

Report

Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot

April 2013



www.anglicave.asn.au

Anglicare Australia

Anglicare Australia is a network of 45 independent organisations that are linked to the Anglican Church and are joined by values of service, innovation, leadership and the faith that every individual has intrinsic value. Our services are delivered to one in forty Australians, in partnership with them, the communities in which they live, and other like-minded organisations in those areas. In all, over 23,000 staff and 15,000 volunteers work with over 500,000 vulnerable Australians every year delivering diverse services, in every region of Australia.

Contact Details

PO Box 4093 Ainslie ACT 2602

Tel: (02) 6230 1775 Fax: (02) 6230 1704

Email: anglicare@anglicare.asn.au



Preferred Citation

Anglicare Australia, 2013, Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot, Canberra.

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Methodology	8
Findings	10
CASE STUDY: Single parents with children eight years and over	15
Discussion	16
Policy Goals	19
Conclusion	21
Snapshots	22
Anglicare ACT - Canberra and Queanbeyan	22
Anglicare Central Queensland - Emerald, Rockhampton and Gladst South Coast and Snowy	
Anglicare North Coast – Clarence Valley NSW	30
Anglicare NT – Northern Territory	34
Anglicare Riverina – Riverina	36
Anglicare Southern NSW – Southern Tablelands, South Coast, South NSW Region	
Anglicare South Australia – Adelaide	41
Anglicare Southern Queensland – Brisbane	46
Anglicare Sydney – Greater Sydney and the Illawarra	49
Anglicare Tasmania – North West & West Coast region, Southern re Northern region	_
Anglicare Victoria – Melbourne	58
Anglicare Western NSW – Central and far west NSW	62
Anglicare Western Australia – Western Australia	65
Anglicare Willochra – Copper Coast	71
Anglicare Willochra – Whyalla	73
Samaritans – Hunter and Great Lakes	75
St Laurence Community Services – Barwon South West, Victoria	82
St Luke's Anglicare—Loddon Campaspe Region, North Central Victoria	84
Annendix	87

Executive Summary

Each year Anglicare Australia conducts the Rental Affordability Snapshot. This is the fourth time it has been carried out at the national level.

Developed by the Social Action Research Centre at Anglicare Tasmania in 2007, the Snapshot was designed to highlight the lived experience of looking for housing whilst in receipt of a low income.

For the purposes of this project, an suitable rental is one which took up less than 30% of the household's income, a commonly used benchmark of affordability. Household incomes are derived from the maximum rate of Centrelink pensions, allowances or net minimum wage combined with the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and Family Tax Benefits (FTB) where applicable.

The Snapshot was undertaken on Saturday 13 April 2013. In each locality, Anglicare Australia network members audited local newspapers and real estate websites (nominally realestate.com.au unless otherwise stated) for rental accommodation. Nationally, over 56,000 properties were surveyed (n=56,414). In 2012 there were over 65,000 properties but less coverage of the population and geographic area.

As in years gone by, the 2013 Snapshot highlights remarkably well that low incomes like government payments and the minimum wage are completely insufficient to cover costs in the Australian rental market.

Housing plays a critical role in the health and wellbeing of individual Australians. The availability of affordable, sustainable and appropriate housing underpins good health and the social, educational and economic participation of individuals.

The primary findings of the nationally aggregated data are:

Single people are seriously disadvantaged in the housing market, with less than 1% of listed properties rated as suitable.

Couples fare marginally better, at around 2% of listings rated as suitable, except where the couple household also has children and is on a government payment (0.9%).

Regional areas are too expensive for people living on a government payment (0.1%-5.8%) and only marginally less expensive for single people living on a minimum wage (4.0-6.3%).

The cities are inaccessible to anyone living on a low income with all household types being able to access less than 1% of listed properties except a couple with children on the minimum wage for whom 4.1% of the listed properties were deemed suitable..

Anglicare in every community

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics, 2001, Canberra, cat No. 4160.0, viewed 12 April 2013, http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/E07179C5CE8AFEDCCA2571B70011A672?opendocument

Reports from various industry sources boast of the slow but steady comeback of the housing market. Growth is positive and prices are rising. On the other hand the COAG Reform Council says that rental affordability has worsened and that people on the lowest incomes are being hardest hit.

There was a time in Australia where the right to housing and the responsibility of providing it was central to the Government's business. Time however has eroded that sense of responsibility and despite the largest investment in affordable housing in decades, the changes are not filtering through to the least advantaged.. Reasons have been posited for this which include lack of investment, regulatory constraints and landlord-tenancy frictions.

Other work from Anglicare Australia has put a face on the housing crisis and it looks like people going in to debt to pay their bills. It looks like kids and parents going without food because it is the only discretionary item in the budget.

At a time when the Government has announced an interim agreement for the National Affordable Housing Agreement and a fifth round of the National Rental Affordability Scheme, it should also be looking toward fundamental reform of the housing sector. This government is clearly not afraid of a challenge with reforms like the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Gonski educational reforms. Reforms in the housing sector of that scale are badly needed and to point the government in the right direction Anglicare Australia has made recommendation which help to address housing inequality forcefully and without hesitation. Such measures include:

- An increase in the Commonwealth Rent Assistance
- An increase in the basic level of the Allowance payments
- A review of tax treatment in the housing sector, for example negative gearing
- Targeting of the NRAS investment toward the lower end of the property market.

Introduction

The *Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot* (the Snapshot) is an annual project surveying the affordability of rental properties for people living on a low income in Australia.

Developed by the Social Action Research Centre at Anglicare Tasmania in 2007, the Snapshot was designed to highlight the lived experience of looking for housing whilst in receipt of a low income. This is the fourth year that the *Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot* has been undertaken at the national level.

Housing plays a critical role in the health and wellbeing of individual Australians. The availability of affordable, sustainable and appropriate housing underpins good health and the social, educational and economic participation of individuals (AIHW 2011a).²

The Housing Industry Association (HIA) on the other hand has reported that, while low, the housing market is recovering and that the land prices are at record highs.³ News from the Reserve Bank of Australia similarly says that despite the high Australian dollar, Australia's economy is performing well - jobs, output growth, retail sales, housing construction are all listed as having 'pretty good numbers'.⁴ The REIA too, is eager to promote the good news of rising prices in the residential market. ⁵ What then does this positive growth mean for people on low incomes in terms of housing themselves and their families?

In its latest report the COAG Reform Council stated bleakly that "[n]ationally, rental affordability worsened for the lowest 10% of households by income—their rate of rental stress jumped from 49.2% in 2007–08 to 60.8% in 2009–10." The experience of people living at the edges of society is becoming increasingly known. The discourse around income adequacy and work insecurity is being taken up in quarters heretofore unknown. Proponents from business groups, workers and manufacturers unions, social academics and even some economists have called for an increase in the basic income of unemployed people. Alliances are being forged like that of ACOSS, the Australian Council Trade Union and the Business Council of Australia to pursue this as a policy goal. This is an election year, with a high performing economy and a high Australian dollar. All three of which will have major impacts on the forthcoming Federal Budget. The question remains however, given the volatile fiscal and policy environments leading up to both the Budget and the Election, will affordable housing be left off the agenda?

⁶ COAG Reform Council, 2012, ...



² AIHW (2011), Australia's welfare 2011. Australia's welfare no. 10. Cat. no. AUS 142. Canberra: AIHW

³HIA, 2013, Land Sales Signal Inadequate Home Building Recovery, viewed 23 April 2013,

http://hia.com.au/media/~/media/Files/MediaMicrosite/Media%20Releases/Land%20Sales%20Signal%20Inadequate%20Home%20Building%20Recovery.ashx

⁴ Curran, E 2013, 'RBA changes tone on cost of high dollar', *The Australian*, April 09, 2013, viewed 23 April 2013, < http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/rba-changes-tone-on-cost-of-high-dollar/story-e6frg8zx-1226616193995>.

⁵ Real Estate Institute of Australia, 2013, *Residential market shows positive signs*, viewed 23 April 2013, < http://www.reia.com.au/userfiles/MEDIARELEASE_1363128016.pdf>.

The following table was generated from data from FaHCSIA and DEEWR and appeared in the last report from ACOSS looking at material deprivation and poverty. It highlights how many people in the Australian population in receipt of government benefits - and the minimum wage numbers have also been added – indicating how many people could potentially be impacted by the findings from the Rental Affordability Snapshot apply to.

Table 1: Major income support payments 2010-2011, target group and number of recipients

Income support payment	Target group	Number of recipients
Pensions *		
Aged Pension incl Veterans age pension	People aged over 65 years if male or 64 years if female	2,158,000
Disability Support Pension	People with disabilities assessed as 'unable to work full or part time'	793,000
Parenting Payment Single (PPS)	Sole parents of children under 8 years old	323,000
Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP)	Primary carers of children under 6 years in a couple	117,000
Newstart Allowance (NSA)	Unemployed people 21-64 years	513,000
Other major income sup	port payments *	
Youth Allowance	Full time students up to 24 years old and unemployed people up to 20 years old	409,000
Carer Payment (CP)	People providing constant care for a person with a disability	169,000
Income from Earnings*		
Minimum Wage		1,400,000

Sources: * FaHCSIA 2012, *Income support customers: a statistical overview 2010*, (data for 2010) at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/research/statistical/Pages/stp-9.aspx;

Youth Allowance data from DEEWR (2012), *Labour Market and Related Payments* for August 2011. # DEEWR 2012, *Response to senate Estimates question EW0708_12* (data for August 2011).

J Healy and S Richardson, An Updated Profile of the Minimum Wage Workforce in Australia, National Institute of Labour Studies, October 2006 at http://www.flinders.edu.au/sabs/nils-files/reports/AFPC 1 MW workers.pdf

⁷ ACOSS, 2012, *Who is missing out? Material deprivation and income support payments*, Sydney, viewed 25 April 2013, http://acoss.org.au/images/uploads/Missing Out 2012 ACOSS.pdf



Methodology

For the purposes of this project, an affordable rental is one which took up less than 30% of the household's income, a commonly used benchmark of affordability. Household incomes are derived from the maximum rate of Centrelink pensions, allowances or net minimum wage combined with the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and Family Tax Benefits (FTB) where applicable. This year an additional household was included to reflect the experience of those who have been impacted by the Government decision to remove parents from the Parenting Payment Single, when their youngest child reaches eight years of age. The total resulting income for each household type was used to establish a maximum affordable weekly rent based on the 30% rule.

A Note on Commonwealth Rental Assistance:

CRA has both a minimum (cut-in) point and a maximum (cut-out) point for each household type. Where the advertised weekly rent falls between the cut-in and cut-out points, the proportion of CRA is calculated as a proportion of the amount paid in rent. Where the weekly rent falls above the cut-out point, the maximum rate is applied irrespective of how far above the cut-out point the weekly rent happens to be. Given higher rents the CRA becomes less effective as a means of affordability.

The Snapshot was undertaken on Saturday 13 April 2013. In each locality, Anglicare Australia network members audited local newspapers and real estate websites (nominally realestate.com.au unless otherwise stated) for rental accommodation. Nationally, over 56,000 properties were surveyed (n=56,414). Predefined tests of affordability and appropriateness were applied resulting in the number of advertised properties on a given day which were adequate for households living on a low income. For a dwelling to be determined as suitable it must satisfy tests of both affordability and appropriateness. Assumptions underlying the tests of affordability and appropriateness may be found at Appendix 1.

Is 30% Enough?

The commonly used benchmark of housing affordability is the '30% ratio'. That is, it is determined that when housing costs are greater than 30% of disposable income and that household's income is in the bottom 40% of the income distribution, the household is deemed to be in 'housing stress'. There are weaknesses with the 30% of income housing stress measure such as what constitutes housing costs and how to account for household income.

¹⁰ Harding, A., Phillips, B., & Kelly, S *Trends in Housing Stress*, NATSEM, Paper Presented at the National Summit on Housing Affordability, Canberra 2004



⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics, 2001, Canberra, cat No. 4160.0, viewed 12 April 2013,

 $[\]underline{http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/E07179C5CE8AFEDCCA2571B70011A672?opendocument}$

⁹ ABS, 2001, op. cit.

Though these concerns are inherent in any measure of affordability¹¹ Anglicare Australia has developed safeguards, where possible, to minimise the distortions created from inconsistent treatment of these concepts.

When a household income is upwards of \$150,000, 30% of that income might be enough to obtain a suitable dwelling with adequate access to services and amenities as required without placing the household under any kind of stress. However, when the household income is at or below the minimum wage, options are limited and a reasonable place to live often comes at a much higher than advertised price. Particularly given rising house prices in both the buying and rental markets. 12,13

The Ratio method, such as has been used in the *Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot*, is a broad brush approach to affordability not taking into account the nuances of individual households. Though focussing on the lived experience of searching for suitable housing, the Snapshot does not seek to understand the individual experiences of households. The strength of the Ratio method is that it provides an indicator at a particular point in time (a snapshot) of unaffordability, and over longer periods, of the extent to which affordability shifts.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute – from its National Research Venture 3 into housing affordability – found that the ratio method was a reasonable indicator of housing stress and was useful in identifying "households likely to be at risk of problems associated with a lack of affordable housing". The ratio method underpins the Housing Affordability Index offered by the HIA and Commonwealth Investment Bank and the Council of Australian Governments also uses the ratio method in the current National Affordable Housing Agreement as its measure of affordability.

¹⁶ COAG Reform Council 2011, *National Affordable Housing Agreement: Performance report for 2009–10*, COAG Reform Council, Sydney.



¹¹ Henman, P & Jones, A, 2010, *Exploring the use of residual measures of housing affordability in Australia: methodologies and concepts.* Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute: Melbourne.

¹² HIA, 2013, op cit.

¹³ REIA, 2013, op. cit.

¹⁴ AHURI, 2010, National Research Venture 3 into housing affordability, AHURI Final Report No. 105

¹⁵ HIA, n.d, *HIA-CBA Affordability Index and Report*, viewed 23 April 2013, < http://economics.hia.com.au/media/Affordability%20Index%20Methodology.pdf>.

Findings

Detailed findings for each locality can be found in the section *Locality Snapshots*. What follows is an overarching description of the common findings across jurisdictions for people living on low incomes.

National catchment

Overall there was a decrease in the number of properties surveyed but an increase in the number of regions where the snapshot took place. The Snapshot was carried out in every state and territory covering a large proportion of Australia's geographic area.

Diagram 1: Coverage of the Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot (stylised)



In total 56,414 properties were assessed on the collection day as either *appropriate* or *affordable* for households living on low incomes. The Snapshot looks at 13 household types of varying composition and payment type and is conducted in both regional and metropolitan areas. For a property to be considered suitable for any of the household types both tests must be satisfied (ie, suitable = affordable and appropriate). Table 2, below, provides a breakdown of the suitability of properties listed on the day of the Snapshot for each of the 13 household types. It should be noted however that these are aggregate figures

and are not distributed evenly across the Snapshot catchment areas. It does not follow that a person living in rural South Australia will have the same chance of access a suitable property as would a person in either a similar regional area or a metropolitan area. For detailed figures on individual catchment areas please see the relevant locality Snapshot.

Table 2: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: National aggregate.

Household Type	Payment Type	No. Affordable & Appropriate	% Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	503	0.9%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	246	0.4%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	1151	2.0%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	342	0.6%

Anglicave in every community

Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	61	0.1%
Single	Age Pension	346	0.6%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	149	0.3%
Single	Newstart Allowance	21	0.0%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	13	0.0%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	13	0.0%
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A	4777	8.5%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	1266	2.2%
Single	Minimum Wage	920	1.6%
Total No of Properties		56,414	

Single income households

Less than 1% of listed properties were rated as suitable for any of the single households in receipt of a government payment. Singles living on an Aged Pension or the Disability Support Pension would be able to afford 0.6% and 0.3% of the total properties equating to 346 and 149 dwellings respectively. Singles living on Newstart and Youth Allowance however could only afford 21 and 13 of the 56,000 properties listed in the national Snapshot catchment areas. These figures do not equate to a percentage at one decimal point, hereafter this will be described as <0.1%. Despite the higher level of the pensions over the allowances, affordable rentals are extremely limited for any single person living on a government payment.

Singles in receipt of a minimum wage fair marginally better than their government payment counterparts with 1.6% of the listed properties (n=920) available to them.

Singles with children would also struggle to find suitable accommodation had they been looking on the day of the Snapshot. A single with two children and living on the minimum wage would have access to 2.2% of the listed rentals (n=1,266), while the same family if in receipt of the Parenting Payment Single would have access to only 0.6% of the listings (n=342). The two household types including a single parent and child are some of the hardest hit. The two households are differentiated by the age of their child and subsequently the payment type: one has a five year old child and is in receipt of the Parenting Payment; the other, has an eight year old child and is in receipt of Newstart. Respectively the availability of suitable rentals is 0.6% (n=342) and 0.1% (n=61).

Double income households

Households with dual incomes naturally fair better in this Snapshot. There is clear demarcation though between those living on the minimum wage and those in receipt of Government



payments. An implication is that the affordability benchmark for the minimum wage is drawing closer – if still not close but closer – to the average weekly rental price. Of the three couple households, two include children. Children and the associated Family Tax Benefit payment do not seem to be an indicator of a greater share of suitable properties at the aggregate level. The household with the greatest proportion of suitable listings is a couple household with two children living on the minimum wage at 8.5% (n=4,777). At the other end, the same family composition in receipt of the Newstart Allowance would have access to only 0.4% of the available listings (n=246). A couple living on the Aged Pension would have access to 2.1% or 1,151 properties of the listed 56,000.

