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Report

Anglicare Australia

Rental Affordability Snapshot

April 2017

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Anglicare Australia

Anglicare Australia is a network of 36 independent local, state, national and international organisations that are linked to the Anglican Church and are joined by values of service, innovation, leadership and the Christian faith that every individual has intrinsic value. Our services are delivered to one in 26 Australians, in partnership with them, the communities in which they live, and other like-minded organisations in those areas. In all, over 13,000 staff and 9,000 volunteers work with over 940,000 vulnerable Australians every year delivering diverse services, in every region of Australia.

Anglicare Australia has as its Mission "to engage with all Australians to create communities of resilience, hope and justice". Our first strategic goal charges us with reaching this by "influencing social and economic policy across Australia…informed by research and the practical experience of the Anglicare Australia network".

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Executive Summary

This eighth annual Rental Affordability Snapshot by Anglicare Australia comes at a time where there seems to be, finally, a universal agreement that there is a housing affordability crisis. As is shown by the consistency of our findings over the last eight years, this discussion is only just catching up to what many Australians have experienced for a much longer time.

The purpose of the Rental Affordability Snapshot has always been to highlight the lived experience of people and families on low incomes trying to find a home in the private rental market. As this Snapshot shows, the number of houses affordable for people on low incomes is so low that rental stress is unavoidable for most. In highlighting this lived experience it is important to emphasise that the biggest impact of the housing affordability crisis is in compromising people's right to a home.

There is more to having a home than simply having a roof over your head. Our home is the foundation of our wellbeing and health. A home is defined as much through the people we share it with, its objects, sounds, smells, tastes, textures and memories, as it is by its architecture or location. A home supports and reflects our cultural connections and identities; it is a place that takes shape through our habits, interests and visions. We know our home and our home knows us.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot highlights the extent to which the private rental market has failed to provide access to affordable and appropriate shelter, let alone a home, for millions of Australians. As the report shows, there is a dire shortage of affordable rental houses for people on low income, particularly the 10% of Australians reliant on government payments. In addition, this experience of rental stress is for many coupled with a lack of rights to make the place they are renting their own.

The Snapshot was undertaken on the weekend of 1-2 April 2017. We partnered once again with the REA Group to collect data on listings available across Australia on the Snapshot weekend as our primary data source. We determined a suitable rental to be one which took up less than 30% of the household's income, a commonly used benchmark of affordability.[1] Household incomes for 14 household types are derived from the maximum rate of Centrelink pensions and allowances, or net minimum wage, combined with the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and Family Tax Benefits (FTB) where applicable.

The Snapshot covers both regional and metropolitan areas, and has a similar coverage to previous years. Nationally, over 67,000 properties were surveyed (n=67,751). Of these properties, 52,012 were in metropolitan areas and 13,739 were in regional areas.

Consistent with previous years, the survey shows that a single people on Youth Allowance and Newstart would find it almost impossible to find an affordable home anywhere in Australia, whether regional or metropolitan. In Western Australia, the ACT and the Northern Territory there wasn't a single property affordable to a single person living on Newstart or Youth Allowance. There were none, either, in Sydney or Brisbane; and less than handful of affordable properties found in Tasmania (n=6), Central Queensland (n=8), regional NSW (n=3), Victoria (n=6) and regional South Australia (n=5).

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001), Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics, 2001, Canberra, cat No. 4160.0, viewed 18 April 2016.

The devastatingly inadequate rate of Newstart is also reflected in a comparison of properties available for single parent families who have been moved from the Single Parenting Payment onto Newstart Allowance once their child turns 8 years old. Only 0.3% (n=239) properties nationally are available for a single parent on Newstart Allowance compared to 1.5% (n=1,011) properties for a single parent on a Parenting Payment. No properties were available for a single parent on Newstart in Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Darwin, Hobart or Brisbane. This also gives context to effects that policies like longer waiting periods for Newstart Allowance can have on single parent households, for whom rental stress is already all but unavoidable.

It is also important to emphasise the rental affordability crisis faced by people living on the Disability Support Pension (DSP). On the Snapshot weekend only 586 or 0.9% of properties Australia-wide are affordable for people living on the DSP. There were no affordable properties in Sydney, Brisbane or Darwin; only 2 in Canberra and Hobart, 4 in Adelaide and 5 in Melbourne and Perth. Of course, for a person on the DSP the Snapshot only tells half the story, as each recipient will have specific requirements for accessibility. And home modification and universal design simply don't figure in the vast majority of affordable rentals.

This report shows the experience of many different households looking for a home in the private rental market. The locality Snapshots, examining rental affordability in 18 different metropolitan and regional areas, show what this experience is like at a local level. But what stays the same for people on low incomes – old or young, living in Canberra or in the Kimberley – is the severe difficulty of finding a home in the rental private market.

Key recommendations

The findings of the 2017 Rental Affordability Snapshot show that for people on low incomes housing options in the private rental market are extremely limited, and that the chances of finding a place that could be called home are even worse. Combined with the lack of community and public housing options, the unaffordability and inadequacy of housing in the private rental market calls for fundamental changes to how we intervene to ensure a home for every Australian.

Our key recommendations to make homes available to people on low incomes are:

- Adopt a housing first approach to ending homelessness.
- Increase funding for public housing and community housing by rebooting the National Affordable Housing Agreement, radically increasing transparency so its goals can be tracked and are delivered.
- Create a National Affordable Housing Finance Corporation, modelled on the successful UK entity, to leverage government guarantees and bond aggregation for more investment in community and affordable housing.
- Wind back negative gearing and capital gains tax exemptions, and redirect funds saved into public and community housing.

It is also vital that people are able to make a home where they live. Making renting fairer, more secure and more acceptable is an essential part of ensuring every person in Australia has a home.

To begin this, we need to:

- Implement a national renter's rights plan that delivers consistent and fair renting conditions for all Australians.
- Fund co-designed community housing options that ensure affordable and appropriate homes that fit everyone's needs.
- Include public and community housing in urban renewal and new development.

The Snapshot also illustrates the urgent and critical need to increase income support payments. At current levels, income support payments are trapping people in severe rental stress, leaving people in a situation where they have to trade off other things essential to their health and wellbeing in order to pay rent. Key actions needed:

- Establish an independent commission to set indexed and adequate government income support that takes account of people's differing circumstances.
- Lift the minimum wage to a living wage.
- Increase and amend Commonwealth Rent Assistance to ensure it reflects rent levels in different markets.
- Increase public investment in enterprises that create secure work and are responsive to community and employee needs.

