

Locality Snapshot Reports

Snapshot: Anglicare Northern Territory — Northern Territory

Introduction

Anglicare NT recognises that unsafe, inadequate and expensive housing is a challenge across the Northern Territory. People who struggle to find affordable housing often resort to living in overcrowded and sometimes unsanitary conditions which constrains their capacity to maintain employment and participate within their community in a meaningful way.

Anglicare NT continues to advocate for additional resources in the housing sector to ensure that improved housing stock and support services can be available for Territorians who most need this support.

Anglicare NT provides services 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 15-19 and transitional accommodation program to help adults and families experiencing homelessness to establish a stable housing environment. In addition, Anglicare NT provides some emergency relief support services and case management.

Findings

On the weekend of 1-2 April, 1287 private rentals were advertised for rent in the Northern Territory (compared with 1,354 properties in 2016). Private rentals were surveyed from online sources. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that:

- 10 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 90 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Further analysis

- There were no (n=0) properties that were both affordable and appropriate for people who receive Newstart Allowance, Single Parenting Payment, Disability Support Pension or Youth Allowance or on a Age Pension and living alone.
- Of the 10 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate, the analysis made evident that the only people who currently receive the age pension (i.e. living as a couple, with no children) would be appropriate for these properties.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Northern Territory, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	0	0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	10	1%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	0	0%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	90	7%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	1	0%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	0	0%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	3	0%
Total No of Properties		1287		

On the Snapshot day, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
10	94

Discussion

Across the Northern Territory, the average cost of renting has decreased over the year to now be \$472.67 per week compared with \$500.06 per week last year (2016) and \$560 (2015) and \$581 (2014).

The average rental cost within the Northern Territory as a whole \$472.67 (2017), is lower when compared with just Darwin (and its suburbs) which on average costs \$483.79 per week. Average rental costs in Darwin in 2016 are \$532 per week which is a reduction from 2015 when the average cost in Darwin was \$604 per week.

While rental prices as a whole have fallen in this reporting period, it is important contextually to note that median rent price for all dwellings in Darwin was still higher than every other capital city except Sydney and Canberra (as reported by CoreLogic 2016 report).

There are a number of factors that may impact the average price decrease and these could include:

- The Northern Territory reported the lowest population growth of any jurisdiction at 0.3% [ABS Data September 2016].
- Overall property prices in Darwin have experienced the biggest drop in price of any capital city in Australia with rents dropping 14.1%. [CoreLogic RP Data, April 2016]

While there was a reduction on the weekly costs of rent on average, on the weekend of data collection there was still less than 8% (104) of surveyed properties were both affordable and appropriate within the Northern Territory for people on the pension, some form of welfare payment or the minimum wage. This continues a three year trend within the Northern Territory of lack of availability of housing stock that is both appropriate and affordable for those in our community who have the most limited resources.

The Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot process has reinforced the importance of government policy interventions and the need for appropriate resources to address the housing affordability crisis in Northern Territory. Too many people within the Northern Territory who are reliant on some form of welfare payment are paying too large a percentage of their limited resources towards housing which often isn't particularly appropriate for their needs and places extra stress on the household to maintain essential services such as electricity, water and purchasing fresh and healthy food.

Despite programs like the 'head-leasing initiative' funded by the Territory Government, there has not been significant progress to address the crisis of housing affordability in the Northern Territory.

Policy interventions to counter the risks associated with housing stress could include further increasing the supply of affordable and appropriate housing across the Northern Territory as well as extending the National Rental Affordability Scheme with a focus on young people.

Anglicare NT remains concerned about the lack of information about the future of housing policy in the Northern Territory and encourages both the Territory and Australian governments to make some long term strategic investments to ensure stability in housing for those people who most need support

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. Anglicare NT acknowledges the new Northern Territory Government commitment to invest a billion dollars in remote housing, however not enough is being done to support rough sleepers and young people in major urban centres. The Northern Territory has the highest rates of youth homelessness in Australia and without intentional intervention; this housing crisis will continue to disadvantage young people and impact on their ability to meaningfully participate in their community.

Conclusion

The Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot demonstrates clearly that there a housing affordability crisis in the Northern Territory as we have identified **0%** of properties that were affordable for families who currently receive the Newstart or parenting allowances.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot also demonstrated that less than 1% of rental properties surveyed were affordable and appropriate for a couple living on the age pension and less than 8% of rental properties were affordable and appropriate for families living on the minimum wage.

While there has been a marginal improvement in the number of properties that were affordable and appropriate for families living on a minimum wage, this appeared to be more about the downturn in the NT economy and the number of people who have left the Northern Territory and created vacancies rather than a strategic policy shift to increase available housing. During the reporting period, only NSW and SA had a larger number of people migrating out of the jurisdiction than the Northern Territory.

The picture for rental affordability in the Northern Territory continues to follow a very concerning trend, with more investment required in the National Rental Affordability Scheme leveraging private investment in affordable housing. Failure to attract either government or private investment in affordable housing options in the Northern Territory will continue to place cost of living pressure on those who can least afford it and those who have the least housing options available to them.