Regional catchment

The 2013 Snapshot took into account the greatest portion of rural and regional areas to date. Generally, Australia is codified into five different scales of remoteness: Metropolitan (least remote), Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, and Very Remote.¹⁷ Similar to the method used by the COAG Reform Council Anglicare Australia has used a rough 'balance of state' approach to determining regional and metropolitan areas. Hence, Regional refers to the four ABS categories which include regional and remote descriptions. Also generally, the areas covered in the regional areas have between 10,000 to 100,000 inhabitants except in those areas which are very remote.¹⁸ According to the ABS approximately 30% (30.8%) of Australia's population lives in regional areas. Those properties counted in the regional areas of the Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot equates to 27.8% of the total collection, in keeping with the proportional breakdown of metropolitan and regional population distribution.

Table 3: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: Regional aggregate.

Household Type	Payment Type	No. Affordable & Appropriate	% Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	409	2.6%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	203	1.3%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	900	5.7%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	277	1.7%

¹⁷ ABS, 2012, Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2011, viewed 25 April, 2013, http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3218.0~2011~Main+Features~Main+Features?OpenDocument#PARALINK3.

Anglicare in every community

¹⁸ Ibid.

Single, one child	Newstart	48	0.3%
(aged over 8)	Allowance		
Single	Age Pension	299	1.9%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support	121	0.8%
	Pension		
Single	Newstart	19	0.1%
	Allowance		
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	11	0.1%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	11	0.1%
Couple, two children	Minimum Wage +	3107	19.6%
(one aged less than 5,	FTB A		
one aged less than 10)			
Single, two children	Minimum Wage +	985	6.2%
(one aged less than 5,	FTB A & B		
one aged less than 10)			
Single	Minimum Wage	627	4.0%
Total No of Properties		15,855	
		-	

Single income households

Single people in regional areas are very hard hit by housing unaffordability. Regional areas generally have fewer services and higher unemployment rates raising the dilemma of "if you can afford to live there, there are no jobs and if there are jobs, you can't afford to live there!"

Of the 15,855 properties that were analysed on the collection day, those that would be suitable for a single person ranged from 0.1% for singles on Newstart and Youth Allowance (n=19 & 11), increasing to 0.3% for a single parent on Newstart (n=48), to 0.8% for a person with a disability (n=121). Singles living on the Parenting Payment or the Aged Pension could access 1.7% and 1.9% respectively (n=277, n=297).

Singles living on the minimum wage might apply for 627 properties if on their own (4.0%) or 985 properties if they had a child (6.2%).

Double income households

As with the national aggregate, having children and a higher income does not equate to higher proportion of suitable rentals. A couple with children on the minimum wage might access 19.6% of those listed (n=3107) whereas the same family living on Newstart might only access 2.6% (n=409). An Aged pension couple could only afford 900 of the 15,500 properties (5.7%).

Metropolitan catchment

Metropolitan areas have seen the greatest growth over the last ten years with the bulk of that growth occurring in the inner and outer suburbs. Growth has occurred too along the inland coast areas, adding extra pressure on urban areas whereas a decline has been experienced in



inland rural areas, particularly those ravaged by drought.¹⁹ Metropolitan areas account for 69.2% of Australia's population: 14.7 million people.²⁰

Table 4: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: Metropolitan aggregate.

Household Type	Payment Type	No. Affordable & Appropriate	% Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	94	0.2%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	43	0.1%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	251	0.6%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	65	0.2%
Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	13	0.0%
Single	Age Pension	47	0.1%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	28	0.1%
Single	Newstart Allowance	2	0.0%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	2	0.0%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	2	0.0%
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A	1670	4.1%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	281	0.7%
Single	Minimum Wage	293	0.7%
Total No of Properties		40,559	

Single income households

Given the increasing pressure on our cities people living on a low income have very little chance of living in an urban environment without living in extreme housing stress. As can be seen from Table 4 none of the single income households would have access to more than 1% of the total available properties listed in the catchment areas on collection day. Singles living on the higher pensions would be able to access only 0.2% if they have a child (n=65) otherwise 0.1% for those on an Aged or Disability Support Pension (n=47, n=28). For singles living on the



¹⁹ ABS, 2012, op.cit.

²⁰ Ibid.

Newstart and Youth Allowances <0.1% of the available rentals in the metropolitan areas would be suitable (n=2, n=2).

Double income households

Of the three couple households only the minimum wage household would be able to access more than 1% of the listed properties. (4.1%, n=1670). The couple household with children on Newstart would be able to afford 0.2% and an aged couple might apply for 0.6% (n=94, n=251 respectively).

CASE STUDY: Single parents with children eight years and over

In the 2012 Federal Budget the Government announced that previous grandfathering arrangements for people receiving the Parenting Payment would cease. On 1 January 2012, those in receipt of the payment whose child was over the requisite age – six years for a couple and eight years for a single – would be transitioned off the Parenting Payment onto the lower Newstart Allowance and its associated participation requirements. This policy measure is in place for all recipients of the payment subsequent to 2006 but has gained national attention due to the bulk transition of 80,000 parents onto the lower payment at one time.

The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) in a letter to the Special Rapporteur to the UN stated:²¹

The Parenting Payment stands at 90% of the Poverty Line, while the Newstart Allowance is only 77% of the Poverty Line. Moving single parents from the Parenting Payment to the Newstart Allowance will risk further poverty for this group...[a]ll single parents, whether in casual or part-time employment will stand to lose a portion of their income, and in some circumstances they may lose up to 12.8% of their income, or \$223.23 per fortnight.

Given the debate over the impact of the policy decision to transfer recipients off the parenting payment on to the lower Newstart payment and given the considerable amount of money that would potentially be lost in the transition, Anglicare Australia chose to add the additional household type of a single parent with a child over eight years to investigate the likely impact on this cohort in terms of housing stress.

For the purposes of this project, a weekly income is generated by assuming the household is in the full receipt of government payment and any entitlements that accompany it. That is, Family Tax benefit A and B where appropriate.

http://acoss.org.au/uploads/Urgent%20communication%20to%20the%20UN%20Special%20Rapporteur%20on%20Extreme%20Poverty%20and%20Human%20Rights Final 051012.pdf?utm source=ACOSS+Media&utm campaign=258ac43fe8-2012-10-05 MR soleparents&utm medium=email



²¹ ACOSS, 2012, *Letter from ACOSS and other groups to the UN Special Rapporteur dated October 5, 2012*, viewed 25 April 2013,

Commonwealth Rent Assistance is also included in the income and is calculated on the 30% benchmark of income. Following this method a household in receipt of a parenting payment would be able to afford to pay up to \$171 a week in rent whereas a household in receipt of the Newstart Allowance could afford to pay up to \$135 a week in rent.

The act of moving a single parent and their child to a lower payment equates to \$36 a week less and therefore 281 fewer properties where they might potentially find a home.

As reported in a previous section the household on the higher Parenting Payment might apply for 342 properties whereas the household on the lower Newstart allowance might apply for only 61 properties in 56,000 or **0.1%** of the available properties on the day of collection.

Discussion

The provision of housing – either the building and maintenance of public housing or the mechanisms underpinning private and commercial housing – was once a hallmark of the Australian Federal Government. Poor responses to varying cost pressures of housing markets and short-sighted decisions of governments have led invariably to Australia having one of the most expensive housing markets in the developed world.²² Over the years since the post-war reconstruction effort attitudes have shifted away from protecting housing as a right and as an obligation of government to ensure the security of housing markets – particularly for the least advantaged. A notion endorsed too by the community in those post-war years.²³ Now, Governments seem shy of their achievements in this sector and fail to promote what gains have been made.²⁴ This is most seemingly evident in the lack of mentions of housing in general much less affordable housing for the least advantaged by either of the major political parties – nor was it raised by the voting populace – in the previous election.

Anglicare Australia conducts the *Rental Affordability Snapshot* for precisely these reasons. It is one way in which the experience of housing affordability in Australia can be showcased and kept at the forefront of policy discussions. It is particularly timely this year, as Australia braces itself for a very long and drawn out political election campaign.

Despite its unpopularity with politicians and the media, housing continues to be an extremely serious issue in Australia, especially for those living on the lowest incomes.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), the number of households in moderate housing stress—adopting a measure of 30% of *gross* household income—has

²⁴ Tingle, L, 2012, 'You've got to accentuate the differences', *Australian Financial Review*, viewed 23 April 2013, < http://www.afr.com/p/opinion/you_ve_got_to_accentuate_the_differences_VyGppQsBYs7fpyWBWwKfaN>.



²² Troy, P 2012, *Accommodating Australians: Commonwealth Government Involvement in Housing*, The Federation Press, Sydney.

²³ Ibid.

increased from just over 900,000 (14%) in 1995, to more than 1.4 million (17%) in 2010. Similarly, the number of households in severe housing stress—costs in addition to 50% of gross household income—has also increased from 300,000 (4.6%) to more than 460,000 (5.5%).²⁵ In a report assessing the supply and demand of affordable rentals in the private market and looking specifically at the lowest 40% of income earners in Australia (those earning less than \$42,000 a year), AHURI²⁶ found that of those 40% almost half (47.3%) spent more than 30% of their household income on housing. Within the lowest quintile only – the 20% of people who earn less than \$22,000 a year – 78% spent more than 30% of their income with almost a quarter of them in severe housing stress paying over 50% of their household income on housing.

In this same report AHURI found that although the number of private rental dwellings grew by 11 per cent between 2001 and 2006, the growth was skewed towards the top end of the rental market which has more purchasing power than low income renters and can afford relatively higher rents. Rent prices rose in the context of limited supply resulting in a shortage of affordable housing stock available to those living on low incomes.

Other work carried out by Anglicare Australia demonstrates the intractability of housing stress. In a report commissioned through National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) – *Going without: Financial Hardship in Australia* – it was found that households living on low incomes were spending up to 121% of their incomes with up to 64% of that spent on basics including housing.²⁷ Through the Food Insecurity Project which underpinned the 2012 State of the Family Report – *When there's not enough to eat* – it was found that food became one of the only discretionary items in the budget so in order to ensure that the rent and other bills were payed, families and sometimes children had to go without food. It is this type of work that puts a face on the housing crisis.²⁸

The most recent Housing and Homelessness Minister, Mark Butler, has negotiated with the states and territories an interim agreement for the continuation of the National Affordable Housing Agreement and has also announced a fifth round of the National Rental Affordability Scheme, itself worth close to \$1 billion. These latest announcements top out the \$20 billion investment the Federal Government has made in Australia's affordable housing sector over the last five years. With such massive investment, why does affordable housing remain as an issue?

Across all indicators, there is no evidence that housing affordability has improved, rental affordability has even worsened.²⁹ AHURI stipulates that the market has stagnated because of continued reductions of investment in the sector, including barriers to private investment, leading to an overall reduction in low-cost housing; it points to the various planning and



²⁵ AIHW (2011), Australia's welfare 2011. Cat. no. AUS 142. Canberra: AIHW

²⁶ Wulff, M. et al. (2011) *Australia's private rental market: the supply of, and demand for, affordable dwellings,* AHURI Final Report No.168. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

²⁷ NATSEM, 2012, *Going without: Financial hardship in Australia*, Anglicare Australia, Catholic Social Services, the Salvation Army and UnitingCare Australia, Canberra.

²⁸ Anglicare Australia, 2012, *When there's not enough to eat: State of the Family Report 2012*, Anglicare Australia, Canberra.

²⁹ COAG, 2012, op.cit.

regulatory barriers that inhibit supply; and also finally to legislative and tenancy-landlord constraints impacting on the attractiveness of large scale projects as an investment opportunity. 30

Australians for Affordable Housing, Homelessness Australia, National Shelter and ACOSS have policy goals which relate to or take their lead from these identified constraints. Primarily these include

- Increase CRA by 30%
- Increase Newstart Allowance
- Commitment from state and territory governments to extend National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness beyond 2013
- Adequate/guarantee funding for homelessness and related programs
- Tax and regulatory reform

As pointed out by Patrick Troy,³¹ the Government is no longer proud or overly conscious of its obligation to support housing as a right and the community has failed in holding them accountable to it. In this election year, it is up to Anglicare Australia and its collegiate organisations and citizens which view the need for safe and adequate housing as a social, economic and moral imperative (or even one out of three) to remind government and the community of that responsibility.

Systemic changes must be a part of future planning for the housing system. The government has made very clear that its primary focus is jobs and returning people to the workforce. And yet, even people working on the minimum wage struggle to find housing given current market prices. Given too, the increasing disparity between the allowances and the pensions, the hole that these people are finding themselves in is growing ever deeper and becoming increasingly entrenched.

This government is clearly not afraid of setting itself difficult tasks. The NDIS a year early, Gonski, Carbon price, the Murray Darling Basin Plan. All examples of the government clearly taking up a position and going to the mattresses for it. In regard to housing however, as a pillar of well-being it is inexcusable for it not to be the focus of similar national reform. The continuation of the NAHA provides ample opportunity to begin these conversations with the states and territories, for without it, only much of the same is to be expected.

³¹ Troy, P 2012, *Accommodating Australians: Commonwealth Government Involvement in Housing*, The Federation Press, Sydney.



³⁰ AHURI, n.d., http://www.ahuri.edu.au/themes/housing_affordability/

Policy Goals

Along with income, affordable housing is one of the few issues that genuinely crosses all sectors and population groups within Australia. It is an issue, though affecting all Australians, which affects our most vulnerable and disadvantaged disproportionately. Like the NDIS or Gonski, this is an issue that will take genuine intervention from governments, business and society as a whole. Action for change must be lead and as such it is the Federal Government that must make a genuine commitment to intervention.

As it is an issue without border or particular origin, so it must be a battery of interventions that might intercede and reverse it. And rather than tinkering with the edges, policy interventions must address housing inequality forcefully and without hesitation. Such measures might include:

Income Adequacy

Commonwealth Rental Assistance – As house prices continue to rise the CRA becomes less effective as a means of improving affordability. Research from RMIT and the Tenants Union of Victoria has found that between 1995 and 2009, median weekly rental prices in all capital cities rose by 41%. At the same time, the maximum rates of CRA remained steady in real terms, meaning this assistance now covers a smaller proportion of rent in 2009 (between 17% and 24%) when compared with 1995.³² As a result, it has been suggested, in the first instance, to increase the rate of the CRA to more accurately reflect the cost of housing in Australia and secondly, to develop an instrument which responds to geographic pressures such as mining.

Adequacy of Benefits – Economists, advocates, social commentators, Australian society in general³³ and the international community³⁴ have all commented on the inadequacy of Australia's transfer payments. The Government's position on income support is clear, that the level of income support is in itself an incentive to return to work. However, this position is outdated; to better support people back into the workforce, it must be ensured that the essentials – shelter, food, warmth – are secure. Despite the disappointing recommendations coming out of the Income Adequacy Inquiry the central finding is clear: the current level of allowances are too low. ³⁵

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary Business/Committees/Senate Committees?url=eet ctte/completed inquiries/2 010-13/newstart allowance/report/index.htm



³² Colic-Peisker, V., Ong, R., and McMurray, C. (2009) *Falling behind: The growing gap between rent and rent assistance* 1995-2009, RMIT University and the Tenants Union of Victoria: Melbourne accessed http://www.tuv.org.au/articles/files/housing_statistics/Falling_Behind_CRA.pdf

³³ Anglicare Australia, 2011, Support for Fair Welfare, Media Release http://www.anglicare.asn.au/site/medrel-4.php

³⁴ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2008), *Growing Unequal?: Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries* in Catholic Social Services Australia, Anglicare Australia, UnitingCare Australia & the Salvation Army. 2011. *What if employers say no?*, Canberra.

³⁵ Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee, 2012, *The adequacy of the allowance payment system for jobseekers and others, the appropriateness of the allowance payment system as a support into work and the impact of the changing nature of the labour market*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, viewed 25 April 2013,

Systemic Barriers

Taxation – The Henry Review - Australia's Future Tax System - called for the review of the treatment given to such tax incentives as negative gearing. Anglicare Australia is on record with a proposal to shift the way negative gearing and other tax treatments operate to ensure that a social element is required for claiming. For example, negative gearing may only be claimed on properties in which the tenant is a low-income earner.

Funding to support tenancy management – Tenancy sustainability and its impact on the cycle of homelessness can impact negatively on housing affordability. Where tenancies fail and the occupant is forced back into the cycle of homelessness, often this might have been averted through supported tenancy management. Several Anglicare member's and other agencies have indicated that increased funding to allow workers greater capacity to work with tenants would considerably reduce the event of failed tenancies.

Cultural Barriers

Stigma and discrimination – many people on low incomes, particularly in cases of long-term unemployment have little or no rental history to speak of that is acceptable to many property managers and landlords. Individuals and families whose income summary statement is printed on a Centrelink letterhead are at an immediate disadvantage due to the stigma which exists in the private rental market. By making housing affordability a national priority and by committing to such initiatives as re-orienting negative gearing, investing in low-income housing and increasing basic income support payments, a message is being sent from the highest level that people who live on low-incomes deserve a home as much as any other Australian.

Infrastructure

Continued spending – Government spending on building new dwellings is at record highs. The NRAS and other initiatives such as the Housing Affordability Fund, have been successful in bringing thousands of properties on line and yet it has not been sufficient. The Government has experienced several hits to revenue streams with lower returns on the mining resource tax and also the impact of the high Australian dollar. In the forthcoming budget it is unlikely to see any spending like that over the last five years, despite projections of significant short falls in the housing sector. It is important in that view to ensure that current investments are strategically targeted toward the lower end of the rental market to alleviate pressure in that area.