Summary national data for the 2017 Rental Affordability Snapshot

Table 1 summarises the national picture of rental affordability for Australians on low incomes. It shows that at a national level, only 6% (n= 3,844) of the 67,651 dwellings surveyed are suitable for any of the 10 selected households in receipt of government benefits. This is down from 7% in 2016. 30% are suitable for any of the four minimum wage based households, down from 31% in 2016.

Table 1: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: National aggregate

#	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)	1,273	1.88%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	804	1.19%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	2,897	4.28%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	1,011	1.49%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	239	0.35%
6	Single	Age Pension	1,097	1.62%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	586	0.86%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	21	0.03%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	3	0.004%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	5	0.007%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	18,675	27.56%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	3,576	5.28%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	1,914	2.83%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	7,212	10.64%
	Total No of Properties	67, 751		

As shown above, affordable rental options are severely limited for single people on any government payment. Housing affordability has also deteriorated for single people living on minimum wage, with the number of suitable houses falling from 5.3% to 2.83% (n=1914) nationally.

Households with dual incomes naturally have more options available, though affordability is much worse for those living on government payments compared to those living on minimum wage.

As with previous years, households consisting of a couple on the minimum wage receiving Family Tax Benefits continue to have the best access of people on low incomes to the private rental market in Australia. However geographic variations are significant and must also be considered when reflecting on the overall improvement in the number of properties affordable and accessible this year for this cohort. For such families in Sydney and Canberra for example, just 4% or less of properties were suitable, compared to the national aggregate of 10.64%.

Regional and metropolitan aggregates are presented in the Findings section of this report (pg 12). Findings for each of the 18 regions surveyed are presented and discussed in the Locality Snapshot Reports.

Introduction

It was not very long ago that it was accepted that everyone has a right to a home. Not just a roof over your head, but a home – a place you know is yours for as long as you want it, that reflects your family, your interests and loves, a place where cherished memories are made, a place that provides essential privacy. Home is the foundation of connectedness and cultural identity. Being able to choose where you make your home means your kids can stay at the same school and make friends, and no matter what your stage of life, you can be part of your local community. Home is not just where the heart is, it is the bedrock of everybody's health and happiness.

The truth and value of a home for all of us has not changed, but the willingness of government to see it has the responsibility to ensure everyone can have a home, has. Our understanding of the vital importance of home to people's wellbeing has increased, yet public and community housing numbers have decreased, and successive governments have argued that it is up to the private market to provide a home for all.

Instead of talking about the essential value and right to a home in Australia, we find ourselves caught in an argument about property prices. There is a lot of talk about leaving it to the market yet public policy, and subsidy overwhelmingly supports existing home owners and property investors. It seems that existing policy, and discourse, privileges the privileged.

It is in this context that for eight years now Anglicare Australia has published our Rental Affordability Snapshot (the Snapshot), an annual survey of the affordability of private rental properties for people living on a low incomes in Australia.

The Snapshot has shone a light onto how the private rental market fundamentally fails to deliver affordable and appropriate shelter for millions of Australians, let alone provide what most of us understand as a home.

The consequences of this failure are far-reaching. We know from the work of Anglicare network members that people on low incomes in Australia are enduring severe financial stress, routinely having to forgo essentials such as food or seeing a doctor, just so that they can pay their rent. The number of people who are homeless has risen. For our most vulnerable – for older people renting on their own, people living with disability, women escaping violence, young people just making their way, and people living with mental health concerns – the barriers to obtaining affordable and appropriate accommodation can be insurmountable.

Rental stress is further compounded by insufficient tenants' rights in many parts of the country, which see people living in dangerously run-down accommodation because they are too scared the landlord will raise the rent or evict them if they ask for basic repairs; evicted without cause and forced to move so their kids too have to move schools and vital community connection is lost; and refused the simple joy of the companionship of pets.

The 2017 Snapshot shows that in terms of the raw numbers, little had changed in the circumstances of people on low incomes seeking a home to rent. What has changed is that there is finally, a universal political acknowledgement that this is a crisis; and that governments and organisations at all levels need to work together to address it.

Through the Snapshot, Anglicare Australia seeks to highlight the lived experience of unaffordable housing and to amplify the voices of those who are most affected by it. Now we finally have acknowledgement that governments must intervene, it is critical that these voices are heard, because they show with great clarity where public policy intervention is needed and how worthwhile that intervention will be.

Methodology

For the purposes of this project, an affordable rental is one that takes up less than 30% of the household's income, a commonly used benchmark of affordability for people living on low income.

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 total resulting income for each household type was used to establish a maximum affordable weekly rent based on the 30% rule.

The Snapshot was undertaken over the weekend of 1-2 April 2017 (Snapshot weekend). This year, Anglicare Australia has again partnered with REA Group (who operate the realestate.com.au website) to collect data on rental listings across Australia, replacing previous manual collection methods. In addition to the rental data from realestate.com.au, some Anglicare Australia network members have also audited locally based real estate websites and/ or local newspapers for rental accommodation. Nationally, over 67,000 properties were surveyed (n=67,751). Predefined tests of affordability and appropriateness were applied to the survey data, resulting in the number of advertised properties on a given day which were adequate for households of different types 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 can be found at Appendix 1.

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. As rents increase the CRA becomes less effective as a means of affordability.

What is the 30:40 housing stress measure?

The commonly used benchmark of housing affordability is the '30:40 indicator'.[2] 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'.[3]

In measuring housing affordability using this indicator, housing costs generally include rent, mortgage payments, rates, taxes, household insurance, repairs and maintenance, as well as interest payments on loans for alterations and levies on strata-titled dwellings.[4] Household income is calculated by looking at gross income (pre-tax income), disposable income (post-tax income) or equivalised disposable income (after-tax income adjusted for the number and ages of people in the household).[5]

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[2] Lovering, Matthew (2014), Housing affordability stress: Understanding the 30:40 indicator, Evidence Review 54, AHURI.
[3] Harding, A., Phillips, B., & Kelly,S (2004), *Trends in Housing Stress*, NATSEM, Paper Presented at the National Summit on Housing Affordability, Canberra
[4] Op cit 2.
[5] ibid

The Snapshot adopts a simplified model of the 30:40 indicator, and includes only rent as housing cost. Net income is used, taking into account maximum rate of Centrelink pensions, allowances or net minimum wage combined with the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and Family Tax Benefits (FTB) where applicable.

