

# Boost for homeless services

By Erin Handley

LOCAL homelessness services have welcomed government reform that has seen a state-wide \$30 million boost and made it easier for them to reach out to people sleeping rough in Tamworth.

On Tuesday, Tamworth Family Support Services learned it had received a 10 per cent boost in its funding; however, a chronic shortage of youth crisis accommodation continues to be a problem for the region.

Homelessness services manager Tanya Rogers said the region had had two crisis accommodation sites – one in Tamworth and one in Armidale.

“Our crisis accommodation is 99 per cent of the time full,” Ms Rogers said.

“There’s really quite high demand. In Tamworth we have

only four beds available.”

She said the organisation was trying to combat the shortage by early intervention, helping youth stay at home if it was safe, or if they were the right age, assisting them into independent living situations.

“We will always need more crisis accommodation, but having said that, it’s not always the right place for people either,” Ms Rogers said.

She said crisis accommodation was costly to staff and wasn’t always helpful for individuals with complex needs trying to overcome homelessness.

Ms Rogers said the 10 per cent funding increase was welcome and the local service had already been bolstered under the recent Going Home Staying Home reforms.

“It’s an opportunity to look at innovative ways to house people quicker,” she said.

Ms Rogers said the reforms had consolidated separate services for homeless men, women and youth.

“That means we can directly provide them with support rather than them having to tell their story multiple times,” she said.

She said people facing struggles of homelessness and disadvantage could give up easily if they didn’t reach the right service after a couple of calls, and that women escaping domestic violence could be traumatised again if they had to rehash the details of abuse.

Federal Minister for Social Services Scott Morrison and state Minister for Family and Community Services Gabrielle Upton yesterday announced the NSW implementation plan for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) which secured the funding increase.