Superannuation – There is a substantial amount of wealth residing in the Australian superannuation sector. In South Africa they have begun to use some of that wealth to invest in new housing infrastructure. The South African Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) is the largest pension Fund in Africa with US\$145B in assets under management. The Fund is the most powerful investor in the South African economy. It's the most powerful investor in the



South African economy and takes a very serious role in responsible investment and nation building.

Appropriate structures – The Housing Supply Council has reported growth in single and couple households with no children.³⁶ The Council suggests as a measure to keep pace with demand and the household trends in Australia new developments ought to cater for this household type.

Conclusion

Housing Affordability is a *national issue* and should be a *national priority*. With evidence coming from the Governments own agencies – AIHW and the ABS – as well as its independent advisory bodies such as the COAG Reform Council that housing supply is down and rental affordability is worsening it is surprising that there are not reforms in place on the scale of the NDIS or Gonski. The Rental Affordability Snapshot has shown once again that people on low incomes are bearing the brunt of the housing crisis and that it is likely they will continue to do so. As the population grows and puts increasing pressure on urban centres housing affordability continues to be an extremely important and serious issue. The Snapshot has also clearly shown that the nature of the housing crisis is not unique to either the city or country areas but is felt across the board.

The *Rental Affordability Snapshot* offers only an overview of the experience of housing stress in Australia. It does not speak to the issues of individual households who are spending more and more of the meagre budget on housing.

³⁶ National Housing Supply Council, 2011, *State of Supply Report 2011*, National Housing Supply Council, Australian Government, viewed 23 March, 2012, http://www.nhsc.org.au/state_of_supply/2011_ssr_rpt/docs/nhsc-state-of_supply-report-2011.pdf



Snapshot: Anglicare ACT—Canberra and Queanbeyan

Introduction

The ACT, together with Queanbeyan, is unique in that it is almost totally urban and suburban, with very few rural villages.

About 411,000 people live in this region, mostly in Canberra while Queanbeyan has a population of around 54,000. 1.6% of this population (compared to 2.5% nationally) reported an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, with a slightly higher proportion in Queanbeyan than Canberra. More than a quarter of the Canberra/Queanbeyan population have a university-level qualification, nearly double the national figure of 14.3% (ABS 2011). As well, about 40% of this region's workforce is employed in the public sector. The result of such high public sector employment is that the region's residents have, on average, a larger amount of disposable income than the Australian population more generally.

However, this, in combination with an insufficient supply of housing, also results in upward pressures on rental prices. In addition to this, Queanbeyan, which in past decades was the solution to affordable housing for Canberra workers, now has rental prices approaching the unaffordability levels of Canberra, with the added problem of poor access cheap public transport over the state/territory border. Persons employed in lower paid industries or reliant on Centrelink benefits have next to no options in this market.

Anglicare ACT supports low income households in Canberra in a variety of ways. A few key examples include: supporting young people at risk of homelessness in independent living programs, aged persons through various community based aged care programs; providing disability support services, and partnering with parish-based food assistance programs.

Findings

There were practically no affordable rental options found in Canberra or Queanbeyan for any of the low-income households studied. For example, there are question marks around the appropriateness of the one affordable property affordable listed on spreadsheet for a single person on the Age Pension. The property is in Rahula Community Lodge, a boarding house style arrangement with single bedrooms but shared bathrooms. Singles with a minimum wage income could afford lower-priced shared housing but no 'live alone' private rental options. Of the four properties affordable to couples on the Age pension, the only one in Canberra is a studio granny flat; the other three are the cheapest three units currently on the market in Queanbeyan.

Once methodological differences between the 2012 and 2013 surveys are accounted for, we found a marginal tightening in an already very dire situation in Canberra-Queanbeyan. The rental affordability situation for families and individuals reliant on Government benefits or the minimum wage remains extraordinarily bleak.



What should be noted is that the total number of affordable properties we are talking about is so small that the demographic groups we looked at would all be competing for the same properties with each other and higher income earners. Indeed we are just talking about 14 affordable properties in total:

- 8 share accommodation options that were affordable for single people on the minimum wage;
- four 1 bedroom properties that were appropriate and affordable for couples on the Aged Pension and;
- two 3 bedroom properties that were appropriate and affordable for couple families reliant on the minimum wage.

The demographic groups for which we found affordable and appropriate housing were couples on the Age Pension, singles on the Age Pension, families with two minimum wage incomes and two children, and singles on the minimum wage.

One key methodological difference between the 2012 and 2013 surveys is the decision to exclude share accommodation as an "appropriate" option for couples on an aged pension. Last year, we reported that there were 106 properties suitable for couples on the Aged pension. However, all of these were in fact a single rooms in a shared house, which is very unlikely to be a realistic option, especially in Canberra where there is market is dominated by tertiary student houses. The finding this year that there are only four appropriate and affordable houses for couples on the Aged Pension in Canberra-Queanbeyan (compared to 106 in 2012) does not indicate a significant tightening in the market but a change in our definition of appropriate housing for this group.

Another methodological change was the decision to use "after-tax" income for people on the minimum wage rather than "pre-tax". This decision was made to emphasise the 'lived experience' of renting on a low income. So for example, these household may receive a tax refund at year's end, but the actual amount of money they have to budget week-to-week on rent is the amount placed in their bank account each pay period (after tax is withheld). Last year's report found 20 properties affordable using the pre-tax measure; using this year's income data however last year had only one more property suitable for the two minimum wage earning family with two children.

It should be noted that all of the properties affordable to individuals on a minimum wage are shared properties. Since these are advertised less formally than properties themselves, it is difficult to put an exact figure on how many there are, not knowing how many of those found have already been filled. It should also be noted that all of the properties found for single Aged Pensioners were in shared accommodation, which is unlikely to be a realistic option.

The number and percentage of affordable and appropriate properties for each household type examined are given below:



Number and Percentage of Affordable & Appropriate Properties by

Household Type

Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	0	0.0%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	4	0.2%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Newstart Allowanc + FTB	0	0.0%
Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance + FTB	0	0.0%
Single	Age Pension	1	0.0%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0.0%
Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A	2	0.1%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	0	0.0%
Single	Minimum Wage	8	0.4%
Total No of Properties	2071		

Discussion

The ACT and surrounding region has an ongoing problem with housing affordability. These findings were largely as Anglicare expected for the Canberra/Queanbeyan region. Many studies have shown that there is virtually no affordable rental housing available in Canberra for persons on a low income. This data supports the previous findings of Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshots.

It is particularly concerning that so few properties are affordable even for households with a minimum wage income. Virtually nothing was found for families with two minimum wage incomes, and nothing at all was found for a single parent of two children on a minimum wage. Single people without dependents at least have the option of a share house; all of the dwellings we found affordable to this group were shared houses.



An added factor is that these figures do not indicate the level of competition for any affordable option. Rental applicants may find themselves up against 20-50 other applicants for a property or a room in a house. It is well known that a landlord is more likely to choose a wage earner rather than a Centrelink beneficiary when given the choice.

Policy Implications

Anglicare acknowledges that the ACT Government has recognised the need to increase the affordable housing stock. However the dire findings in this report suggest a far more comprehensive and coherent approach is needed to address rental affordability in the private market as well as increasing public housing and community housing options.

As shown in the ACT Government's publication on the Targeted Assistance Scheme, it is not only the lowest income-earners that struggle in this environment. Low waged, particularly casually employed breadwinners and their households are at risk since their cost of living, particularly rental costs, are high and they are not always eligible for concessions. The long waits for public housing and lack of affordable private rental options create a perverse incentive to maximize disadvantage, perhaps by avoiding opportunities for low-paid part time work, in order to be eligible for priority public housing. This in turn creates environments of complex and intergenerational disadvantage in concentrated public housing developments. A comparison of the Netherlands and Australian housing policies showed that a larger proportion of social housing stock, as in the Netherlands, avoided these concentrations of disadvantage and in particular, "that affordability problems among lower-income households are worse in Australia because of the greater reliance on private housing in that country." 37

The difficulty working single parents are likely to face in this market is disappointing in light of the recent changes to single parent benefits. While there is much spoken of the importance and benefits of working, the fact remains that low-paid and particularly part time workers are still unable to afford housing in this market and likely to have the added financial burden of childcare costs as well.

As perennially found in this project, there is simply nowhere for persons on any Centrelink benefit to affordably live in this region. Community organisations such as the YWCA and Sakyamuni Buddhist Centre have taken it upon themselves to set up low cost accommodation targeted specifically at low income earners or benefit recipients, but these cannot meet demand.

Partnerships between the community sector and the ACT Government to continue and increase these community projects are crucial, but just as important is ongoing systematic change to increase supply of housing and relieve the upward pressure on property prices and rents.

Anglicare in every community

³⁷ Milligan, V., et al (2006) "Impacts of contrasting housing policies on low-income households in Australia and the Netherlands" in *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 21: 237-255.

At a federal level, Commonwealth Rent Assistance needs to be increased, and the definition of 'affordable' for National Rental Affordability Scheme properties re-thought. In markets like Canberra-Queanbeyan, even 75% of market rent (the current definition) is too much for a low income earner to afford. Options also need to be explored for providing an incentive to landlords who charge lower rents.

Conclusion

The private rental market in Canberra and Queanbeyan is extremely unaffordable for persons on a low income such as minimum wage or government benefits. This is placing significant pressure on government housing programs, as well as contributing to financial stress and social exclusion in families unable to access subsidised housing. Aged pensioners, single parents, disability pensioners, unemployed or low-waged people and families, and students have no appropriate and affordable housing options in this market.

Snapshot: Anglicare Central Queensland— Emerald, Rockhampton and Gladstone

Introduction

Anglicare Central Queensland covers a broad area, those that are included in the snapshot are detailed below.

Emerald: 2011 census:

Population 16 666, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3.1%. The median age of the population is 31 years of age. 69.6% are in full time employment, there is an unemployment rate of 2.8%. Employment is predominately in coal mining (16.9%), followed by farming (3.8%).

Rockhampton: 2011 census:

Population 109 336, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 5.5%. The median age of the population is 37 years of age. 62.2% are in full time employment, there is an unemployment rate of 5.1%. Employment is predominately in technical and trades (17.4%) followed by professionals (15.6%) and clerical and administration (13.9%).

Gladstone: 2011 census:

Population 57 891, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3.5%. The median age of the population is 35 years of age. 66.3% are in full time employment, there is an unemployment rate of 4.5%. Employment is predominately in technical and trades (22.4%) followed by machinery and operators (13.7%)

Housing Services offered by Anglicare Central Queensland in Rockhampton, Gladstone and Emerald

- Community Rent Scheme
- Community Managed Studio Units (Rockhampton only)
- Long term community housing (Rockhampton and Emerald)
- Emergency and crisis housing (Rockhampton and Emerald)
- National Rental Affordability Scheme (Rockhampton and Gladstone)

Findings

On Saturday 13th April 2013, one thousand (1,012) rental advertisements listed on Realestate.com were identified as available for rent in the townships of Emerald, Gladstone and Rockhampton. This is the second year that Anglicare Central Queensland has participated in the study, this year Emerald was included. Properties related to house, townhouse, flat and



unit rentals. There was an absence of share accommodation in Central Queensland which significantly diminishes availability of rentals for low income households.

Comparing 2012 data to 2013 data for Rockhampton and Gladstone indicates that there has been a increase in the number of advertisements for both these communities, of particular note is a fivefold increase in advertisements for units in Gladstone (from 31 to 169).

- The median house rent in Gladstone has declined by \$50 per week to become \$600, however the median rent for units and flats in Gladstone rose by \$100 per week to become \$550 per week.
- Median rents in Rockhampton rose by \$17 per week for houses with a slight decline for units/ flats of \$2 per week.

2013

Gladstone has the most expensive advertised rental properties in Central Queensland, furthermore Gladstone's advertised rents were substantially higher than advertised rental properties in Metropolitan Brisbane (an average of \$155 per week).

Rockhampton has the cheapest median rents in comparison to the communities of Emerald and Gladstone.

Discussion

The rental market in Central Queensland is largely unaffordable to singles and families on low incomes. Based on the 30% affordability criteria (for the purposes of this study, a rental property is considered affordable if its rent is less than 30% of post-tax household income.

- None of the 1012 rental properties advertised in Central Queensland on 13th April 2013 was affordable to singles on Newstart, Austudy or Youth Allowance.
- Only 15 rental properties (1%) were assessed as affordable to a couple with two children receiving Newstart allowance.
- 148 (15%) were deemed affordable to a couple with two children when both earned a minimum wage, with only a third of these (54 properties) were considered both appropriate and affordable for a dual minimum income couple with two children.

Despite the growth in advertised rental properties between 2012 and 2013 the percentages of affordable rental properties declined marginally for all but one household type. The decline in rental affordability across the household types is a consequence of household rental thresholds not keeping pace with rent increases.

Low income renters cannot afford to live in Gladstone or Emerald. Gladstone and Emerald rents are significantly higher than median rents in metropolitan Brisbane.



Policy Implications

The following actions are recommended to alleviate the pressure on the affordable housing market.

- 1. To support programs that will increase the stock of social and affordable housing, for example building more social housing, increasing availability of the National Rental Affordability Scheme and a repurposing of current social housing stock to ensure it meets the needs of low income families and individuals.
- 2. An increase in the Commonwealth Rent Assistance program for low income households would provide some relief to those accessing the private rental market
- 3. The current campaign by ACOSS for an increase in Newstart allowance to a similar level to other benefits needs to be supported to provide an adequate level of income.

Conclusion

The private rental market in the communities of Rockhampton, Gladstone, and Emerald has limited options for people on low incomes to secure affordable and appropriate housing.

While additional properties were advertised for rent (on realestate.com) in Gladstone and Rockhampton compared to the 2012 snapshot, they remain largely unaffordable to those on minimum wages or benefits income such as Newstart, Youth Allowance, Disability and Aged pensions.

Snapshot: Anglicare North Coast—Clarence Valley NSW

Introduction

Anglicare North Coast covers a broad geographic area stretching from Port Macquarie to Tweed Heads. The population is concentrated around several major regional cities and towns but there are also significant rural areas with poor infrastructure and access to services. Anglicare North Coast has several initiatives to support residents of the North Coast, including case-managed support to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, financial counselling, home energy saving and community housing.

The unifying issues across the region are overwhelmingly a picture of income and housing affordability stress. Households in the area are significantly financially disadvantaged compared to the Australian average, with a higher representation of households over 60yrs old, single parent households and single person households. Furthermore, there is a higher representation of ATSI households, with lower income levels than the national average.

Using the 2011 Census data, we can see some of the major variations from the national average:

- A higher percentage of aged persons (e.g. 39.6% of Ballina's population were aged over 60yrs, compared to the NSW average of 20.3% and the national average of 19.6%);
- Higher levels of unemployment (e.g. 12.9% in Kempsey, compared to 5.9% for NSW and 5.6% Australia wide);
- Lower median income levels (e.g. The median household income in Kempsey was 53% lower than for NSW and Australia);
- Higher levels of single parent families (eg Lismore 27.2%, Grafton 24.8%, Byron Bay 24%, Ballina 26.9% and Kempsey 35.3%, all considerably higher than the 16.3% for NSW and the 15.9% Australia wide.

Further, it was noted that higher than state or national averages of renters were paying more than 30% of their income in rent (eg in Byron Bay 24.6% of renters were paying in excess of 30% of their income in rent, compared to the NSW average of 11.6% and the Australia wide average of 10.4%).

On Saturday the 13th of April 2013, there were 912 rental properties advertised on www.realestate.com.au, in eight of the major towns on the North Coast of New South Wales. Our survey did not consider properties advertised in local newspapers. We broke our search down into 8 discrete areas by postcode and then compiled the results to achieve an overview of the region surveyed.

Findings

The snapshot calculates the accessibility of available properties to certain household types by assessing the affordability of dwellings offered for rent that may be appropriate for a particular household composition. By these measures, none of the 912 properties were accessible for single people on Newstart or Youth Allowance. Less than 1% were considered both affordable and appropriate for single households in receipt of Parenting Payment, Age Pension and Disability Pension. 7 properties (1% of those available) were considered affordable and appropriate for couples with two children claiming Newstart, 23 (3%) properties and 48 (5%) properties were accessible to single parents on the minimum wage and single people on the minimum wage respectively. Couples (where both are in receipt of the minimum wage) with two children were considered to be eligible for 353 (38%) properties across the region. The table below breaks the data down further as there are variations within the geographical areas we considered.

	Availability of affordable rental properties broken down by region, appropriate to household type								
	Regions Surveyed	Ballin a	Byron Bay	Clarenc e Valley	Coffs Harbou r	Kemps ey	Lismo re	Port Macquari e	Tweed Heads
	Total Properties counted	94	53	153	159	48	113	168	124
	Couple, 2 children Newstart	0	0	1 (<1%)	0	6 (13%)	0	0	0
	Single, 2 children, Parenting Payment	0	0	0	0	1 (2%)	0	0	0
pes	Couple, no children, Age Pension	0	0	10 (7%)	9 (6%)	4 (8%)	12 (11%)	0	0
old Ty	Single, 1 child Parenting Payment	0	0	0	0	0	1 (1%)	0	0
Household	Single Age Pension	0	0	2 (1%)	1 (<1%)	0	0	0	0
Нои	Single, 21+ Disability Support Pension	0	0	2 (1%)	1 (<1%)	0	0	0	0
	Single, NewStart	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Single, 18+ Youth Allowance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Single , Share House Youth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Allowance								
Couple, 2	24	0	96	45	35	54	74	25
children	(26%		(62%)	(28%)	(73%)	(48%	(44%)	(20%
Minimum Wage	·)		, ,	, ,)	, ,)
+ FTB A& B								
Single, 2	0	0	20	0	19	9	0	0
children			(13%)		(40%)	(8%)		
Minimum Wage								
+ FTB A& B								
Single	0	0	5	5	4	9	0	0
Minimum Wage			(3%)	(3%)	(8%)	(8%)		

Discussion

Given that the area under consideration has high representation of people over 60yrs, as well as a high number of single households, it is quite clear that there is a mismatch between the size and costs of available rental properties and the demographic makeup of the region. Rental prices are beyond the means of a significant proportion of the area's residents and shared housing, overall, is insufficiently developed and promoted outside of the larger urban areas. Public transport is generally basic with over 90% of the region's population reliant on motor vehicles, as opposed to 67% nationally. This is not only limiting but also imposes further budgetary constraints on households which are already far poorer than the national average. Electricity price rises have also impacted on budgets, as have the recent changes to the Parenting Payment structure.