While using the 30:40 indicator provides policy-makers with a useful tool to assess how housing cost burdens have changed over time,[6] as with any measure of affordability, there are weaknesses with this housing stress measure.[7] For instance, it doesn't take into account the shift in household make up in Australia when assessing housing affordability in a broader sense. Anglicare Australia has developed safeguards, where possible, to minimise the distortions created from inconsistent treatment of these concepts.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI)—from its National Research Venture 3 into housing affordability—found that the 30:40 measure (or 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."[8] The Ratio method underpins the Housing Affordability Index offered by the HIA and Commonwealth Investment Bank[9] and the Council of Australian Governments also uses the Ratio method in the National Affordable Housing Agreement as its measure of affordability.[10]

Is 30% enough?

When a household income is upwards of $150,000, 30% or greater 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 ($672.70 per 38 hour week before tax or $34,980 per annum[11]), options are limited and a reasonable place to live often comes at a much higher price.

The Ratio method, which has been used in the Rental Affordability Snapshot, is a broad brush approach to affordability that does not take 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.

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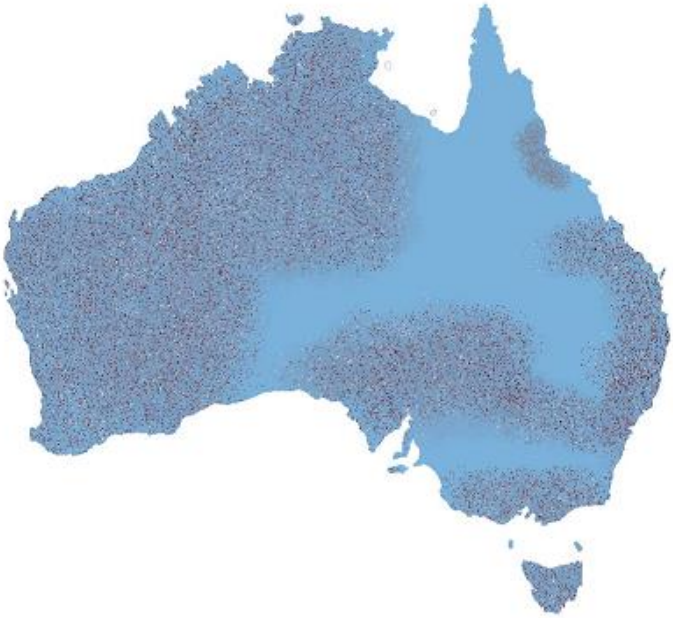
[6] ibid
[7] Henman, P & Jones, A. (2010), *Exploring the use of residual measures of housing affordability in Australia: methodologies and concepts*. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute: Melbourne.
[8] AHURI (2010), National Research Venture 3 into housing affordability, AHURI Final Report No. 105
[9] HIA, n.d, *HIA-CBA Affordability Index and Report*, viewed March 2017.
[10] COAG Reform Council (2011), *National Affordable Housing Agreement: Performance report for 2009–10*, COAG Reform Council, Sydney.
[11] Fair Work Ombudsman, 2016, National Minimum Wage Order 2016, Canberra accessed 11 April 2017, https://www.fwc.gov.au/awards-and-agreements/minimum-wages-conditions/national-minimum-wage-orders

Findings

The Locality Snapshot Reports section of this report contains detailed findings for cities and regions in every jurisdiction. What follows is an overarching description of the common findings across jurisdictions for people living on low incomes.

National catchment



Indicative national coverage of rental affordability snapshot 2017

The geographic area covered by the Snapshot this year was similar to last year. Overall there was a decrease in the number of properties surveyed compared to last year but the fall was not consistent across all jurisdictions.

The 2017 Snapshot assessed 67,751 properties available to rent over the Snapshot weekend, and considered whether they are appropriate and affordable for households living on low incomes. The Snapshot looks at 14 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 (i.e. suitable = affordable and appropriate). Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the suitability of properties listed on the weekend of the Snapshot for each of the 14 household types. It should be noted that these are aggregate figures and are not distributed evenly across the Snapshot catchment areas. It does not follow, for example, that a person living in rural New South Wales will have the same chance to 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 1: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: National aggregate

#	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)	1,273	1.88%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	804	1.19%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	2,897	4.28%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	1,011	1.49%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	239	0.35%
6	Single	Age Pension	1,097	1.62%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	586	0.86%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	21	0.03%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	3	0.004%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	5	0.007%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	18,675	27.56%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	3,576	5.28%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	1,914	2.83%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	7,212	10.64%
	Total No of Properties	67, 751		

Single income households

Less than 2.0% of the listed properties were rated as suitable for any of the single households in receipt of a government payment. Singles living on an Age Pension **(#6)** could afford 1.62% of the total properties, equating to 1,097 properties, however, this figure may be somewhat inflated by the availability of general share house accommodation.

Given that share accommodation is typically targeted at younger populations, the likelihood that age pensioners would find that this accommodation meets their needs or that they would be able to secure this type of rental property is slim.

Singles living on the Disability Support Pension **(#7)** could afford less than 1% of the total properties, equating to 586 dwelling. Singles living on Newstart **(#8)** and Youth Allowance **(#9 or #10)** however could only afford 21, three or five properties respectively of the 67,751 listed in the national Snapshot catchment area. As these figures do not equate to a percentage at one decimal point, it will be hereafter described as <0.1%. Affordable rentals for any single person on government pensions were essentially non-existent.

Singles with children would also struggle to find suitable accommodation had they been looking on the weekend of the Snapshot. A single person with two children and living on the minimum wage **(#12)** would have access to 5.28% of the listed rentals (n=3,576), while the same family if relying on the Parenting Payment Single **(#2)** would have access to only 1.19% of the listings (n=804).

The two household types that include a single parent and a child are some of the hardest hit. These 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 **(#4);** the other has an eight year old child and is in receipt of Newstart Allowance **(#5)**. Respectively the availability of suitable rentals is 1.49% (n=1,011) and 0.35% (n=239).

Singles on a minimum wage **(#13)** could find 1914 suitable rentals, equating to 2.83% of the total private rentals on the Snapshot weekend.

Double income households

Households with dual incomes naturally fare comparatively better in this Snapshot. However, there is clear demarcation between those living on the minimum wage and those in receipt of income support payments. Of the four *couple households*, three include children.

The double income households with the greatest proportion of suitable listings are households with two children living on the minimum wage **(#11)** at 27.56% (n=18,675), and households with two children living on minimum wage and parenting payment **(#14)** at 10.64% (n=7,212).

At the other end of the Snapshot income scale, the same family composition in receipt of Newstart **(#1)** would have access to only 1.88% of the available listings (n=1,273). A couple living on the Age Pension **(#3)** would have access to 4.28% or 2,897 properties of the listed 67,751 private rentals.

Regional catchment

The 2017 Snapshot considers the affordability and appropriateness of 13,739 properties in regional areas, 20% of the total properties available at the time of survey.

