflection from their perspective on their experiences, particularly over the past decade since their time at the Oasis Youth Network. What have been their major challenges and supports over this time, and what are their hopes for the future?

Suggested site to assist with this task:

<<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/jun/10/if-it-wasnt-for-the-oasis-i-dont-think-id-be-alive-inside-the-lives-of-homeless-teens>>



» FOCUS ON MENTAL ILLNESS, HOMELESSNESS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Mental health issues are more prevalent among homeless youth than the overall population of young people in Australia. In some cases, mental health is implicated in a young person becoming homeless, although it may be the case that the deterioration in the mental health of other family members tips young people into homelessness. However, becoming homeless is also an unhealthy lifestyle.

There is evidence that psychological and psychiatric problems may result from homelessness. When young people with mental health issues also develop substance use problems, the situation of co-morbidity (or dual diagnosis) presents major difficulties for supported accommodation services, as well as for specialist services that deal with mental health and drug and alcohol issues. Mental health is a major issue amongst chronically homeless youth with high and complex needs.

Mental Health advocacy group 'Beyond Blue' identifies 'six senses' that act as protective factors against mental health problems:

Divide students into pairs or small groups and read/

SENSE OF SELF-WORTH:

How you regard yourself. Knowing your strengths, skills, and abilities, and valuing yourself.

SENSE OF HUMOUR:

Ability to see the lighter side of life and to use laughter to manage stress and difficult situations.

SENSE OF CONTROL:

Realistic belief that you have the skills and ability to cope with life challenges, and that you are in charge of your own life.

SENSE OF FUTURE:

Sense of hopefulness for the future that motivates you to set goals and make plans to meet those goals.

SENSE OF BELONGING:

Feeling valued, needed, and accepted by others. Believing that you are connected to others in your world in meaningful ways.

SENSE OF PURPOSE:

Focus on things in life that provide opportunity for success and/or pleasure now and in the future. May be different for each person.

discuss the six senses. Have students come up with examples from their own life (personal and observed experiences) where they have seen the impact of these six senses.

Students are to discuss how the people from 'Life After The Oasis' were helped in relation to each of the six senses through the support they received. Share responses as a class and suggest ways that the community can extend upon these supports when helping the homeless deal with mental health problems.

TABLE 1

	Current environment, living/ working family/interests	Challenges they've faced in the past decade	Successes they've experienced in the past decade
Chris			
Owen			
Emma			
Darren			
Haley			

Area	Reason behind decision
Job chosen	
Weekly Pay	
Health Insurance	
Rent	
Child's Needs	
Job pressure	
Balancing competing interests of home, work, children and bills	

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These lesson plans
have been reviewed by
young people who have
experienced homelessness



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