Policy Implications

There are a number of issues impacting upon the ability of low income persons to secure and maintaining appropriate, affordable rental accommodation across the north coast of NSW. We believe the various levels of government can address a number of issues that have led to, and continue to contribute to, this situation, including the following:

- The mismatch between the types of available rental properties and the demographic makeup of the region. In particular, there is a need for housing that is appropriate and affordable for single persons on all types of benefits. We call upon both the state and federal governments to develop policies and programs, such as the National Rental Affordability Scheme, designed to lead to an increase in the supply of affordable and appropriate properties in the region.
- Under current NSW policy, low income earners who need assistance with a rental bond are only able to access such assistance as a loan. Repayment of these loans further impacts on their capacity to meet their ongoing rental commitments. We urge the NSW Government to reconsider this policy and revert to the previous situation whereby rental bond assistance was not provided as a loan, but rather held by the Rental Bond



- Board and refunded to Housing NSW as the conclusion of the tenancy (where no claim made).
- Electricity prices continue to rise and are impacting the amount of income that is available for rental payments. We call upon governments to develop policies that make electricity usage affordable to low income earners.
- Recent changes to parenting payments for parents with children aged over 8 years have led to a reduction in income for many families in our region. There are insufficient suitable jobs, transport networks and affordable child care options available across the region to make employment a viable option for many of these parents. We call upon the federal government to either revert to the previous situation for those on Parenting Payments, or to develop policies that lead to job creation and better transport and child care options that would enable affected parents to access employment.

Conclusion

We are deeply concerned about the findings of this study as they clearly demonstrate the lack of affordable housing for all low income earners across our region. In particular, we are concerned about single persons, including those on all types of government benefits. Our 2012 study, conducted only in the Clarence Valley, had similar findings for single people as the 2013 study. We are very keen to see governments develop policies and programs that address this dire problem so that future studies will be able to demonstrate a greatly improved situation.

Snapshot: Anglicare NT, Northern Territory

Introduction

Anglicare NT recognises that unsafe, inadequate and expensive housing is a major challenge right across the Territory. People who struggle to find affordable housing often live in unsanitary and overcrowded conditions, which immensely diminish opportunities to meaningfully participate in their communities.

In view of this, Anglicare NT continues to advocate for improved housing and runs programs such as the Tenancy Support and Sustainability Program to help people at risk of eviction to retain their public housing tenancy, Youth Housing Program to assist young people aged 15 – 19, and transitional accommodation program to help adults and families experiencing homelessness to establish a stable housing environment.

Anglicare NT also employs strategies such as emergency relief, support services and case management to seek to help in this area.

Findings

A total of 735 rental properties were surveyed on 13th April for this year's Snapshot. 634 of the rental advertisements were taken from www.realestate.com.au, 56 from the rental property and shared accommodation pages of www.gumtree.com.au and 45 from the pages of the NT News.

Of these properties, none were affordable and appropriate (thereafter suitable) for people on Youth and NewStart Allowances, Parenting Payment and Disability Support Pension and only 5 were suitable for people on some benefits and minimum wages. Of those 5 properties:

- 5 properties were suitable for a couple living on the age pension;
- 2 properties were suitable for a single person on an age pension;
- 3 properties were suitable for a single person on minimum wage

Discussion

On the day of data collection, less than 1% (5) of surveyed rental properties were affordable and appropriate in the Northern Territory.

Shared accommodations are in general the most affordable rentals on the market ranging from \$110 to \$350 per week, and 51 of those were considered in this Snapshot. While some were affordable for families with children on NewStart Allowance (21), Parenting Payments (17), parent on single minimum wage (25) and parents both on minimum wages (28), they were not appropriate due to limited space (1 bedroom in a shared house).

Conversely, all the advertised shared accommodation would be appropriate for single people on benefits or the minimum wage and only 3 were affordable for that household type.



The Snapshot findings clearly indicate a lack of affordable and appropriate housing for people on minimum incomes and benefits within the Northern Territory.

Policy Implications

The Snapshot reinforces the importance for policy interventions to address rising housing unaffordability in the Northern Territory. It is evident that people are required to pay much more than they can afford on housing costs which limits how else individuals and families might cater to their own needs and the needs of their loved ones. Interventions to counter the risks associated with housing stress might include increasing supply of affordable housing through extending programs such as the National Rental Affordable Schemes with the addition of specific targets for particular population groups such as indigenous young people here in the NT, increasing the rate of Commonwealth Rental Assistance and improving the adequacy of benefit payments.

The National Affordable Housing Agreement calls for all levels of government to act in regard to this issue with particular emphasis placed on housing for Indigenous people. The Northern Territory has the highest rates of youth homelessness in the country and without intervention, the housing crisis will contribute to disadvantaged young people further spiralling into ongoing poverty and deprivation, which will immensely diminish their life chances.

To overcome the challenges presented in the housing crisis and highlighted by this Snapshot, real action stemming from real commitment is required.

Conclusion

The Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot shows that less than 1% of rental properties are affordable to families with children on minimum wage(s), couple living on age pension without children and single person on minimum wage.

The picture of rental affordability in the Northern Territory may be grimmer when taking into account the potential lasting impacts it has on all young people but particularly Indigenous young people here in the Territory.

The recent announcement that the NT Government will see up to 2000 new homes constructed across the Territory in the next four years is pleasing however this initiative is not likely to provide affordable and appropriate housing for the most vulnerable of Territorians in the near future.

Snapshot: Anglicare Riverina—Riverina

Introduction

The population of the Riverina/Murray area, approximately 157 000, is distributed between 'inner regional' areas (56%), 'outer regional' areas (42%), and 'remote' areas (2%). Its major regional centres are Wagga Wagga and Griffith, with Albury growing rapidly. 46% of its population has a post-secondary qualification and its fastest growing demographic is persons aged between 15 and 24 and persons over 55. In 2010 its unemployment rate was 4.9% (compared to 5.5% nationally) and 10% of its residents receive the Age Pension. 4.2% of the residents in this area are of an Indigenous background, compared to 2.5% nationally. The median household income in 2011 was \$994, compared to \$1234 nationally (ABS National Regional Profiles 2006-2010). The major industry in this area is farming.

Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT supports low income households in the Riverina through a variety of ways including supporting aged persons through various aged care programs and partnering with community based emergency relief programs.

Findings

This year we surveyed a larger number of households in this region than last year: 907 this year over 585 last year. Last year we did not include Albury or smaller towns like Lockhart.

As a result of our larger sample and the inclusion of some small towns, there is a larger amount of affordable housing for groups on the lowest incomes. Nevertheless there remain virtually no properties affordable to singles on Newstart or Youth Allowance. The results are given below:

Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	82	9.0%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	38	4.2%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	193	21.3%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Newstart Allowance + FTB	71	7.8%
Single, one child (aged over 8)	Parenting Payment Single	17	1.9%
Single	Age Pension	39	4.3%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	36	4.0%
Single	Newstart Allowance	2	0.2%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%



Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A	373	41.1%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	169	18.6%
Single	Minimum Wage	92	10.1%
Total No of Properties	907		

While there may appear to be an improvement in affordability over last year's figures, it should be noted that many of the cheapest properties are in small towns with likely limited opportunities, particularly for lower skilled people. Moving away from the city to a town that small, leaving aside the difficulty in convincing Centrelink it will help one find work, puts the whole household at risk of social isolation as they move away from social support networks. As well, living in the country makes a personal vehicle a necessity, particularly in order to access low priced food.

The Riverina still has a problematic level of housing unaffordability – meaning that there are few housing options in the private rental market for those on very low incomes, and there remain some groups with no affordable housing options, even in shared accommodation. For example, while singles and couples on the aged pension had more options here than in other areas of NSW, only 4% of properties found were affordable to single aged pensioners. Things are much better here for a single parent on the minimum wage, with access to 19% of the market as affordable, appropriate housing; in neighbouring regions they are more likely to find next to nothing. Another consideration, in light of the small towns many of these low priced properties are situated in, is whether the parent's job is within a sustainable distance.

While 8% of properties were appropriate and affordable to single parent, one child families on Parenting Payment (Single), once the child turned eight only 2% of properties were appropriate unless the parent had another source of income, likely incurring extra childcare costs. Similarly, single Disability Support Pension recipients had few options that were not in shared accommodation. With the exception of one shared property in Griffith, Youth Allowance recipients and Newstart recipients could access no affordable accommodation in the private rental market, even in shared accommodation.

Policy Implications

Anglicare was unable to find any affordable housing for singles on Newstart anywhere across the broader region including the Central and Far West, Southern Tablelands, South Coast and the ACT. The Riverina was no exception. This suggests that the Newstart Allowance for singles needs to be adjusted to reflect the reality of the housing market, possibly via an increase in Commonwealth Rent Assistance.



The lack of affordable housing for aged pensioners in nearby regions including the ACT, South Coast and Southern Tablelands, combined with the ageing of Australia's population more generally, means that there is likely to be an increase in demand for aged care and health related services in the Riverina.

Conclusion

The private rental market in the Riverina has some limited options for persons on a low income such as minimum wage or government benefits. However, there remain effectively no options for persons living on Newstart or Youth Allowance. This is placing significant pressure on government housing programs, as well as contributing to financial stress and social exclusion in families unable to access subsidised housing. In particular, aged pensioners, single parents, disability pensioners, unemployed people and families, and students have limited access to appropriate and affordable housing.

Snapshot: Anglicare Southern NSW— Southern Tableland, South Coast, South East NSW region

Introduction

The population of this region is 207 800 (ABS Census 2011) and 3% have an indigenous background; most of this segment of the population lives in the South Coast area. While the South Coast's fastest growing demographic is in people aged 55 and over, the Southern Tablelands is growing fastest in the 15-24 age group. Major regional centres here are Goulburn, Yass, Batemans Bay and Bega. (please note Queanbeyan has been included in the ACT report on page xx)

Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT supports low income households in the Southern Tablelands and South Coast through a variety of ways including homelessness programs, emergency relief programs and supporting aged persons through various aged care programs.

Findings

We found properties suitable for all groups except for singles on Newstart and Youth Allowance. However, only two properties were found suitable for single parents on Parenting Payment who had two children, and only two were found for a single parent on Newstart with one child. Singles on the Age Pension and Disability Pension also had very limited options.

Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	10	2.1%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	2	0.4%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	44	9.2%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Newstart Allowance + FTB	20	4.2%
Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart	2	0.4%
Single	Age Pension	6	1.3%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	6	1.3%
Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A	168	35.1%

Anglicave in every community

one aged less than 10) Single Total No of Properties	Minimum Wage	18	3.8%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5,	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	42	8.8%

As Canberra/Queanbeyan's rental costs increase, more lower-income households who work in the national capital are electing to live in the Yass Valley, Goulburn-Mulwarra and Pelarang shires in order to access cheaper housing. There are sustainability and environmental concerns about people travelling so far every day to work, as well as the burden of the petrol cost on that household's budget.

The housing issue on the NSW South Coast are typical for many Australina coastal communities.

Tourism has a major impact on the private rental market. The popularity of 'holiday houses' belonging to people who usually don't live there. These houses are generally not available to locals for long term rent, and also do not have permanent inhabitants regularly participating in the local economy. Thus although there may appear to be plenty of houses, the supply on the market remains low and prices remain high.

The decline of other industry is another factor. In Eden, for example, jobs have been steadily decreasing over the past decade and there is now very little work for low skilled people, particularly in the off season. There are only a small number of commercial fishing licences available now, shrinking an industry which once provided work for many more locals. A nearby wood processing plant is almost totally mechanised, again reducing opportunities for low skilled workers. This story is likely echoed around many parts of regional Australia, and certainly many towns along the South Coast.

Policy Implications

Anglicare was unable to find any affordable housing for singles on Newstart anywhere across the broader region including the ACT, Southern Tablelands, and the Riverina. The South Coast was no exception. This suggests that the Newstart for singles needs to be adjusted to reflect the reality of the housing market. In particular, Rent Assistance needs to be increased to assist singles and families on low paying benefits.

Conclusion

The private rental market in the South Coast has very few options for persons on a low income such as minimum wage or government benefits. This is placing significant pressure on government housing programs, as well as contributing to financial stress and social exclusion in families unable to access subsidised housing. In particular, aged pensioners, single parents, disability pensioners, unemployed people and families, and students have virtually no access to appropriate and affordable housing.



Snapshot: Anglicare SA—Adelaide

Introduction & methodology

The Anglicare SA Rental Affordability Snapshot surveyed rental properties available in the Adelaide region on Monday the 15th of April 2013. The survey used rental listings on domain.com.au to enable data from both private and agents' listings to be captured. Using a single source for house rental eliminated duplication and inconsistencies. A weakness in the methodology is the fact that domain.com.au does not have the same quantity of listings as realestate.com.au (which does not contain private listings). In terms of absolute numbers of properties, realestate.com.au listed a total 3162 properties on the day, as opposed to 1707 on domain.com.au.

In addition to the data collected on domain.com.au, data was also collected from gumtree.com.au in regards to share accommodation available for single people looking for accommodation in the Adelaide region.

Properties were assessed for affordability and appropriateness for a number of different household types and incomes. This survey defined an affordable rental as one which took up less than 30% of the household's income. The 30% benchmark is commonly used as an indicator of 'housing stress' among low income households.

We assessed how many properties would be affordable for each of the 12 household types listed in the findings section of this report. The only income sources taken into account were the household's main income support payment or minimum wage, and Family Tax Benefit. Other allowances the household might receive (e.g. Mobility Allowance) were not included. Commonwealth Rent Assistance was included as income for the purpose of calculations.

Data was disaggregated to separate listings of appropriate and affordable properties. Appropriateness for properties was assessed on the basis of the number of the bedrooms in relation to the number of occupants. For a property to be considered suitable, it was required to be affordable and appropriate.

For the gumtree.com.au search, affordability was deemed the only required marker of suitability as the relevant cohort is single.

Findings

On the day of data collection, 1707 properties were identified via domain.com.au search engine as being within the applicable locality. Of the 1707 properties, Table 1 summarises which were affordable and appropriate:



Table 1: Number and Percentage of Affordable & Appropriate Properties by Household Type

Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable	Percentage Affordable	Number Appropriate	Percentage Appropriate	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	108	6%	580	34%	29	2%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	40	2%	580	34%	11	1%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	40	2%	1076	63%	26	2%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	15	1%	993	58%	1	0%
Single, one child (aged over 8)	Parenting Payment Single	5	0%	993	58%	1	0%
Single	Age Pension	5	0%	1091	64%	5	0%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	5	0%	1076	63%	1	0%
Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0%	1091	64%	0	0%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0%	1091	64%	0	0%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0%	1091	64%	0	0%
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A	1001	59%	580	34%	516	30%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	333	20%	580	34%	122	7%
Single	Minimum Wage	12	1%	1091	64%	12	1%
Total No of Properties	1707	I					

On the day of collection, 135 properties were identified via gumtree.com.au via searching using the 'roomshare' option. 26 listings were removed during screening as they were deemed inappropriate for our cohorts because of the advertisement using language indicating that advertisers were seeking a 'student', 'women only', or a 'professional', consequently excluding cohort members . Of the 109 remaining properties Table 2 below summarises which were affordable:

Table 2: Number and Percentage of Affordable Properties by Roomshare Search on gumtree.com.au

Household Type	Payment Type	Min Beds Needed	Maximum Affordable Rent per week	Total Number of Properties	Number Affordable	Percentage Affordable
Single	Age Pension	1	\$137.69	109	67	61%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	1	\$133.80	109	53	49%
Single	Newstart Allowance	1	\$80.34	109	2	2%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	1	\$63.02	109	1	1%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	1	\$63.02	109	1	1%
Single	Minimum Wage	1	\$164.70	109	109	100%

At the time of data collection, 2% of available rental properties were affordable and appropriate for couples with two children where both parents were receiving Newstart Allowance (or Parenting Payment Partnered), equating to 29 properties. For a couple with both people receiving the Age Pension, 2% of properties were affordable and appropriate, equating to 26 properties. For single people with children where income support constituted the sole income, and for single people receiving the Age Pension or Disability Support Pension, 1% or less of available properties were affordable and appropriate. For single people on Newstart or Youth Allowance, no properties were affordable.

For a single person on a minimum wage, 1% of properties were affordable and appropriate, equating to 12 properties. For a of a single person on a minimum wage with two children, where Family Tax Benefit was received, 7% of properties were affordable and appropriate, equating to 122 properties. For a full-time working couple with two children receiving minimum wage and Family Tax Benefit, 30% of properties were available, equating to 516 properties.

For single people receiving the Age Pension, affordable roomshare accommodation was available for 61% of shared properties surveyed. This equated to 67 properties. For people receiving a Disability Support Pension, affordable roomshare accommodation was available for 49% of properties surveyed, equating to 53 properties.