Generally, Australia is codified into five different scales of remoteness: Metropolitan (least remote), Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, and Very Remote.[12] Similar to the method used by the COAG Reform Council, Anglicare Australia has used a rough 'balance of state' approach to determine regional and metropolitan areas. Hence, Regional refers to the four ABS categories which include regional and remote descriptions. Generally, the areas covered in the regional areas have between 10,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, except in those areas which are very remote.[13] For 2017, we have grouped Hobart and Darwin Statistical Divisions in our Metropolitan rather than regional catchment. We believe this better reflects a layperson's understanding of Australia's metropolitan areas and the fact that as capitals, these cities have rental markets that function differently from other regional townships in their jurisdiction.

[12] ABS (2012), Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2011, viewed 10 April, 2017.
[13] ibid

Table 2: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: Regional aggregate

#	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)	1,133	8.2%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	751	5.5%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	2,295	16.7%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	986	7.2%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	235	1.7%
6	Single	Age Pension	687	5.0%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	542	3.9%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	18	0.1%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	2	0.02%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	3	0.02%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	6,422	46.7%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	2534	18.4%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	1,207	8.8%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	3854	28.1%
	Total No of Properties	13,739		

Single income households

Single people in regional areas are still 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 13,739 regional properties analysed on the collection weekend, there were fewer than five properties that would be suitable for a single person on Youth Allowance **(#9 or #10)** (n=2 & 3). For those on Newstart, the appropriate properties ranged from 0.1% for singles on Newstart **(#8)** (n=18), increasing to 1.7% (n=235) for a single parent on Newstart **(#5)**. Singles on the Disability Support Pension **(#7)** could access 3.49% (n=542) of properties surveyed. An age pensioner **(#6)** could access 5.0% (n=687) of properties surveyed, however, many of these properties were share houses so there are questions about how successful an application by an age pensioner for this property type would be.

Singles living on the Parenting Payment with one child **(#4)** could access 7.2% of rentals (n=986), while those on the same payment with two children **(#2)** could access 5.5% (n=751).

Singles living on the minimum wage might apply for 1,207 properties (8.8%) if on their own **(#13)** or 2,534 properties (18.4%) if they have two children **(#12)**.

Double income households

A couple living in regional area with two children on the minimum wage **(#11)** might access 46.7% of all rentals (n=6,422). However, the same family living on Newstart **(#1)** might only access 8.2% (n=1,133).

An Age Pension couple **(#3)** could afford 16.7% (n=2,295) of the 13,739 properties.

Couple households living with two children on minimum wage and parenting payment **(#14)** might access 28.1% of the rentals (n=3,854).

Metropolitan catchment

Metropolitan areas have seen the greatest population growth over the last decade with the bulk of that growth occurring in the inner cities and outer suburbs. Growth has also occurred along urban infill areas and coastal regions, adding extra pressure on housing supply. The combined population of greater capital cities as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, increased by 276,500 people (1.7%) between 30 June 2015 and 30 June 2016, accounting for 82% of the country's total population growth.[14]

Table 3 below provides the breakdown of results for all 54,012 metropolitan properties surveyed.

[14] ABS (2016), Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2015-16, catalogue no. 3218.0

Table 3: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: Metropolitan aggregate

#	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)	140	0.3%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	53	0.10%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	598	1.1%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	29	0.05%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	4	0.01%
6	Single	Age Pension	413	0.8%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	44	0.1%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	3	0.01%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	1	0.002%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	2	0.004%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	12,182	22.6%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	1,113	2.1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	715	1.3%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	3,356	6.2%
	Total No of Properties	54,012		

Single income households

Given the increasing pressure on most of our cities, people living on a low income have very little chance of living in an employment rich urban environment without being under extreme housing stress. As can be seen from Table 3, none of the single income households on government payments would have access to more than 1.1% of the total available properties listed in the catchment areas over the collection weekend.

Similar to last year, there were very small numbers of rentals suitable for singles with children living on pensions – in fact the situation has worsened even further in 2017. For a single household with one child living on Newstart Allowance **(#5)**, just four of 54,012 rentals would be suitable and available. The same household composition living on a parenting payment **(#4)** would do marginally better with 29 suitable properties for rent on the Snapshot weekend. A single parent with two children **(#2)** living on parenting payment could access 53 private rentals.

For singles living on the Newstart **(#8)** and Youth Allowance **(#9 or #10),** virtually no properties are available in the metropolitan areas that would be suitable.

Singles living on an Age Pension **(#6)** would be able to afford less than 1% (n=413) of properties available in metropolitan areas. Singles on the Disability Support Pension **(#7)** would be able to afford only 0.1% of the total metropolitan dwellings (n=44). Singles living on the minimum wage in metropolitan centres faced a significant drop (more than 50%) in the number of propertied they could apply for in 2017 – down to 15 properties (1.3%) if on their own **(#13).** However there was a slight improvement for those singles on minimum wage with two children **(#12)**, with 2.1% of properties (n= 1,113) available compared to 0.9% last year.

Double income households

A couple living in metropolitan area with two children on the minimum wage **(#11)** might access 22.6% of all rentals (n=12, 182), although there is significant regional variation discussed in the next section of this report. The same family living on Newstart **(#1)** might only access 0.3% (n=140).

An Age Pension couple **(#3)** could afford 1.1% (n=498) of the 54, 012 properties.

Couple households living with two children on minimum wage and parenting payment **(#14)** might access 6.2% of the rentals (n=3.356), double last year's result.

Discussion & Policy Goals

Grasping the magnitude of the crisis

In February 2017 there were 781,330 Australians receiving Newstart[15]. The latest government figures on the number of people on various other forms of income support are from 2015, and show that around 275, 258 young people are receiving Youth Allowance, 814,400 people are receiving the Disability Support Pension[16] and approximately 621,550 Australians are receiving the Aged Pension and rent[17]. A recent estimate of the number of Australians earning the minimum wage put the figure at around 860,000[18].

These figures combined with findings of the Snapshot therefore allow us to grasp the scale of the impact and consequences of the housing affordability crisis. Looking first at those receiving government income support – some 10% of Australians, including people on the Aged Pension who don't own their own home, are in all likelihood living in hardship due to the cost of renting. The exceptions are those that are able to access the small number of public and community housing tenancies.

Notable in this year's Snapshot is the deterioration in affordable and appropriate rental options for single people on the minimum wage. Nationally there was a nearly 2.5% decrease in the number of properties that single people on the minimum wage could afford to rent. However even this stark figure masks the severity of the situation in metropolitan Australia, with single people on the minimum wage entirely locked out of the private rental market in Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Darwin, and able to potentially access a paltry 1% or less of suitable properties in Brisbane, Darwin, Adelaide and Perth.