For singles receiving Newstart Allowance, affordable roomshare accommodation was available for 2% of properties surveyed, equating to 2 properties. For singles receiving Youth Allowance, affordable roomshare accommodation was available for 1% of properties surveyed, equating to 1 property.

This survey does not take in to account suitability of properties in regards to physical accessibility, nor does it account for the appropriateness of the 'social mix' in shared accommodation or suitability of neighbourhood.

Policy Implications

This snapshot highlights the need for increases to government payments and the minimum wage as there is limited appropriate and affordable housing for households on low incomes.

The snapshot reinforces the need for policy interventions to address rising housing unaffordability, whether through social housing or other available mechanisms.

Conclusion

A very limited range of properties surveyed were both affordable and appropriate for people receiving a government payment on the 15th of April 2013. The majority of properties surveyed were not affordable and appropriate for people receiving government payments. Slightly over 50% of roomshare accommodation was available for people receiving government pension payments.

Anglicave in every community

Private rental is largely out of reach of most South Australians on government payments. The costs of private rental poses risks of significant impact on families, as a larger than acceptable amount of their resources is required for housing costs, and less of their resources are available for other needs such as utilities, food, education and health.

For the majority of people receiving pension payments, the only affordable accommodation is roomshare type accommodation. This accommodation is often unsuitable and may impact on people's capacity to function both physically, socially, and emotionally.

Snapshot: Anglicare Southern Queensland—Brisbane

Introduction

The area surveyed for the 2013 Anglicare Southern Queensland (Anglicare SQ) Snapshot takes in the five Brisbane City statistical divisions (Inner, North, South, East and West).38

With a workforce of approximately 2000 people across residential aged care, community care and social services programs, Anglicare SQ serves disadvantaged members of the community, including those in the above regions, through a range of social and community welfare activities. These include nursing care and domestic assistance in the home, physiotherapy to enable the return of mobility, emergency accommodation for victims of domestic violence, working with foster carers in the care of vulnerable children, providing a safe caring environment for frail elderly people, services for the homeless, skills training for young unemployed people and parental education and counseling.

In the Anglicare SQ 2013 Rental Affordability Snapshot, a total of 4,993 Brisbane rental advertisements from the property website realestate.com.au was assessed. These involved house, townhouse and unit rentals as well as share accommodation advertisements.

For comparative purposes, nearly nineteen hundred (1,869) share accommodation advertisements were also assessed from the community and classifieds website, Gumtree.com.au ('Gumtree'). The aim was to determine whether share accommodation listings on Gumtree were more affordable to singles on low incomes than those listed on realestate.com.au.39

This study focuses on the lived experience of seeking rental accommodation whilst living on a low income. For that reason, in calculating an affordable rental, 30% of the available income – that is income after tax – was used to calculate the benchmark.

Findings

Between 2013 and 2012, the percentage of affordable rental properties remained basically unchanged for all household types evaluated in the Rental Affordability Snapshot.

 Based on the 30% criterion, none of the 4,993 rental properties advertised on realstate.com.au on the weekend of 13-14 April 2013 in metropolitan Brisbane was affordable for singles on Newstart, Austudy or Youth Allowance.

³⁹ To assist data evaluations in 2013, ASQ changed a number of data collection and data processing procedures. Most notably, each website's embedded search filters were used to extract summary details about their advertised rental properties, rather than manually compiling individual listings. Consistent with other Anglicare organisations nationally, the definition of household income was altered to a post-tax estimate for those earning the minimum wage, to make this a more appropriate measure of household disposable income. To further assist data evaluations, Brisbane's 2012 survey results were reprocessed using the 2013 methodology to create benchmark comparisons.



³⁸ As defined in the ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS 2011).

- The Brisbane rental market also remained unaffordable to families on low incomes in 2013. Based on appropriateness as well as affordability criteria, only 29 (1%) of the advertised rental properties were considered suitable for a family of two Newstart recipients and two children.
- Even households with two minimum wages experience rental stress in Brisbane. Only 10% of the advertised rental properties were both appropriate and affordable for a family of four when both parents earn a minimum wage.

The number of rental properties advertised on realestate.com.au rose by 466 properties between 2012 and 2013 (from 4,527 to 4,993 respectively). Most of the growth occurred in Brisbane's Inner City, rising to 2,105 advertisements in 2013. Despite the growth in rental properties, however, rental affordability did not improve. For those receiving government allowances, the number of affordable rental properties actually fell. This appears to be a consequence of household rental thresholds not keeping pace with rent increases between 2012 and 2013.

In terms of location, the most affordable rental properties continued to be in Brisbane's inner suburbs (Brisbane Inner City) as well as Brisbane South. This reflects the relatively large number of share accommodation properties in the CBD and the suburbs surrounding Brisbane's universities.

Share-type accommodation appears to be increasingly advertised in more diverse forms – possibly an indicator that the private rental market is seeking innovative ways to address the lack of affordable housing for low income renters. In addition to share accommodation, where a single room is effectively sublet to a tenant, 'boarding house' style accommodation was apparent on realestate.com.au in 2013. Realtors act as off-site property managers, renting individual rooms in properties via separate leases. While such advertisements primarily target students, the cheapest room rental advertisement in 2013 (at \$120 per week) was nearly double the Austudy rental affordability threshold. Likewise, the advertised room rentals were not affordable for singles receiving Youth or Newstart allowances in 2013.

A further variation, beyond the scope of the current study but indicative of the lack of affordable accommodation in metropolitan Brisbane, is advertisements for room-sharing in a multi-bed single room which are listed on Gumtree and other online rental websites.

Policy Implications

For some low income renters, recent federal and state government policy changes have further impeded rental affordability.

Late last year, single parents with children aged over 8 years were transferred from the Parenting Allowance to the Newstart Allowance. As a consequence, household incomes were reduced from \$499 per week to \$404 per week, representing a 19% reduction. The 2013 Rental Affordability Survey assessed only 31 rental properties in metropolitan Brisbane as



being affordable to a single parent family with children aged 8 years or older. This compares with the 164 properties deemed affordable to a single parent with children aged less than 5 years. Neither finding is very encouraging. When compared together, they illustrate just how vulnerable people on low incomes are to rental stress in metropolitan Brisbane.

The future of the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service (Queensland) is uncertain following the withdrawal of State government funding in October 2012, which occurred despite the State government acknowledging this as an important and valuable service. 40The service is currently operational until 30 June 2013 due to federal government emergency funding.

Historically TAAS (Qld) has assisted low income renters in the private rental market to negotiate tenancy and rooming accommodation laws, respond to tenancy difficulties and practices such as rent gouging, and maintain their tenancies. With continuing pressure on rental affordability for those on lower incomes, the loss of this advocacy service is of significant concern.

The appeal rights of public tenants are to be revoked under state government 'three strike' laws proposed for introduction from 1 July 2013. Designed to discourage recidivist anti-social behaviour by public tenants, this policy has generated concern from a number of advocacy organisations, including Queensland Shelter. Queensland Shelter consultations have identified a number of alternate strategies that may help to maintain 'problem' tenancies, including a review of allocation policies by the Department of Housing to prevent concentrations of disadvantage; and the establishment of appropriate supports at the time of allocating accommodation for 'problem' tenants. Eviction is seen to be a tool of last resort.41

Conclusion

This year's findings again illustrate how tight the rental property market is in metropolitan Brisbane. Based on data from the mainstream online property website realestate.com.au, the needs of low income renters are not being met by the private rental market.

The private rental market appears to be adapting to try to meet the accommodation needs of low income single renters. A variety of share rental options are being offered to low income single renters. Unfortunately, many of these share rental options remain unaffordable to most low income singles, and inappropriate for low income families.

⁴¹ http://www.qshelter.asn.au/sector-news/queensland-government-three-strikes-policy-for-social-housing-0



 $^{^{40}}$ http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/housing/housing-services/renting-in-the-private-market/queensland-tenant-advisory-and-advocacy-services

Snapshot: ANGLICARE Sydney (Greater Sydney and the Illawarra)

Introduction

On 13-14 April 2013, ANGLICARE Sydney conducted a rental affordability 'snapshot' of the Greater Sydney and Illawarra regions, as part of an annual national project conducted by Anglicare Australia.42 The aim of the snapshot is to highlight issues of affordability for people looking for rental accommodation on low incomes.

According to the 2011 Census, there were 1.6 million households in Sydney and 160,000 in the Illawarra and surrounds – collectively accounting for about two-thirds (67%) of households in NSW. Of this number, 32 percent of households were renting their home in Sydney and 27 percent in the Illawarra region. In Sydney, about half of families were couples with children (49%), compared with 42 percent in the Illawarra. Sydney had a much higher proportion of dwellings that were flats or units (28%) compared with only 10 percent in the Illawarra.

In 2011, median weekly household income in Greater Sydney was \$1,477 per week. This was higher than the median income of households in the Illawarra Statistical Area (\$1116 per week), a sub-region of the Illawarra, and in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven Statistical Area (\$896 per week). However, some aspects of household expenditure were also higher in Greater Sydney – households with a mortgage paid an average of \$2,167 per week on repayments and \$351 per week on rent. In comparison, households in the Illawarra Statistical Area paid less than those in Sydney on mortgage repayments (\$1,950 per week) and rent (\$250 per week). Those in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven Statistical Area paid the least in the region on mortgage repayments (\$1,604 per week) and rent (\$230 per week).

Findings - Greater Sydney

Households on Income Support: Of the **12,880** properties available for private rental in Greater Sydney on the snapshot weekend, only **23** properties were identified that satisfied the criteria for affordability and appropriateness without placing households dependent upon income support payments into rental stress. Couples receiving the Aged Pension had the greatest number of suitable properties available to them – 19 across Sydney. There were few suitable properties available for other household types, including singles on the Aged Pension (n=5 properties), single parents on the Parenting Payment (n=2), couples with children on Newstart (n=2) and people on Disability Support (n=2). No suitable properties were found for single people on Youth Allowance or Newstart.

Households on the Minimum Wage: Results reveal that having two Minimum Wage earners in a household can improve the chances of obtaining housing without being under rental stress.

Anglicare in every community

⁴² Geographies covered in this Snapshot are the Sydney Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA) and the Illawarra and Southern Highlands/Shoalhaven Statistical Areas Level 4 (SA4s)

There were **241** unique properties identified that would be appropriate and affordable for households on the minimum wage without placing them into rental stress. Results were highest for couples families on the minimum wage (n=208), followed by single persons (n=34) and single parents (n=5).

The online classifieds site Gumtree (gumtree.com.au) is another source of housing for single persons. An indicative search of 'Flatshare/Houseshare' listings for the Sydney Region indicated that, at the time of this study, there may be around 1,200 share-houses that are affordable for single people on the Minimum Wage. However, those on Newstart and Youth Allowance still have few options. No analysis of suitability has been conducted on these share-houses, with many advertisements seeking a person of a particular gender, race, religion, etc.

Findings - Illawarra

Households on Income Support: Of the **1,215** properties available for private rental in the Illawarra region on the snapshot weekend, only **36** properties were identified as both affordable and appropriate for households receiving income support. Compared with Sydney, the Illawarra region had a higher number of suitable properties relative to the size of its available rental stock. Most of the suitable rental properties in the region were located in Southern Highlands/Shoalhaven Statistical Area (n=25). Couple families on the Aged Pension had the highest number of suitable properties available to them (n=31). Only small numbers of suitable properties were found for single people on the Aged Pension (n=6), Disability Pension (n=3), or Parenting Payment (n=1). Couples with two children where both adults were on the Newstart Allowance had only two suitable properties available to them. There were no affordable and appropriate properties for the remainder of households on Parenting Payments, Newstart or Youth Allowance.

Households on the Minimum Wage: There were **231** unique properties identified that would be appropriate and affordable for households on the minimum wage without placing them into rental stress. Results were highest for couples families on the minimum wage (n=207), followed by single parents (n=27) and single persons (n=24).

The number of share-house listings on Gumtree for Wollongong and the South Coast43 was much lower than for Sydney, with only about 200 affordable share-house options for single people on the Minimum Wage.

Discussion

Within Greater Sydney, the largest number of affordable and appropriate rental properties for households dependent upon income support payments was found in the Central Coast Statistical Area (n=11), about two hours from the Sydney CBD. The other fourteen Statistical Areas either had no suitable properties or a negligible amount (3 or less). Despite the relatively high number of suitable properties on the Central Coast, only one was affordable and

Anglicare in every community

⁴³ Regions as classified on Gumtree

appropriate for household types other than couples on the Aged Pension. This indicates that even the Central Coast does not represent a viable option for most households on income support without placing them into rental stress. The Illawarra region reflected a similar pattern, with the bulk of suitable properties only being affordable and appropriate for couples on the Aged Pension (n=31). Of these, the majority (n=23) were located in the Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands Statistical Areas. Rather than being a solution to Sydney's lack of suitable housing, this demonstrates that the Illawarra also faces its own critical lack of affordable and appropriate housing.

Policy Implications

A range of policy solutions are needed to improve rental affordability for low income households, including the urgent need for increases in the supply of social housing, raising the rate of Commonwealth Rental Assistance and increasing the Newstart Allowance and Parenting Payment Single. At the State level, two areas which could be addressed to deliver better accommodation outcomes are:

Draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney 2031: On 19 March 2013, the O'Farrell Government released its Draft Metropolitan Strategy, which projects the need for an additional 545,000 houses by 2031. In order to achieve this supply of new housing, the Government sets targets for dwelling construction at the subregional level. However, the Strategy lacks clear affordable or social housing targets. ANGLICARE Sydney is concerned that this demonstrates a lack of commitment to plan for social and public housing in new developments. The need for a comprehensive commitment to preserve public housing stock (including a 'one-for-one' replacement policy for public housing) is essential.

Rentstart Scheme: This scheme is managed by Housing NSW and has recently been modified to be advanced as a loan payment only. Tenants will be required to repay the loan to Housing NSW on a fortnightly basis, usually over 12 to 18 months. ANGLICARE Sydney considers Renstart a valuable financial product but remains concerned that changing Rentstart into a loans program will mean that already vulnerable tenants will need to spend more of their income on rent, placing them at risk of housing insecurity.

Snapshot: Anglicare Tasmania—North West & West Coast region, Southern region, Northern region

Introduction

Anglicare Tasmania collected information on all the properties advertised as available for rent across Tasmania on the weekend of 13-14 April 2013. This included rooms available in share houses. The information was gathered from major real estate websites and from newspapers.

We assessed these properties on the basis of whether they were appropriate and affordable for people living on low incomes.

We worked out whether people who depend on Centrelink payments could afford to find suitable accommodation for themselves and their family. We also assessed the situation for people who are working and earning the Minimum Wage.

Findings

2677 properties were advertised as available for rent throughout Tasmania over the weekend of 13-14 April 2013, of which 563 located in the North West and West Coast region; 1,304 located in Southern region, and 809 located in the Northern region.

Overall, there were only a very small number of private rental properties that were affordable for people who depend on Centrelink payment as their main source of income.

Tasmania as a whole

People on New Start and Youth Allowance

- There were a total of 13 rental properties advertised that were affordable for a young person (aged over 18) who depends on Youth Allowance and almost all of these were in share houses where the price was based on more than one person sharing a bedroom.
- Less than 1% of the rental properties in the State which were affordable for a single person who depends on New Start Allowance (19 properties)
- Only 8% of the properties were affordable for a couple with two young children who are living on New Start Allowance (224 properties).

Single parents on Parenting Payment Single

- Only 5% of the properties were affordable for a single parent with one child (135 properties)
- Only 4% were affordable for a single parent with two young children (118 properties).

Single parents on whose youngest child is aged over 8

Anglicave in every community

26 properties – only 1% of the total – were affordable for a sole parent whose youngest child is aged more than 8. These people no longer qualify for Parenting Payment and can now only receive the lower New Start Allowance.

People on Age and Disability Pensions

- 8% were affordable for a single person on the pension (221 properties)
- 15% were affordable for a pensioner couple (395).

For people who are working full time and earning the Minimum Wage the situation is still very limited.

Minimum wage workers (in full-time work)

- 14% were affordable for a single minimum wage worker with no children (387 properties)
- 17% were affordable for a sole parent worker with 2 children (461 properties)
- 34% of the properties were affordable for a couple with two young children where both parents were working full-time (901 properties).

North West and West Coast region

People on New Start and Youth Allowance

- There was only 1 property advertised in the North West which was affordable for a young person (aged over 18) who depends on Youth Allowance. This was in a shared house.
- There was only one other property affordable for a single person who depends on New Start Allowance. It was in a small settlement on the West Coast.
- Only 17% of the properties were affordable for a couple with two young children who are living on New Start Allowance (93 properties).

Single parents on Parenting Payment Single

- Only 16% of the properties in the North West were affordable for a single parent with one child (88 properties)
- Only 10% were affordable for a single parent with two young children (57 properties).

Single parents on whose youngest child is aged over 8

20 properties – only 4% of the total properties advertised in the North West – were affordable for a sole parent whose youngest child is aged more than 8. These people no longer qualify for Parenting Payment and can now only receive the lower New Start Allowance.



People on Age and Disability Pensions

- 4% were affordable for a single person on the pension (20 properties) but these were almost all in shared houses, most of which involved sharing a bedroom with 1 to 3 other people.
- 26% were affordable for a pensioner couple (148).

For people who are working full time and earn the Minimum Wage the situation is considerably improved but limited.

Minimum wage workers (in full-time work)

- 23% were affordable for a single minimum wage worker with no children (130 properties)
- 34% were affordable for a sole parent worker with 2 children (191 properties)
- 47% of the properties were affordable for a couple with two young children where both parents were working full-time (264 properties).

Southern Tasmania

People on New Start and Youth Allowance

- There were only 7 rental properties (less than 1% of the total) advertised that were affordable for a young person (aged over 18) who depends on Youth Allowance. All of these were in share houses.
- Less than 1% of the rental properties in the State which were affordable for a single person who depends on New Start Allowance (8 properties)
- Only 3% of the properties were affordable for a couple with two young children who are living on New Start Allowance (42 properties).

Single parents on Parenting Payment Single

- Only 1% of the properties were affordable for a single parent with one child (8 properties)
- Only 1 % were affordable for a single parent with two young children (11 properties).

Single parents on whose youngest child is aged over 8

There was not a single property advertised in the Southern region that was appropriate and affordable for a sole parent whose youngest child is aged more than 8. These people no longer qualify for Parenting Payment and can now only receive the lower New Start Allowance.

People on Age and Disability Pensions

- 6% were affordable for a single person on the pension (74 properties)
- 7% were affordable for a pensioner couple (97).

Anglicare in every community

For people who are working full time and earning the Minimum Wage the situation is still very limited.

Minimum wage workers (in full-time work)

- 9% were affordable for a single minimum wage worker with no children (117 properties)
- 8% were affordable for a sole parent worker with 2 children (106 properties)
- 26% of the properties were affordable for a couple with two young children where both parents were working full-time (340 properties).

Northern Tasmania

People on New Start and Youth Allowance

- There were only 2 properties advertised in Northern Tasmania which were affordable for a young person (aged over 18) who depends on Youth Allowance. These were in shared houses.
- There were only 6 properties affordable for a single person who depends on New Start Allowance
- Only 11% of the properties were affordable for a couple with two young children who are living on New Start Allowance (87properties).

Single parents on Parenting Payment Single

- Only 4% of the properties in the North were affordable for a single parent with one child (36 properties)
- Only 6% were affordable for a single parent with two young children (48 properties).

Single parents on whose youngest child is aged over 8

There were only 3 properties in whole of the Northern region that were affordable for a sole parent whose youngest child is aged more than 8. These people no longer qualify for Parenting Payment and can now only receive the lower New Start Allowance.

People on Age and Disability Pensions

- 10% were affordable for a single person on the pension (78 properties), but many of these were in shared houses or in comparatively isolated areas where other needed services, such as shops, are unlikely to be available.
- 18% were affordable for a pensioner couple (147).

For people who are working full time and earn the Minimum Wage the situation is easier but still limited.

Anglicave in every community

Minimum wage workers (in full-time work)

- 17% were affordable for a single minimum wage worker with no children (137 properties)
- 20% were affordable for a sole parent worker with 2 children (162 properties)
- 36% of the properties were affordable for a couple with two young children where both parents were working full-time (295 properties).

Discussion

The results of this survey confirm the very difficult situation that Tasmanians living on low incomes are facing when looking for housing in the private rental market.

The survey analysed all the properties advertised for rent in Tasmania's three main newspapers and on two major real estate websites over the weekend of 13-14 April. It was designed as a snapshot of what Tasmanians living on a low income would find on an average weekend if they were going through the classifieds looking for somewhere to live.

It should be noted that the very limited number of properties that we did find as suitable and affordable for people on low incomes 'doubled up' – that is, a property that is suitable for a single person looking for work would also appear as one of the properties an age pensioner could afford.

It is evident that the pressure on those few properties that are affordable is very great, and that in the absence of adequate housing supply people are being forced to spend more money than they can afford in order to obtain housing, thus putting sometimes dangerous pressure on other aspects of their budgets.

We assessed the appropriateness of the properties solely on the basis of the number of bedrooms required for the various household types. We found that many of the properties that were affordable in financial terms were located in comparatively isolated areas where employment and other services may be very limited and where other costs, such as transport, become disproportionately high. Thus many properties would in fact not be appropriate in terms of affordable access to food shops, employment, health services and education. It should also be noted that our survey is a very basic tool, and takes no account of the related housing costs such as how people must budget to accumulate enough money to pay a bond and rent in advance.

Other accommodation, ostensibly affordable, was in fact unlikely to be suitable. For example, while a single age pensioner may be able to afford to rent a room in a shared house, it is most unlikely that they would be the successful applicant for this type of accommodation which is mainly geared towards younger people, nor would such accommodation provide an appropriate environment for the person living on the Age Pension.

While there are a number of share houses advertised for rent, most of these are still priced too high to be truly affordable for people on low incomes. Many were offered on the basis of



tenants (in some cases up to four people) sharing a bedroom. For many people this would not be considered safe or suitable, yet it may be the only truly affordable option.

While the situation for people who are working full time and earning the Minimum Wage was somewhat easier, it was still very limited. Even where both members of a couple with two young children work full-time only one-third of the properties advertised would be affordable. A single person would only find 14% of the properties to be affordable.

Policy Implications

Our survey shows that it is young people who are facing the most difficulty in finding appropriate affordable housing with only a handful of suitable properties available anywhere in the state.

However, Anglicare's service experience has shown us that where people are able to gain secure, affordable accommodation, with appropriate supports, they are able to do well in other aspects of life such as continuing with education or training, seeking employment and leading healthy lives.

With Tasmania having a low retention rate to complete school and follow further education and training, there is a great need to ensure that young people are able to find safe, secure and affordable housing.

The private rental market is patently not able to meet the needs of Tasmanians living on low incomes, whether in receipt of government pensions and benefits or earning low wages in employment.

Conclusion

Clearly much more needs to be done to ensure that Tasmanians living on low incomes are able to live dignified lives and not be forced into hardship in other areas of life in order to pay for their housing.

Anglicare Tasmania has long advocated the importance of public housing and the need for community and social housing options to be structured so as to be truly affordable to people living on very low incomes.

Snapshot: Anglicare Victoria—Metropolitan Melbourne, Ballarat, LaTrobe

Introduction

Anglicare Victoria's Rental Affordability Snapshot covered the whole of Metropolitan Melbourne, comprising 31 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Inner, Eastern, South-eastern, Northern and Western Regions. Our Snapshot also included the City of Ballarat and the City of LaTrobe to provide a regional comparison (33 LGAs in total).

Anglicare Victoria's Snapshot examined all family types and income categories.

Anglicare Victoria's services operate out of approximately 30 service sites located across metropolitan Melbourne as well as the regional areas of Gippsland (Morwell, Maffra, Sale, Bairnsdale), Leongatha, Ballarat, Myrtleford, Warrnambool, Ararat, Bright and Mt Beauty.

The Agency provides care and support for marginalised and in-crisis families, individuals, young people and children in Victoria, through over 100 different services including:

- Home-Based Care and Out-of-Home Care for children and young people
- Crisis accommodation, support, counselling and mediation for young people
- Intensive family counselling and support
- Parent education
- Women's, men's and boys' domestic violence programs
- Disability support services for families;
- Training and skills assistance for young people
- Counselling for victims of child abuse and neglect
- Support for dealing with drug and alcohol abuse, problem gambling and sexual assault
- Food, material aid and financial counselling for low income families
- Advocacy

Findings

Anglicare Victoria reviewed 18,908 rental listings advertised on 13 April 2013 across the 33 LGAs described above. The highest number of listings were for rentals in the South-Eastern region (N = 5,517) and the lowest number of listings were for rentals in Ballarat (N = 294).

Across all income categories, the range of affordable and appropriate housing ranged between <1.0 per cent in Inner Melbourne to 20.9 per cent in La Trobe. However, the affordability of rentals was uneven across family types and income categories.

Singles

Less than 1.0% of listed rentals were affordable and appropriate for single people on the aged pension and singles <21 years of age in 32 of 33 LGAs. In La Trobe 6.9% and 4.9% of rental

listings were affordable and appropriate for these groups respectively. Singles on the minimum wage could afford a higher proportion of rentals listed in La Trobe (17.2%) and Ballarat (1.02%), but were priced out of the market in all other LGAs (<1.0% of listed rentals affordable and appropriate). Less than 1.0% of listing were affordable and appropriate for singles on Newstart and Youth Allowances across all LGAs examined.

Single parent families

Less than 1.0% of listed rentals across the whole of Metropolitan Melbourne were affordable and appropriate for single parents with children across all income categories, including single parent families on the minimum wage. Just over 4.0 per cent (4.1%) and ten per cent (10.1%) of listings were affordable and appropriate for single parent families comprising two children (parenting payments) and single parent families with one child (minimum wage) in La Trobe. Single parent families with two children also found 2.7 per cent of rental listing affordable and appropriate in Ballarat.

Couple families

Couple families with two dependents on the minimum wage were the only family type x income group that could find affordable and appropriate rentals in Metropolitan Melbourne, although this ranged from <1.0% in Inner Melbourne to a mere 6.0 per cent of listings in the Eastern Region. One in five (20.9%) listings were affordable and appropriate to this group in La Trobe and 2.7 per cent of listings were affordable and appropriate in Ballarat. The regional picture was similar for couples without dependents on the aged pension (21.8% affordable/appropriate in LaTrobe and 2.7 per cent affordable/appropriate in Ballarat). However, couples without dependents on the aged pension could not find any affordable and appropriate listings in Metropolitan Melbourne. Couples with two dependents on the Newstart allowance could only find affordable and appropriate housing in La Trobe (8.6% of listings), as there was less than 1.0 per cent of affordable and appropriate listings in Metropolitan Melbourne.

These findings are summarised in the table below (relates to affordable and appropriate).

		Inner	Eastern	South- eastern	Northern	Western	Ballarat	Latrobe
Couple, 2 children (one aged <5, one aged <10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	0	0.04	0.02	0	0	0	8.62
Single, two children (one aged <5, one aged <10)	Parenting payments, single	0	0.04	0.02	0	0	0	4.31
Couple, no children	Age pension	0	0.65	0.40	0	0.07	2.72	21.8
Single, one child (aged	Parenting payments,	0	0.04	0.02	0	0	0.34	10.1

Anglicare in every community

<5)	single							
Single, one child (aged >8)	Parenting payments, single	0	0.04	0	0	0	0	2.3
Single	Age pension	0	0.08	0.02	0	0	0.34	6.9
Single (aged >21)	Disability Support Pension	0	0.08	0.02	0	0	0	4.89
Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.04	0	0	0	0.34	0
Single (aged >18)	Youth Allowance	0	0.04	0	0	0	0.34	0
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.04	0	0	0	0.34	0
Couple, two children (one aged <5, one aged <10)	Minimum wage + FTB A	0	5.99	5.71	0.13	2.04	2.72	20.9
Single, two children (one aged <5, one aged <10)	Minimum wage + FTB A&B	0	0.39	0.33	0	0.10	2.72	14.1
Single	Minimum wage	0	0.13	0.18	0	No information available	1.02	17.2

Anglicare Victoria provides services to thousands of vulnerable Victorians each year. For many, their problems and vulnerabilities are compounded by a lack of affordable housing and resulting unsafe, insecure and stressful living conditions. Inappropriate accommodation arrangements also limit opportunities and enjoyment of life. The private rental market also pushes individuals and families into restricted geographic areas with limited employment opportunities. These pockets of disadvantage are often characterised by high crime rates, poor quality schools and lack of social infrastructure and other undesirable communities characteristics that perpetuate the cycle of disadvantage.

Policy Implications

Cannot rely on rental markets to look after the housing needs of people on low-income. Governments need to intervene.

Investments are needed to revitalise disadvantaged communities and to develop social and recreational infrastructure in growth areas where people on low income can secure affordable and appropriate housing.



Conclusion

Affordable and appropriate housing is a basic essential of life, necessary for self-reliance and encouraging of good parenting. Victorians on low income who need to find housing through the private rental market have the option of either spending more than they can afford in order to live in the metropolitan area, or moving to more remote areas. Either option comes at a considerable price; the former results in financial stress and the likelihood of missing out on other essential items while the latter typically steers people away from jobs and social support networks into neighbourhoods devoid of high quality services and life opportunities. Housing and/or financial stress borne out of an unaffordable private rental market needs to be addressed through government intervention both to revitalise disadvantaged communities and promote more egalitarian access to rental housing in metropolitan localities.

Snapshot: Anglicare Western NSW—Central and far west NSW

Introduction

The central and far west of NSW is a vast area with mostly relatively sparse population. Its population in the 2011 Census was 241120. The major industries include farming, manufacturing, forestry and in particular an expanding mining sector. Indigenous people account for 5.7% of the population, more concentrated in the Far West area, and significantly higher than the national figure of 2.5%.

Despite the considerable natural resources in this region, household and personal incomes are significantly lower than the national average. This could be affected by the tendency of mines to employ fly-in, fly-out workers, whose income does not remain within the region. The unemployment rate is slightly lower than the national rate despite this disparity in income.

Anglicare Western NSW supports low income households in Western NSW in a variety of ways. A few key examples include supporting the community through NILS programs, foster care, and partnering with community and parish based emergency relief programs.

Findings

Census data (ABS 2011) indicates median rents of \$140-180 in the central and far west of NSW. However, our data tells a very different story; the median rent of the properties we found in the Snapshot was \$350. While this in part may be the result from our focus on the major regional hubs—Mudgee, Bathurst Orange, Dubbo and Broken Hill—it is significant the Census reported an almost identical median rent in Greater Sydney at \$351. It is clear that for a very low income household looking for a rental property in key regional employment centres in western NSW, things are likely to be very difficult.

As shown in the chart below there are a number of low income groups who are totally without options in this rental market.

Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	8	1.2%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	3	0.4%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	29	4.2%



Total No of Properties	683		
Single	Minimum Wage	12	1.8%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	44	6.4%
(one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	FTB A		C 40/
Couple, two children	Minimum Wage +	199	29.1%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	2	0.3%
Single	Age Pension	3	0.4%
Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance + FTB	1	0.1%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	11	1.6%

Three of the communities studied (Broken Hill, Mudgee and Orange) are affected by the ebbs and flows of mining activity, which tends to have very direct repercussions on the market for private rentals. Whenever new mining operations are located close to town, the rents will go up owing to demand from miners. This puts pressure on local residents who do not work in mining and whose income might no longer be sufficient to access housing in the private rental sector. This brings with it the risk that unduly high housing costs make it difficult for employers in some sectors to attract employees. This has the potential to paralyse key sectors of the local economy.

Last year, our report noted that Mudgee had experienced growth in the mining sector and the rental market was struggling to keep up; even caravans could be prohibitively expensive. Demonstrating the fluctuations that major industries can cause, however, we have some quite different findings this year. There has been some significant downscale of mining activity around Mudgee which has had a direct effect on real estate dealings this year. Some properties are being advertised as "reduced rent" as the market adjusts. However, it is important to consider that properties advertised for rent in "Mudgee" are often very rural.

The most affordable properties can also be somewhat substandard and very isolated. In Bathurst, for example, many of the properties in an affordable price range were located in suburbs known for complex social issues and higher crime levels. This is a serious problem for families unable to afford anywhere else; it is harder to protect their children from the difficulties of their environment, they are unable to move, and all too often we have seen poverty and disadvantage replicated through the generations.



Finally, it should be noted that the concept of affordability relates purely to housing expenditure, not housing standards. Meanwhile, the measures of "appropriateness" in this snapshot are purely around the size of the property based on number of bedrooms. The reality is that substandard housing is an enduring issue in parts of rural and remote New South Wales.

Policy Implications

In general terms, policy levers should be designed to encourage a speedy catching up of the rental market whenever new economic activity enters an area. Where new economic activity arrives at once (as is the case with mining), decision makers should remain mindful of the effects on low income households.

There is a need to encourage the design and realisation of small scale, purpose-built accommodation, located in appropriate environments, close to facilities and transport. The building industry will often criticize bureaucratic regulation as an impediment to the building of new affordable dwelling units. On the other hand there is a need to continue to promote compliance and greater environmental sustainability. For this reason, a better dialogue between industry representatives and decision-makers should be encouraged where possible. This should result in a better supply of affordable housing options.

There is a need to take a close look at the total experience of those members of the community who are most vulnerable financially. The study found that no private rented accommodation is affordable for a single individual in receipt of the Newstart allowance. For this reason it might be pertinent to rethink the level of this allowance in order to ensure an adequate quality of life and level of dignity for all members of the community. At the very least, Rent Assistance needs to be increased.

Conclusion

While couple families with two minimum wage incomes have little trouble accessing affordable housing in this region, most other low income groups we have examined have much greater difficulty. There was no affordable housing for singles on Newstart or Youth Allowance, and barely anything for single parents on benefits, families where both parents are unemployed, or singles on the Age or Disability pension. Even an elderly couple with two Age pensions would have difficulty finding suitable accommodation, particularly if they needed to access services or could not drive long distances. The major difficulty is the fluctuating mining sector, bringing significant investment and population but not on a long term basis. In this situation, people and households on very low incomes need the support of extra Rent Assistance in order to access appropriate properties within range of necessary services.



Snapshot: Anglicare WA—Western Australia

Introduction

Anglicare WA works across Western Australia; predominantly in the greater metropolitan area of Perth, the South West and Great Southern, and the North West (Pilbara and Kimberley). It provides services that assist people to build relationships, secure affordable housing, and manage financial stress.

On Saturday 13 April, 2013 Anglicare WA ran a Rental Affordability Snapshot to survey available private rental properties. The survey examined online listings from realestate.com.au, gumtree.com.au (Perth Metropolitan only), and print listings in The West Australian newspaper. The main focus for the Perth metro region was on collecting listings from realestate.com.au. However, Anglicare WA also looked at the cheapest of the 3000 listings on Gumtree, as there is a perception that cheaper rentals and share accommodation may be listed there.