The critical importance of Family Tax Benefit payments to single parents on the minimum wage is illustrated by the improvement in the number of affordable and appropriate properties by 0.6% nationally and 1.2% in metropolitan areas. However welcome as this improvement is, ultimately its impact is marginal given there were fewer than 3,600 properties across the country accessible for single parents on minimum wage.

As in previous years, of all people on low incomes in Australia, households consisting of a couple on the minimum wage receiving Family Tax Benefits continue to have the best access to the private rental market. However, geographic variations must also be considered when reflecting on the overall improvement in the number of properties affordable and accessible this year for this cohort. For such families in Sydney and Canberra and for instance just 4% or less of the properties tested were suitable.

It also does not hold true for families where one parent is on the minimum wage and one is receiving a parenting payment: they face severe shortages of affordable housing in metropolitan areas.

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[15] DSS (2017) Labour Market and Related Payments February 2017.
[16] Productivity Commission (2017) Report on Government Services, Volume A, Chapter 2.
[17] Ibid. Note that it is estimated that approximately 25% of people on the Aged Pension are renting and therefore the figure quoted here is derived from applying that percentage estimate to the total of 2,486,200 people on the Aged Pension in the Productivity Commission's report, referenced above.
[18] Productivity Commission (2015) Draft Report on Workplace Relations Framework.

Regional vs metropolitan Australia

It can be gathered from the discussion above that overall there is more affordable and appropriate rental accommodation for people on low incomes in regional Australia, and this is particularly the case for people on the minimum wage. However people on government incomes, particularly young people on Youth Allowance or find there is nowhere in the country affordable for them. Single parents on Newstart and singles on the Disability Support Pension also face severely limited options for affordable and suitable accommodation in regional Australia.

Nonetheless, geographic variations in the availability of affordable rental properties across Australia demonstrate the urgent need for Commonwealth Rent Assistance to be amended to allow for payments to be based on the true nature of local rental markets.

Fragile homes are not homes at all

The effects of the lack of an affordable and stable housing are diverse, profound and long-lasting. Some are more immediately apparent and understood than others.

Perhaps the best understood are the immediate impacts of the financial stress caused by unaffordable rents. Because the rent is immutable and income is fixed, people and families cut spending on other basic needs and damage their own health and prospects in life to maintain shelter. Put simply, people go hungry, and turn to emergency food relief if they can; go without heating in winter and cooling in summer; can't afford essential transport, medical expenses or have to deny their kids involvement in school and recreational activities.

For many individuals and families, particularly in our metropolitan areas, and especially if they are receiving government income, payments are now so far below the real cost of living they are paying 50% or more of their income in rent, and living with the constant threat of becoming homeless. Anglicare agencies across the country work with people from all walks of life living in several rental stress, or dealing with being locked out altogether due to unaffordability. There is little doubt that rates of homelessness are an underestimate given the number of people couch-surfing, returning to live with parents or other family even when the accommodation is unsuitable (for example families cramming into single spare rooms) simply because they have no other choice.

Other impacts are less evident but as serious. Anglicare has case studies of young people forgoing education and employment opportunities because they can't find affordable accommodation where they would need to live to take them up; and of women seeking to escape family violence being unable to move away from the perpetrator.

Compounding financial stress is the tenuousness and narrowness of renter's rights in most of Australia. In all states and territories except Tasmania landlords are able to evict tenants on periodic leases without cause. The consequences of this can be extreme. Anglicare agencies have seen summary evictions lead to children being placed in foster care simply because the parents are unable to quickly secure affordable and appropriate accommodation when this happens. Families having to move, and uprooting children from their local schools, job changes and losses are also common and damaging consequences.

Poor maintenance and energy efficiency in many rental properties sees people on low incomes enduring living conditions that undermine their health, including poor heating and cooling, and the presence of mould and pests. Other tenancy restrictions can more subtly damage quality of life and wellbeing, particularly for those who are older or socially isolated. Not being permitted to have a pet, for example, denies many people vital companionship.

This year National Shelter, CHOICE, and the National Association of Tenants' Organisations released timely and important research showing that Australian renters often live in a climate of fear with little rights. In their report 'Unsettled' they found that:

- 83% of renters in Australia have no fixed-term lease or are on a lease less than 12 months long.
- 62% of people say they feel like they can't ask for changes.
- 50% of renters report experiencing discrimination when applying for a rental property.
- 50% of renters worried about being listed on a residential tenancy database.
- 20% renters experiencing leaking, flooding and issues with mould.
- 8% of renters are living in a property in need of urgent repairs. [19]

'Unsettled' found that discrimination is reported against people on government income support, who have a disability, have small children or are single parents; and this strongly reflects the experience of many people that Anglicare agencies assist.

Australia lags far behind comparable countries in giving renters proper rights, including the option of longer leases, the right to have pets and reasonably alter a property to make it a home. It is essential that such rights are recognised and guaranteed no matter where you are in the country. Making renting fairer, more stable and more flexible is an essential part of ensuring every person in Australia has a home.

Policy Recommendations

Ensure everyone has a home

For eight years now our Rental Affordability Snapshot has demonstrated the failure of the private market to provide shelter, let alone a home, to the ~2.5 million Australians on low incomes. It is time for governments to pick up this fundamental responsibility again, and redirect public investment towards providing homes for those on low incomes.

Anglicare has previously given detailed recommendations on measures to increase the availability of public and community housing[20]. In summary the key actions needed are:

- Adopt a housing first approach to ending homelessness.
- Increase funding for public housing and community housing by rebooting the National Affordable Housing Agreement, radically increasing transparency so its goals can be tracked and are delivered.

[19] CHOICE, National Shelter and NATO (2017), Unsettled: Life in Australia's Private Rental Market
[20] Anglicare Australia (2016), Affordable Housing Position Statement, Anglicare Australia, Canberra.

- Create a National Affordable Housing Finance Corporation, modelled on the successful UK entity, to leverage government guarantees and bond aggregation for more investment in community and affordable housing.

- Wind back negative gearing and capital gains tax exemptions, and redirect funds saved into public and community housing.

Ensure everyone can make a home where they live

People cannot make where they rent a home if they can be evicted with little notice and no cause, can't ask for things that break to be repaired without facing demands for higher rent, can't have a pet, hang pictures, or have the flexibility to deal with changing life circumstances.