Properties advertised on realestate.com.au were assessed in terms of affordability and appropriateness for a number of different household types and assumed incomes. Affordable rental was defined as 30% or less of a family/individual's gross income. This is a commonly used indicator of housing stress for low income households. Appropriateness was assessed on the number of bedrooms in a property (eg a single parent with one child would need a two bedroom property).

For a property to be considered suitable it was required to meet the tests of both affordability and appropriateness.

Findings

Data was collected on 4272 private rental listings. For the purposes of analysis the properties were grouped into three locations: (1) Greater Metropolitan Perth, including Mandurah, (2) South West and Great Southern (including Bunbury and Albany), and (3) the North West (Pilbara and Kimberley).

Perth

"Private rentals are inaccessible for low income earners and those on benefits. Access to rentals for a couple on two minimum wages dropped from 6.7% to 2.6% in just one year. Overall the situation is very grim."

Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate	Comments
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	0	0.0%	
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%	

less than 10)				
Couple, no children	Age Pension	1	0.0%	
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%	
Single, one child (aged over 8)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%	
Single	Age Pension	2	0.1%	Only share accommodation available
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	2	0.1%	Only share accommodation available
Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%	
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%	
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%	
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A	95	2.6%	
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	2	0.1%	
Single	Minimum Wage	13	0.4%	Only share accommodation available
Total No of Properties	3646			

For single people on Newstart or the Youth Allowance no properties were affordable in Perth. Only two properties were affordable for singles on an aged pension or a disability support allowance, with both being rooms in share properties.

There was only one affordable property for aged pension couples.

There were no properties available for families on benefits.

Families on a dual minimum wage are only marginally better off, with 2.6% of the market (or 95 properties) in Perth being affordable. At the same time last year, 6.7% of the market was affordable for these families.

Singles and single minimum wage income families had limited options with only 0.5% of the market (or 15 properties) being affordable.

The average rental in Perth was \$609 per week, inclusive of share accommodation, and is up 8% from 2012 when it was \$520. The median rental price has risen by 16% (from \$450 in 2012 to \$520 in 2013).



South West and Great Southern

"In Western Australia, moving to the country is becoming less of a solution to housing."

Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	4	1.1%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	1	0.3%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	9	2.5%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
Single, one child (aged over 8)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
Single	Age Pension	0	0.0%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0.0%
Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A	124	34.3%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	20	5.5%
Single	Minimum Wage	0	0.0%
Total No of Properties	362		

Discussion

Overall the availability of suitable private rentals for people on pensions or benefits across the south of Western Australia was very low.

For single people on Newstart or the Youth Allowance no properties were affordable. There were also no properties available for singles on an aged pension or a disability support pension.

Other household types on pensions or benefits were competing for a very small number of properties.



Families on a minimum wage had private rental options in the south of Western Australia. Five and a half per cent of properties were affordable for families with two children and a single minimum wage income.

The average rental in the south of Western Australia was \$383, up 6% from 2012. The median rental price has risen 5.5%, from \$330 in 2012 to \$350 in 2013.

North West

"Prices have gone down in the North West since 2012, but not so much that rental is affordable to anyone on a low income."

Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	0	0.0%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
Couple, no children	Age Pension	0	0.0%
Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
Single, one child (aged over 8)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
Single	Age Pension	0	0.0%
Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0.0%
Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A	0	0.0%
Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	0	0.0%
Single	Minimum Wage	0	0.0%
Total No of Properties	264		



There was not a single suitable private rental property available in the North West for families and individuals on benefits or on a minimum wage. This was reflective of the overall housing situation in resource based communities in Western Australia.

The average rental price in the North West did decrease by 21% from 2012, with the average rental price now being \$1079 per week. The largest decreases in prices from 2012 were in Karratha (18% decrease) and Derby (28% decrease). While the decrease in price is notable, it was not significant enough to make rental affordable to anyone on a low income.

Policy Implications

Rental properties are an important source of accommodation for individuals and families on low incomes. A shortage of affordable rental properties adversely affects the community on a number of levels.

In the expensive Western Australian housing market, many low income earners are forced to accept a rental price that is far above what they can afford. Coupled with increasing costs for childcare, transport and utilities, this is causing serious financial stress for these families and necessitates severe concessions to their lifestyle and livelihood. This in turn impacts upon family relationships, which are more easily strained when finances are stretched.

Young people who are trying to move out of home are finding that renting is not an option if they are studying, on a benefit or on a minimum wage job. For some young people, this lack of affordable accommodation is leading to couch surfing and homelessness.

For public housing tenants, private rentals are the most realistic option to leave the system. However, there is very little incentive for public housing tenants to make this transition while the rental market is so unaffordable. Considering that many public housing tenants are pressured to leave once they have secured steady employment, it is safer for many to remain jobless but housed.

The implications of unaffordable housing in Western Australia are greatly concerning. A home is critical to the well-being of people and their life and employment opportunities. The consequences of a housing shortage will cost a great deal to governments down the track, as they attempt to address poor educational outcomes for children and the breakdown of families and relationships.

The current rental market in Western Australia is clearly beyond the affordable price range of people on benefits, pensions or a minimum wage. The level of income received by people on pensions and benefits is only sufficient to pay for extremely cheap accommodation, which simply does not exist. In particular the benefits paid through Newstart and the Youth Allowance are grossly inadequate.

The Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA) supplement has not kept pace with the rising cost of rent in Western Australia. The CRA needs to be revised, with consideration given to locational differences in private rental markets.



At a State level, while attention has been paid to the development of policy and strategy on affordable housing, these strategies have yet to be implemented. Action must be taken now. There is a clear need for more affordable and appropriate housing options.

In the North West, the extremely high rent levels make it highly difficult for low to mid level income workers to secure housing. This includes, retail, hospitality and community service workers. As a result, businesses in those sectors are forced to pay their staff higher wages or rental subsidies, or suffer extreme staff shortages.

Conclusion

Private rental properties play an important role in the delivery of affordable and appropriate housing when seen as part of an overall housing continuum.

Affordable housing in Western Australia is at a critical low and is becoming scarcer year by year. Multiple interventions are required at both State and Federal government levels. Priorities must be made to increase the levels of benefits and income supplements, and accelerate social housing programs. The Western Australian State Affordable Housing Strategy is a good way forward, but it requires additional resources to make an impact in the critical next five years.

Anglicare WA, and other community service organisations, provide services that support families in housing, financial and relationship stress. Secure funding is required for these services to be maintained.

Notes:

1: 2012 figures

The cited availability figures for minimum wage earners in 2012 in this report differ from those shown in the 2012 Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot due to a change in the methodology. This report focusses on the lived experience of seeking rental accommodation whilst living on a low income. For that purpose, in calculating an affordable rental, 30% of the available income – that is income after tax – is now used to calculate the benchmark. In the 2012 report income before tax was used as the base.

2: Gumtree

The least expensive of the 3000 listings live on April 14, 2013 on www.gumtree.com.au for Perth were examined to test if there were cheaper rentals and share accommodation available through that site. Eleven shared and low cost housing rentals were found that met the criteria for minimum wage earners. Most of those were in regional areas.

Snapshot: Anglicare Willochra—Copper Coast

Introduction

The Copper Coast is located on the northern Yorke Peninsula in South Australia and incorporates the towns of Kadina, Moonta, Wallaroo, Paskeville and Port Hughes with an approximate population of 12,949 [ABS 2011 Census]. Colonial settlement followed on from copper mining, hence the name, however the current economy is based largely on agricultural enterprises, with tourism a growing industry. The Copper Coast, particularly the seaside towns of Moonta, Wallaroo and Port Hughes is growing in residential development as it has become a popular holiday base and retirement area.

The demographics for the Copper Coast, as reported in the 2011 ABS Census, reflect this ageing population with a higher than state average result in every age category 55 years and over. Thus 40% of the Copper Coast population was aged 55 or over, compared to 28.7% of the South Australian population. Conversely the Copper Coast has a significantly lower proportion of youth (in the 15-24 year age group) at 9.9% compared to 13.1% of the state population. The age groups 25-49 years also are lower in the Copper Coast at 26.1% compared to 33.2% of the South Australian population.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 2.1% of the Copper Coast population, comparable to the state average at 1.9%.

Unemployment is slightly higher than the state average at 6.7%. In addition the Copper Coast has lower rates of full time work and higher rates of part time work being conducted at the time of the 2011 ABS Census collection. Families where both parents were not working comprised 35.3% of the labour force available, significantly higher than the state result of 21.8%. In Copper Coast 39.3% of households had a weekly household income of less than \$600 compared to 27.7% of South Australian households.

Anglicare in the Copper Coast fundraises in the community to purchase emergency relief vouchers which are then distributed through Centrelink to clients requiring additional assistance.

Findings

While there are a reasonable number of appropriate houses available on the rental market, households reliant on government allowances would struggle to find any that are affordable. Of 49 total dwellings advertised as being available to rent none of these were both affordable and appropriate to the needs of a person who is single and on Parenting Payment (with a child over 8 or more than one child), Age Pension, Newstart or Youth Allowance. A couple on an Aged Pension fared slightly better with 6 affordable and appropriate properties on offer, and a couple on Newstart with two young children would have only 3 properties to meet affordability and appropriateness criteria. Households receiving the minimum wage would be most likely to be in a position to secure accommodation that is both affordable and appropriate, with 32 properties (65%) potentially meeting the needs of a couple with children



and 12 properties (24%) affordable for a single worker (minimum wage) with two children. A single person on minimum wage would find only 5 properties that are affordable.

Discussion

Single person households did not fare well in the search for affordable rental accommodation. Even a single worker on minimum wage would have very limited options for housing in the private rental market.

Given the ageing population, and bearing in mind other financial pressures at play such as increased utility and fuel and food costs, it is apparent that a person on an Aged Pension, whether single or part of a couple, would struggle in the private rental market.

A higher than average rate of families where both parents are not working is of concern when related to the lack of affordable rental properties, as it suggests that families are therefore living in accommodation beyond their means.

Lack of affordable options moves people to accept options that are not affordable, thereby placing stress on finances available for food and other discretionary items.

Policy Implications

Although there has been growth in residential development in the Copper Coast there is insufficient private rental options available for low income earners.

A review of the Rent Assistance provided to low income earners so that they can obtain accommodation and avoid Housing stress is required, along with investigation of other options to meet this need.

Conclusion

As the cost of living goes up households that had previously coped may find themselves experiencing financial difficulties and housing stress. These concerns need to be addressed by the government to ensure that those experiencing financial difficulties can secure affordable and appropriate accommodation and reduce the potential for social marginalisation.

Snapshot: Anglicare Willochra—Whyalla

Introduction

Whyalla is an industrial city located on the Spencer's Gulf in South Australia with a population of approximately 22,795 [ABS 2011 CENSUS]. Primarily Whyalla's economy has been founded upon the Onesteel Steelworks. However in recent years there has been a diversification of the employment force with and increased number employed in the mining industry either at the Iron Duke mine or on a flyin-flyout basis. This coupled with major capital work projects [e.g. the expansion of the Whyalla District Hospital] has led to an increase in demand for housing and has led to Whyalla being identified as an investors market and an increase in overall rental prices.

The demographic make-up of Whyalla's population according to the ABS 2011 Population Census indicated that youth [15-24 years] comprised 13.8% of the total population while those identified as mature persons [45-64 years] were 25.6%. This demonstrates that Whyalla has a slightly higher proportion of youth compared to the state [South Australian average was 13.5%] and slightly lower proportion being identified as mature [South Australian was 26.4%]. Also the proportion of Whyalla's population identifying as aboriginal was 4.1% significantly higher than the state that was 1.9%. Of those identified as having a disability Whyalla's average [4.2%] was higher than the overall state 3.1%.

Whyalla's unemployment rate at the time of the 2011 ABS census was 8.2% with the most significant populations affected by unemployment being those who were identified as aboriginal 28.2%, youth 18.4% and people with disabilities 14.8%. all these figures were significantly higher than the overall state average.

Whilst Whyalla appears to have an average income level this is however is misleading as Whyalla has a dichotomous population base with professionally based employees and those who have secured employment in the mining industry receiving above average earnings while there is also a significant number of people receiving Centrelink benefits or minimum wages.

Within this context Anglicare in Whyalla provides emergency relief to those in need in the form of food as well as assisting people to receive PBS medications and in certain circumstances overnight accommodation. We also seek to connect people with other services where appropriate.

Findings

The findings from Whyalla showed that those households which consisted of singles persons on Youth Allowance, Newstart or Disability Allowance would struggle to find accommodation that was both affordable and appropriate with 0% of the 107 dwellings meeting both these criteria. A single person in receipt of the age pension fared little better with 1% of dwellings meeting both criteria. Those on Single Parenting Allowance with two children had a slightly better chance of securing affordable and appropriate accommodation with 5% of dwellings meeting the criteria. Of the various household types identified, a couple with two children



receiving the minimum wage and FTB A were the most likely to secure accommodation that was both affordable and appropriate with 34% of available dwellings meeting both these criteria.

Discussion

The findings that arose are of concern when considered in the context that single person households account for a significant proportion of the overall total. This would indicate that a significant number of single persons are compelled to rent dwellings that are bigger than they require and increasing the demand for rental properties. While 99% of accommodation was identified as appropriate for the single person cohort it is the affordability of rental properties that has arisen as the significant issue.

These observations are supported by anecdotal evidence arising from discussions with clients of the Anglicare Community Centre where there seems to be an increasing number of people accessing services who are either couch surfing or of no fixed abode.

Policy Implications

The findings that arose are of concern when considered in the context that single person households account for a significant proportion of the overall total. This would indicate that a significant number of single persons are compelled to rent dwellings that are bigger than they require and increasing the demand for rental properties. While 99% of accommodation was identified as appropriate for the single person cohort it is the affordability of rental properties that has arisen as the significant issue.

These observations are supported by anecdotal evidence arising from discussions with clients of the Anglicare Community Centre where there seems to be an increasing number of people accessing services who are either couch surfing or of no fixed abode.

Conclusion

Whyalla has been promoted as an "Investor's Market" but the flipside of this means that those already experiencing financial difficulties or who are "getting by" may be forced into housing stress and possibly an escalation in the homeless rate those of lower socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore as prices increase households that had previously coped may find themselves experiencing financial difficulties and housing stress. These concerns need to be addressed by the government to ensure that those experiencing financial difficulties can secure affordable and appropriate accommodation and reduce the potential for social marginalisation.

Snapshot: The Samaritans Foundation— Hunter and Great Lakes

Introduction

On the 13th April 2012 Samaritans along with other Anglicare agencies across Australia carried out a rental affordability snapshot. This Snapshot identified rental property listings in the private market at a point in time and compared these with the ability of prospective renters to pay the rents shown.

The focus of this report is upon the rental affordability for people receiving Government benefits and those on a minimum wage. People who suffer disadvantage and who use Samaritan's services are often receiving government benefits as their main income source. Many too are renting property rather than being home owners or purchasers.

The following report outlines the results of the snapshot for the Samaritan's regions of Hunter and Great Lakes. In the Central Coast/Hunter/Great Lakes and Taree we surveyed 3253 properties. Predefined tests of affordability and appropriateness were applied resulting in the number of advertised properties on a given day which were adequate for households living on a low income. For a dwelling to be determined as suitable it must satisfy tests of both affordability and appropriateness. The 2013 results are stark for anyone living on a low income which included those on a federal income support and the minimum wage. High level figures identified by Samaritans show that housing affordability is as much a regional issue as it is an urban one.

Findings

The Snapshot was undertaken on Saturday 13 April 2012. In Samaritans we audited The Newcastle Herald newspaper and www.realestate.com.au website for rental accommodation. In total 3,253 properties were surveyed. Predefined tests of affordability and appropriateness were applied resulting in the number of advertised properties on a given day which were adequate for households living on a low income. For a dwelling to be determined as suitable it must satisfy tests of both affordability and appropriateness.

The following advertisements were excluded from the snap shot

- Housing in retirement villages and holiday accommodation.
- Those include a condition such as child-minding or other 'employment' type activities
- Properties that were already listed as leased
- Multiple advertisements for the same property

Anglicave in every community

On the 13th April there were a total of 3253 properties available for rent over the Central Coast; Hunter; Great Lakes and Taree Regions. The breakdown per property count was

- Gosford 472 properties
- Wyong 396 properties
- Newcastle 516 properties
- Lake Macquarie 331 properties
- Cessnock 158 properties
- Maitland 386 properties
- Port Stephens 263 properties
- Singleton 151 properties
- Scone, Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook, Gloucester and Dungog Shire -243 properties
- Great Lakes 141 properties
- Taree 196 properties

Gosford LGA = There were a total of 16 affordable and appropriate properties out of 472 available properties. Of these 12 properties were suitable for a couple with two children on the Minimum Wage and 1 for a single person on a Minimum Wage. There were 3 suitable for an aged couple. Young people, people with disabilities and single parents are all unable to find affordable and appropriate accommodation in the Gosford LGA.

Wyong LGA = There were a total of 68 affordable and appropriate properties out of 396 properties. 58 of these properties were suitable for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage, (1 of these same properties was also the only property suitable and appropriate for couple with children on Newstart, single parent on Parenting Payment, single parent on Minimum Wage and one for an older couple). The remaining 10 properties were available for a couple on the Aged Pension (3 of these were also suitable for a single person on a Minimum Wage). Many of the properties available for all categories were in isolated parts of the Wyong LGA with limited transport or employment options.

Once again young people on a benefit, people with disabilities and single unemployed people are all unable to find affordable and appropriate accommodation in the Wyong LGA.