There is also a strong need to ensure that new housing reflects the fact that our population is changing. We need more housing options for single people, people with a disability, the aged, people with cultural and family responsibilities, and those looking for cooperative models. Funding community housing that works with people to ensure the houses that are built will be actual homes for them (because they reflect their life circumstances) is a vital part of the solution.

Key actions needed:

- Implement a national renter's rights plan that delivers consistent and fair renting conditions for all Australians.

- Fund co-designed community housing options that ensure affordable and appropriate homes that fit everyone's needs.

- Include public and community housing in urban renewal and new development.

Ending the poverty trap

For eight years now the Rental Affordability Snapshot has shown that government income payments- Newstart, Youth Allowance, the Disability Support and Aged Pensions – are no longer a safety net, they are a poverty trap. They are so low that people cannot afford to pay for their most basic needs, but must instead trade them off – rent or food; rent or medical needs; rent or transport to work.

It will take years to fix the lack of public and community housing for people on low incomes. It is therefore all the more urgent to increase government income payments to that of a living wage. Given the growing pressures on people on the minimum wage, little wonder there is currently a formal claim to raise it before the Fair Work Commission.

It is beyond the scope of this Snapshot to properly interrogate the complexities and challenges in providing more secure and decently paid employment for the many Australians missing out; however our 2016 Jobs Availability Snapshot[21] does provide insight and recommendations on this issue.

[21] Anglicare Australia, 2016. Evidence base for State of the Family 2016: The lived experience of jobseekers, Canberra.

Key actions needed:

- Establish an independent commission to set indexed and adequate government income support that takes account of people's differing circumstances.
- Lift the minimum wage to a living wage.
- Increase and amend Commonwealth Rent Assistance to ensure it reflects rent levels in different markets.
- Increase public investment in enterprises that create secure work and are responsive to community and employee needs.

Conclusion

The 2017 Rental Affordability Snapshot shows for most people living on a low income in Australia, they may have shelter or accommodation but there is almost nothing available on the market that could be a place to call home.

The wealth of home is inestimable and fundamental. The lack of public and community housing combined with an affordable, inadequate and unsuitable supply of housing in the private rental market shows us that profound change to our values, as a nation, are needed if that wealth of home can really be extended, as it should rightly be, to all.

Anglicare Australia is tasked by our network to influence social and economic policy with a strong prophetic voice, informed by research and their practical experience, and speaking out for those in our community most disadvantaged. For eight years we have done this on the issue of rental stress through the Rental Affordability Snapshot, and every year the picture has remained grim, or gotten even worse.

Surely, now with such strong recognition of the level of crisis, we can look forward to a different and better story to tell for low income Australians when we complete the 9th Snapshot next year. The evidence of the need to act, who needs to be helped most urgently to have a home, and the solutions that will work, have never been more clear.

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.

Snapshot: Anglicare North Queensland — Cairns region

Introduction

Anglicare North Queensland Limited (ANQL) provides a range of services and programs that support and strengthen local communities within the North and Far North Queensland Regions. The provision of services extends from Cairns, south to Mackay, north to the Cape and west to Mount Isa. For the purposes of this Snapshot the analysis of available rental properties relate to the Cairns Regional Government Area (Cooktown to Innisfail).

The 2011 Census reported that Cairns had a population of 224,436 people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represented 10.3% (QLD 3.6% Aus. 2.5%) of the population. The median age of the population was 37 years of age. Just over half of the population (58.6%) were in full time employment with an unemployment rate of 7% (QLD 6.1% Aus. 5.6%). The most common occupations in Cairns included Professionals 16.0%, Technicians and Trade Workers 15.9%, Clerical and Administrative Workers 13.3%, Managers 12.5% and Labourers 11.8%. It is important to note that Cairns has a youth unemployment rate of 20.5% (Australia's Youth Unemployment Hotspots Snapshot, March 2016).

The following homelessness services are offered by Anglicare NQ in Cairns:

- Cairns Homelessness Services Hub
- Cairns HomeStay Support Service
- Cairns Integrated Crisis Accommodation Service (Quigley Street Night Shelter).
- St Margaret's House (Crisis accommodation for young women).
- St John's House (Crisis accommodation for young men).

Findings

On Snapshot weekend, 746 properties were advertised for rent in the Cairns region. The results of the findings follow:

- A couple with two children on the minimum wage with FTB part A had the highest number of properties available – 178 properties (24%) of properties advertised.
- A couple on the Age Pension - 47 properties (6%) of properties advertised.
- A single person on the minimum wage - 11 properties (1%) of properties advertised.
- A couple with two children with one parent on the minimum wage and one parent receiving parenting payment partnered, FTB A&B – 34 properties (5%) advertised with all available properties meeting the criteria of being affordable and appropriate.

A single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance has no properties available to them that are either affordable or appropriate. For a single parent on Parenting Payment Single, of the 746 properties available only 6 properties were affordable and appropriate. For people on a disability support pension, only 5 were available.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Cairns region, 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)	1	0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	1	0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	56	8%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	6	1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	5	1%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	5	1%
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)	197	27%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	15	2%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	13	2%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	37	5%
	Total No of Properties	727		

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)
56	209

Discussion

The Snapshot highlights very little change from the 2016 Snapshot in terms of the statistics relating to affordable and appropriate household type. The findings indicate that approximately 6.3% of advertised properties were available (47 properties) to households on income support and approximately 25% of the advertised properties (188 properties) were available to households on a minimum wage.

The 2017 Snapshot reveals 72 fewer properties listed from the previous Snapshot in 2016 and again 61 properties down from 2015. Cairns is experiencing a housing shortage overall, and a gradual decrease in available private rental stock more specifically.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot for the Cairns Regional Government Area for 2017 evidences three key issues:

- The rental market is priced beyond the means for household types with income less than that of a couple with two children, where both adults earn the minimum wage and are in receipt of FTB (A).
- The Snapshot evidences a consistent decline in available properties for rent. This is certain to be putting even more downward pressure on household types with low incomes in Cairns.
- There is insufficient social housing stock within the Cairns Regional Government Area.

Policy Implications

The findings indicate a decrease in rental properties available to low income earners, properties are unaffordable and out of reach and there is insufficient public housing available.

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

- Increase the level of Commonwealth Government income support, for household types that are unable to access the private rental market, to a level that allows all households types to access the private rental market that are not able to access social housing.
- Increase the level of available social housing stock so as to meet the needs of all household types within the Cairns Regional Government Area.
- The reduced pool of available private rental stock implies a population growth. It is necessary to find a means to increase the level of affordable private rental stock on the rental market for the Cairns greater region.