Newcastle LGA = Of the total of 32 affordable and appropriate properties (out of 516 properties) there was nothing to rent for a couple with two children on Newstart, a single parent on Parenting Payment or on a Minimum Wage, a person with a disability, or a young or single person on a benefit.

There were 18 properties for a couple with children on the Minimum Wage, or 8% of the total properties available. The majority of these properties were a long way from the city centre adding to petrol and other living costs. There were also 9 properties for a single person on the

Minimum Wage with similar issues. Included in the same 9 properties, were 2 properties affordable and appropriate for a lone Aged Pensioner however both were in share houses.

For a couple, no children on the Aged Pension there were 5 properties that were seen to be appropriate in terms of affordability and room configuration. Of those 5 properties, 2 were upstairs properties.

Due to the university there is a lot of shared and student based accommodation available in the Newcastle LGA, yet nothing was affordable for a single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance.

Lake Macquarie LGA = There were total of 37 affordable and appropriate properties (half of what was available in 2012) out of 331 properties. Once again, a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage fared the best with 26 properties available. 2 of these same properties were also suitable for a single parent on the Minimum Wage. Nearly all of these properties were in the Morisset area with difficulties with transport, and proximity to employment hubs, or in the Windale area (seen as a Housing NSW postcode).

For a couple, no children on the aged pension there were 9 properties were seen to be appropriate in terms of affordability and room configuration. However, 6 of these were bedsits and one of these bedsits was also appropriate for a single person on a Minimum Wage. There were 2 other properties available to those single people on a Minimum Wage. One of these properties was seen as affordability and appropriate (room configuration) for a single aged person however was shared accommodation.

Groups that cannot access affordable and appropriate accommodation in Lake Macquarie include:

- Couple with two children on Newstart
- Single person with two children on parenting payment
- Single person with a child of any age on parenting payment
- Single person on a disability support pension
- Singe person on Newstart
- Single Person on Youth Allowance

<u>Cessnock LGA</u> = Out of 158 properties there were only 53 affordable and appropriate properties with 49% of these suitable for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage. Within these 51 properties, are the properties that are affordable and appropriate for a couple with children on Newstart (1) or single parent on Minimum Wage (5). For an aged couple there are two properties, but one of these properties is also the only suitable rental for a single Aged Pensioner, a person with a disability or a single person on a Minimum Wage.

Stereotypes alone about the different categories make it extremely difficult for people to gain accommodation but when they are competing with a couple with children working they are more likely to miss out.

Once again young or single people on Newstart or Youth Allowance, and single parents on Parenting Payments people are unable to find private rental in the Cessnock LGA.

<u>Maitland LGA</u> = Of the 57 affordable and appropriate properties, one property was suitable for a couple on Newstart, for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage, single parent either on Parenting Payment or Minimum Wage, or a couple on Aged Pension.

There were over 386 properties available properties in the Maitland LGA. 50 of these were affordable and appropriate for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage, or 46% of the total properties available. Out of the above 50 properties, 2 were also those that were affordability and appropriate for a single parent either on a Minimum Wage or a Parenting Payment.

There were no rentals affordable or appropriate for:

- Single person with one child over 8 years old on parenting payment
- Single person on aged pension
- Single person on a disability support pension
- Singe person on Newstart, Youth Allowance or on a minimum wage

Port Stephens LGA = Out of the 263 properties available there were only a total of 59 affordable and appropriate properties. Considering Port Stephens LGA reputation as a place for those retiring there were only 6 properties available for those couples on an Aged Pension and nothing for a single person on an Aged Pension.

Predominately couples with two children on a Minimum Wage, were able to access 44% of the available properties. Of these 53 properties, 2 were also affordable and appropriate for a single parent with two children earning a Minimum Wage.

There is nothing affordable and appropriate for single people on any of the following payments – Newstart, Youth Allowance, Aged Pension, or Disability Support Pension. A couple with two children on Newstart and any single parent on a Parenting Payment were also unable to access a rental in the Port Stephens LGA.

<u>Singleton LGA</u> = There were 151 available rentals with only 18 affordable and appropriate properties. 17 of these are for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage (and include 3 also available for a single parent on a Minimum Wage). There is one property available for a couple on the Aged Pension. Many of these properties are at the high end of affordability range and with a small rental increase would soon become unaffordable.

Single people on any income (Newstart, Aged Pension, Disability Support Pension, Youth Allowance or the Minimum Wage) will not find anything affordable or appropriate in Singleton. Neither will families on Newstart, or any single parent on Centrelink support.

Remaining Hunter LGA = For Dungog, Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook, Scone and Gloucester there were 243 properties and only 40 of these were affordable and appropriate.



Of the 6 affordable and appropriate rentals in Dungog, 5 were suitable for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage (including properties that were also suitable for Couple with children on Newstart (2), single parent on Minimum Wage (4), couple on Aged Pension (1)). There was an additional property suitable for an aged couple.

In Upper Hunter LGA there was 1 affordable and appropriate properties being competed for by couple on the Aged Pension, single parent on Parenting Payment or Newstart Allowance (1 child), single Aged Pensioner, Single on a Disability Support Pension or a single person on a Minimum Wage. There was another property suitable for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage.

In Scone there was only one affordable and appropriate for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage.

In Gloucester, there were 11 properties affordable and appropriate for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage also being competed for by a couple on Aged Pension (1), couple with two children on Newstart (1), or single parent on Parenting Payment or Minimum Wage (3). For an aged couple there were an additional two properties available (also affordable and appropriate for single parent with one child on Parenting Payment (1), and single on a Minimum Wage(1).

Muswellbrook has 18 affordable and appropriate properties for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage. However out of these properties 4 are also suitable for a single parent on a Minimum Wage and for a couple with children on Newstart (1).

Despite the employment opportunities, the accommodation is spread out over a large region leading to high travel costs for employment and limited access to services.

Across the region there is no affordable or appropriate accommodation for a single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance.

Great Lakes LGA (including Stroud) = There were a total of 35 affordable and appropriate properties out of 141 available. 27 of these were suitable for couple with two children on a Minimum Wage, (also includes the 6 properties for single parents on a Minimum Wage). Of these 5 of the properties were in Stroud.

There were 8 properties affordable and appropriate for a couple on an Aged Pension, 4 of these were the same properties that were suitable for a single person on a Minimum Wage. One of these 8 properties, One was the only affordable and appropriate rental for Single person on an Aged Pension, or on a disability support pension.

There were no rentals affordable or appropriate for

- Single person with two children on a parenting payment
- Single person with one child over 8 years old on parenting payment
- Singe person on Newstart, or Youth Allowance



Taree LGA = There were 196 properties in the Taree LGA with 117 affordable and appropriate properties. There were two pools of properties. In the first pool, there were 87 properties that were suitable for a couple with two children on a Minimum Wage. Inclusive within these same properties were properties for a couple with children on Newstart (9), Single parent with one or two children on parenting payment (2), or single parent on a Minimum Wage (23).

In the second pool, there were 30 properties suitable for an older couple on an Aged Pension. Within this same property group, properties were suitable for single person on a disability pension (2), or Aged Pension(3). Or a single person on a Minimum Wage (9)

Within the pools often groups are vying for the same properties.

Despite the large number of affordable and appropriate properties, those single parents with a child over 8 on the Newstart allowance, single people on Newstart or Youth Allowance are all unable to find accommodation in the Taree LGA.

Discussion

Although the majority of available rental properties in this region are deemed to be affordable for families on Minimum Wages, there is not really sufficient employment in this area for these housing opportunities to be realised. In other words, the supply of affordable housing does not match the client group who are in need of it.

This picture of affordability and appropriateness is further complicated by the recognition of a very poor public transport system, meaning that people need to budget for additional expenses to run and maintain a car, pay for community transport, taxis or other means of transportation. Lack of transportation often leads to social isolation and an inability to access services. Appropriate, affordable housing is not always as readily available in central locations as it is in some of the more isolated rural parts of the region.

Most affordable properties for households requiring only a single room are in fact shared accommodation – in many cases inappropriate to the household itself.

Young, single people are doubly affected in all of this, with few employment opportunities and virtually no appropriate housing stock. They also face discrimination because of their youth and lack of rental history. As a result, they will migrate to more urban areas, or will become hidden homeless, moving from household to household as a couch surfer or boarder with no tenure.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as our refugee community in the Hunter, also face unspoken discrimination in the private rental market and, even if they meet affordability criteria, may find it harder to access the private rental market.

Also, there appears to be reluctance within the established, older community to move from their particular area, even to access affordable housing. People have often preferred to remain in an insecure situation than to consider moving.



Single Parents and families on Newstart find it extremely difficult to find any affordable and appropriate rentals across the region. Our emergency relief services are currently filled with this client group needing access to food due to their rental costs.

The majority of the above groups accessing our services are renting, staying temporarily with friends or residing in emergency accommodation. This places the parent and the children in difficulties financially on a daily basis, causing much stress and anxiety, school difficulties and risk of homelessness is constant.

Policy Implications

Of serious concern was the lack of affordable and appropriate accommodation for a single person aged over 21 on a disability pension and for young people on Youth Allowance.

We offer many services to clients with a disability and to young people and often accommodation is a huge cost and concern for these clients and their families when considering independent living. Young people in the Hunter are already remaining at home longer (where possible) due to the high rental costs. Unfortunately many of our client group have been unable to remain at home due to abuse and neglect. Our system is filled with young people ready to move on and be independent but they are unable to due to the lack of affordable housing right across the region.

Conclusion

There were 532 affordable and appropriate housing across the Central Coast, Hunter, Great Lakes and Taree regions out of the total 3253 properties available for rent on the 13th April 2013. This means that less than 16% of the total rental is affordable and appropriate for any particular client group. Except for Gosford LGA there is nothing affordable or appropriate for a single person on Youth Allowance, and only 6 affordable and appropriate for a single person on a disability



Snapshot: St Laurence Community Services—Barwon South West Region, Victoria

Introduction

The snapshot was completed by St Laurence Community Services in Geelong, Victoria. The support services delivered by St Laurence include: housing for people on low incomes; Residential Aged Care; home based services to people who are ageing; retirement living; individual support programs for people with disabilities, community based services for people experiencing disadvantage and employment and training services.

Findings

Household type	Number affordable and	Percentage affordable and
	appropriate	appropriate
Couple, two children	4	0.67%
Single with 2 children	1	0.17%
Couple no children (age pension)	18	3.04%
Single one child (<5)	0	0.00%
Single one child (>8)	0	0.00%
Single (age pension)	2	0.34%
Single over 21 (disability pension)	0	0.00%
Single (Newstart)	0	0.00%
Single over 18 (youth allowance)	0	0.00%
Single in share house (youth	0	0.00%
allowance)		0.0070
Couple, two children (min. wage)	189	31.87%
Single, two children (min. wage)	34	5.73%
Single (min wage)	8	1.35%

Discussion

There was increase this year (2013) in the number of rental houses available across Geelong totalling 593 compared to 464 last year at the same time. Overall we found that 43% were affordable and appropriate, with the majority of properties meeting these criteria for couples with two children on a minimum wage. However, for those on Newstart the landscape has not changed with all properties not being suitable for singles and only four properties being suitable for a couple on Newstart with children.

Policy Implications

The lack of affordable rental properties for those who are ageing is concerning; particularly in light of a recent of newspaper article (Geelong Advertiser 24/4/2013) which states that rents in Geelong are estimated to increase 100 per cent in the next decade.

For those who are ageing the lack of affordable rentals is becoming increasingly problematic. Over the next decade the population will continue to age at burgeoning rate. Homelessness and housing services are reporting higher rates of older people looking to access their services



who have not previously experienced homelessness (Westmore & Mallett, 201144). They also found that for older Australians in private rental or entering private rental for the first time were vulnerable and at risk of becoming homeless because of their lack of income and higher needs as they aged.

⁴⁴ Westmore, T & Mallet, S (2011) Ageing in what place? The experience of housing crisis and homelessness for older Victorians. Final Report. Hanover Welfare Services, Melbourne

Snapshot: St Luke's Anglicare—Loddon Campaspe Region, North Central Victoria

Introduction

The Loddon Campapse region in North Central Victoria comprises of six local government areas: City of Greater Bendigo and the Shires of Central Goldfields, Mount Alexander, Campaspe, Macedon Ranges and Loddon. The region has a population of 227,500 with the City of Greater Bendigo (106,000 people) being the main population centre. Population of the 5 other Shires are: Macedon Ranges - 43,000; Campaspe - 39,000; Mount Alexander – 18,500; Central Goldfields - 13,000; and Loddon - 8,000.

St Luke's provides a range of services across the Loddon Campapse region including out of home care, placement prevention, family support services, Child FIRST, youth support services, community based mental health services, and financial counselling services. In the City of Greater Bendigo, St Luke's provides the only youth specific housing service and a generalist housing service in Echuca (main service centre in the Campaspe Shire).

Findings

The snapshot conducted on April 13th 2013 covered City of Greater Bendigo, Shire of Mt Alexander (Castlemaine) and the Shire of Campaspe (Echuca). The number of houses counted was 100 in Bendigo and the available rental properties in Echuca (51 properties) and Castlemaine (24 properties).

The Rental Affordability Snapshot of Bendigo found:

- There was no affordable and appropriate rental housing available for couples with no children, couples with two children and a single person with a child over 8 in receipt of parenting payments or Newstart.
- 4% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a single person with a child under
 5 in receipt of parenting payments.
- 7% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a couple on the aged pension and
 2% for a single person on the aged pension.
- There was no affordable and appropriate rental housing available for a single person on the Disability Support Pension, Newstart and Youth Allowance. 2% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a single person on the minimum wage.
- 36% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a couple with two children on the minimum wage plus FTB A.
- 11% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a single person with two children on the minimum wage plus FTB A & B.



The Rental Affordability Snapshot of Echuca region found:

- There was no affordable and appropriate rental housing available for couples with no children, couples with two children and a single person with a child over 8 in receipt of parenting payments or Newstart.
- 2% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a single person with a child under
 5 in receipt parenting payments.
- 18% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a couple on the aged pension and
 2% for a single person on the aged pension.
- There was no affordable and appropriate rental housing available for a single person on the Newstart and Youth Allowance. 2% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a single person on a Disability Support pension and 12% of housing was affordable and appropriate for a single person on the minimum wage.
- 37% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a couple with two children on the minimum wage plus FTB A.
- 12% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a single person with two children on the minimum wage plus FTB A & B.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot of Mount Alexander Shire (Castlemaine) found:

- There was no affordable and appropriate rental housing available for couples with no children, couples with two children, a single person with a child over 8, single person with a child under 5 in receipt of parenting payments or Newstart.
- 4% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a couple on the aged pension and
 6% for a single person on the aged pension.
- There was no affordable and appropriate rental housing available for a single person on the Disability Support Pension, Newstart and Youth Allowance. 0% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a single person on the minimum wage.
- 29% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a couple with two children on the minimum wage plus FTB A.
- 0% of rental housing was affordable and appropriate for a single person with two children on the minimum wage plus FTB A & B.

Discussion

The rental survey highlights the difficulties facing families and young people, in receipt of benefits, in accessing affordable rental housing in rural and regional areas. This situation is further exacerbated by the low level of available rental properties particularly in rural towns. This lack of available and affordability rental housing is also placing great pressure on homelessness services in rural areas. Experience from workers on the ground highlights that the lack of available rental housing coupled with the lack of emergency accommodation



options is placing great stress on people experiencing homelessness particularly families and young people.

Policy Implications

The lack of affordable rental housing available to recipients of Parenting Payments, Newstart and Disability Support Pensions clearly indicates the need to raise the level of these payments. There is also a need for greater investment in social housing in rural areas to address housing pressures and shortage of affordable rental housing.

Addressing the high levels of long term unemployment in rural areas must a priority for Government. Current analysis of families accessing support services at St Luke's highlights that over 85% are unemployed with many experiencing long term unemployment and housing stress. There is a need for well designed and targeted programs that support parents returning to education and the workforce.

Conclusion

The survey results show that rental housing in rural and provincial areas is not affordable for families, adults and young people on income support. It also shows that those on a minimum wage are also experiencing serious housing stress.

Appendix: Assumptions of Affordability and Appropriateness

Assumptions used when calculating affordability and appropriateness:

The measure of **affordability** that we use is the 'housing stress' benchmark – i.e. if the household is paying more than 30% of its income in rent, then it is in 'housing stress' and the housing is deemed to be unaffordable.

We include rent assistance as income for the purposes of this calculation.

When going through the listings in the paper to assess whether they are affordable, we apply the following assumptions:

- Where rents are banded (e.g. the property is advertised as renting at \$200-\$220 per week), we use the highest rent in the band (e.g. \$220).
- Where rents are listed as 'from \$x' or 'offers above \$x' or '\$x negotiable', we use the figure given (\$x).
- Where rents are not stated in the ad, we assume that these properties would be too expensive.
- Where multiple properties are advertised in the same ad (e.g. 2 rooms available in the one share house), we count them as separate properties.
- The exception to the above rule is when it is not clear from the ad how many properties are available (e.g. an ad for 'seniors' units') – in these cases, we count them as one property.
- Where a property lists a condition of renting such as child minding or other 'employment' type activities, the property is not included.

In determining whether the property is **appropriate**, we apply the following assumptions:

- A room in a share house or a bedsit is suitable for a single person, a 1-2 bedroom property is suitable for a single person or couple, and a 2-3 bedroom property is suitable for parents with children.
- Share houses and bed-sits are not suitable for couples.
- Households with 2 children require a 3 bedroom property we assume that it is not appropriate for the children to share a room.

In order for the property to be considered suitable for a household, it has to be affordable <u>and</u> appropriate.