Conclusion

The Snapshot's findings highlight the lack of affordable and appropriate advertised rental properties available for all household types, most notably for singles and for single parent family unit types. With insufficient social housing stock to meet the needs of all household types and the unaffordability of the private rental market, it is clear that social policy must respond through a combination of increasing the level of social housing available through all three levels of government and the level of income support provided to society's most vulnerable groups in order to eliminate homelessness.

Snapshot: Anglicare Central Queensland

Introduction

Central Queensland's diverse communities range from major population centres to isolated outback towns, each with their own unique set of housing affordability challenges. The region's economy revolves around industries such as mining, gas and associated fields, tourism, agriculture and beef production.

Anglicare Central Queensland services a 570,000 square kilometre region extending from the Capricorn Coast right across the state to the Northern Territory border. The agency's services cover foster care and child protection, community services including youth, disability and mental health programs, and a housing portfolio of more than 600 properties. These properties range from short-term crisis accommodation for families who are homeless or otherwise in urgent need of a safe place to stay, to long term family homes leased through the National Rental Affordability Scheme. AnglicareCQ manages housing in Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast, Gladstone and surrounding communities including Tannum Sands and Calliope, the Central Highlands communities of Emerald and Blackwater, and Barcaldine, Longreach and Winton in the state's west.

Findings

On the 1st April 2017, 1421 private rentals were advertised for rent in Central Queensland. Private rentals were surveyed from newspapers and 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:

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

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Central Queensland, 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)	252	18%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	170	12%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	404	28%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	216	15%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	61	4%
6	Single	Age Pension	104	7%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	104	7%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	4	0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	2	0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	2	0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	587	41%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	421	30%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	176	12%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	509	36%
	Total No of Properties	1421		

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)
483	709

Discussion

Compared to 2016, Central Queensland has seen an increase in the number of households on income support payments, which is likely due to a downturn in the region's mining industry with flow-on effects to local businesses and therefore increased unemployment.

The snapshot also found 362 less properties available than in the same communities last year, which may reflect a removal of properties from the rental market as part of population changes in response to the decline in the local economy.

However there has been little change in the number of appropriate and affordable rental properties for people on government income payments. Further there has been a significant decline of as much as 20% in the number of suitable properties for couples with children where both or one of the adults is on the minimum wage. However these households still have more properties available overall, and the change may reflect the lower number of properties to rent.

Policy Implications

Central Queensland's changing economic fortunes demonstrate that reliance on changes in the private market to make properties more affordable for people on low incomes are not sufficient, and social housing is essential to ensure everyone has a home. There is a particular need for an increase in the number of homes especially for single people who are reliant on government income.

AnglicareCQ also supports for a mix of housing to meet the diverse needs of the Central Queensland Community. There is a need to examine the communities need for accessible and appropriate housing that is sensitive to the needs and lives of those who live here.

Conclusion

On the 1st April 2017 1421 private rentals were advertised for rent through online sources in three Central Queensland communities surveyed: Rockhampton, Gladstone and Emerald.

Local results show that the decline in local economic circumstances has not increased the amount of affordable and appropriate accommodation; particularly for those reliant on government incomes. Central Queensland, as a whole, needs a reliable supply of social housing to ensure that all of the community has a safe, suitable place to call home.

Snapshot: Anglicare Southern Queensland — Brisbane Metro

Introduction

With a workforce of more than 2,000 people across residential aged care, community care and social services programs, Anglicare Southern Queensland (Anglicare SQ) serves disadvantaged members of the community through a range of social and community welfare activities. These include nursing care and domestic assistance in the home, physiotherapy, 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, parental education and counselling, and pastoral care. We also offer a range of specialist services within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, homeless, multicultural and rural and remote communities.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot assesses the private rental market to determine rental affordability for low income households. Anglicare SQ has contributed to the annual national Snapshot since 2010. This year, Anglicare SQ evaluated 8,423 online rental advertisements for 202 suburbs in metropolitan Brisbane. The rental advertisements were sourced from the property website realestate.com.au, and relate to house, townhouse and unit vacancies as well as a small number of embedded share accommodation advertisements. The advertisements were listed on the Snapshot weekend (1 April 2017).

Findings

The Brisbane private rental market continued to expand (by nearly 1,000 listings) between 2016 and 2017. Advertised rents fell in Brisbane over the past 12 months by $15 per week on average. Yet despite these two findings, rental affordability remained largely unchanged for low income households in Brisbane. 99 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress. 1,157 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Only households with at least two minimum wages can afford to rent from the Brisbane private rental market without placing themselves into undue financial stress. Table 2 shows 1,032 rental properties were affordable and appropriate for a family of four earning two minimum incomes. This number represents 12% of the total (8,423) rental property listings in 2017.

With minor exceptions, all other low income households (families, couples and singles) need to spend considerably more than 30% of their weekly household income to rent from the Brisbane private rental market.

Low income earners continue to face significant rental stress if they have to rely on the private rental market in Brisbane. This is especially true for low income earners reliant on government allowances.

- Three bedroom properties are generally considered appropriate for a family of two adults and two children. The median advertised rent for a three bedroom property in Brisbane in 2017 was $440 per week (see Table 3). A couple with two children on Newstart Allowance would need to spend 55% of their household income for a rent of $440 per week (see Table 1 below).

- For a two bedroom property in Brisbane in 2017, the median advertised rent was $400 per week. A rent of $400 per week would absorb 64% of household income for a single parent with one child receiving the Parenting Payment. If the child is 8 years or older and the single parent is on Newstart Allowance (rather than the Parenting Payment), a weekly rent of $400 would consume more than three quarters (76%) of their household income.

- In 2017 the median advertised rent for a one bedroom property in Brisbane was $350 per week. A single person earning the minimum wage would have to spend 59% of their weekly income to rent a one bedroom property at $350 per week. A weekly rent of $350 would cost a single person on the aged or disability pension 70% of their household income.

- The median advertised rent for a room in a share rental (embedded in the general realestate.com.au rental listings) was $165 per week in Brisbane in 2017. A single person on Newstart would need to spend more than half (58%) of their weekly income to pay a $165 weekly rent. Students are more disadvantaged still, as a shared rental rate of $165 per week represents 70% of the Youth Allowance.

Consequently, low income earners who must rely on the Brisbane private rental market will have little disposable income left after paying rent.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, metropolitan Brisbane, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate[22]	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate	Property Size/Type	Percentage Median Rent of Household Income
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	6	0%	3 bedroom	55%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	1	0%	3 bedroom	62%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	34	0%	1 bedroom	49%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	1	0%	2 bedroom	64%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0%	2 bedroom	76%
6	Single	Age Pension	61	1%	1 bedroom	70%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0%	1 bedroom	70%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0%	Shared rental	58%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0%	1 bedroom	>100%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0%	Shared rental	70%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	1,032	12%	3 bedroom	32%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A&B	27	0%	3 bedroom	46%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	126	1%	1 bedroom	59%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	52	1%	3 bedroom	41%
	Total No of Properties	**8,423**				

[22] A rental property may be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type. Therefore, summing the counts in Table 1 will not equal the total number of (unique) counts presented below.

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)
99	1,157

Discussion

Metropolitan Brisbane has experienced substantial property development over the past five years. Urban dwelling infill has proceeded apace and in accordance with the Brisbane City Plan 2014 and the South-East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031.[23] Table 3 reveals 8,423 residential properties were advertised for rent on realestate.com.au in 2017. This was almost 4,000 more rental advertisements than in 2012 (4,527) (see Table 2). It reflects a near doubling of the number of rentals advertised on realestate.com over the past five years.

Rental properties in Brisbane Inner City (comprising the suburbs of Brisbane City, Fortitude Valley, New Farm, Kangaroo Point and South Brisbane) continued to dominate the private rental market in metropolitan Brisbane (3,485 advertisements) in 2017 (see Table 2). They represented 41% of total advertisements on the Snapshot weekend.

Table 2: Comparison of number of rental advertisements by region, 2017 to 2012

Region	Number of Rental advertisements			
	2017	2016	2015	2012
Brisbane - East	712	732	647	494
Brisbane - North	1,308	997	922	677
Brisbane - South	1,918	1,610	1,356	989
Brisbane - West	1,000	796	806	898
Brisbane Inner City	3,485	3,345	2,631	1,469
Brisbane Metro	**8,423**	**7,480**	**6,362**	**4,527**

However, recent development activities have extended beyond the inner city to a 5–10 kilometre radius around the CBD. Between 2017 and 2016, rental advertisements grew more (in absolute and proportional terms) in Brisbane's northern, southern and western suburbs. There were many more advertised rental properties in the dormitory suburbs of Chermside and Nundah (Brisbane North); Coorparoo, Greenslopes and Woolloongabba (Brisbane South); St Lucia, Sherwood and

23 Brisbane City Council (2015) "Our well-designed subtropical city", *BCC* website, 4 April 2017. At: www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/about-council/governance-strategy/vision-strategy/brisbane-vision/our-well-designed-subtropical-city

Taringa (Brisbane West); and Kelvin Grove, Lutwyche and Toowong (Brisbane Inner City). For example, the number of rental advertisements in Brisbane North in 2017 (1,308) exceeded those in 2016 (997) by 311 advertisements (see Table 2 above). The growth in rental stock encompassed houses, townhouses, apartments and one-bedroom studios.

Conversely, in 2017 there was a modest decline in rental advertisements in Brisbane's Eastern suburbs (712 advertisements in 2017, compared to 732 in 2016). The 2017 Snapshot suggests this may be due to a growing number of residential properties being converted to short-term holiday rentals, especially in the bayside suburbs and on the bay islands. This finding directly impacts low income renters. Traditionally the Moreton Bay Islands were a reliable source of low cost rental accommodation. It is a further illustration of the progressive gentrification of the Brisbane property market.

Overall, advertised rents in metropolitan Brisbane fell by $15 per week on average between 2017 and 2016. This is the first time Anglicare SQ has observed a decline in median rents in the 8 years we have been evaluating the Brisbane rental market.

Table 3: Comparison of median advertised rents by accommodation type and property size, 2017 to 2012

Accommodation type /property size	Median weekly rent			
	2017	2016	2015	2012
House/Townhouse	$450	$460	$460	$435
Unit/Flat/Apartment	$400	$420	$400	$380
Shared Rental (embedded)	$165	$180	$160	$175
One bedroom[1]	$350	$370	$355	$300
Two bedroom	$400	$410	$400	$375
Three bedroom	$440	$450	$445	$420
Four bedroom	$530	$540	$548	$530
Five bedrooms or more	$695	$730	$695	$700
Brisbane Metro	**$425**	**$440**	**$430**	**$400**

[1] *excludes embedded share rentals, medians calculated separately*

Median advertised rents fell across all accommodation types and property sizes (see Table 3 above). For example, the median rent for a one bedroom property declined (by $20 per week) to $350 per week in 2017 (from $370 per week in 2016). For two bedroom properties, the median advertised rent dropped (by $10 per week) to $400 per week in 2017.

Despite the marginally lower rental prices, rental affordability remained largely unchanged for low income households in Brisbane in 2017. With the exception of two minimum-income households, low income households need to spend considerably more than 30% of their weekly household income to rent from the Brisbane private rental market (refer Table 1 above).

Policy Implications

The Queensland Government has recently completed state-wide consultations on a discussion paper, *Working together for better housing and sustainable communities*,[24] intended to inform a 10-year Housing Strategy which will aim to "provide safe, secure and affordable housing options for all Queenslanders", and include "well-lit pathways between their housing options".

It is clear from the submissions to the Queensland Government consultation, and from our own findings, that those pathways are currently far from well-lit, with barriers at every phase of the journey for those on low incomes. Queenslanders overwhelmingly (75%) identified the state's stock of social housing as too low (3.6% in comparison to a national average of 4.5%);[25] and the Anglicare SQ findings above demonstrate that almost all low income households need to spend far in excess of 30% of their weekly household income to rent from the Brisbane private rental market. The bridge into home ownership is clearly also a shaky one, with low income renters having limited capacity to save for a home deposit. People are thus locked out of the choice of home ownership and potentially into a long term rental poverty trap.

The growth in the rental market evident in this year's Snapshot, even with a modest decrease in median rent, is unlikely to alleviate the housing challenges faced by low income Queenslanders. Nor is it likely that they will be able to take advantage of the increased "bargaining power with landlords" mooted by 'industry experts' in recent media: "Renters may be able to name their price, get rent-free weeks when signing a new lease, and change the terms of their lease" as vacancy rates rise.[26] In fact, a recent national report, *Unsettled: Life in Australia's Private Rental Market*, details the fears many tenants face when seeking rights as simple as requesting repairs or maintenance, including concerns that the rent would be increased (42%), and fear of eviction (23%) or blacklisting (14%).[27]

Such fears are related to competition for affordable rental housing and low supply. In Queensland, 35.6% of households are renters compared to the national average of 31% (ABS, 2015); and we have the highest percentage of renting households of any state or territory in the country except for the Northern Territory. Tenants Queensland Inc notes this figure is set to increase, with population growth of 10.7% predicted to 2021 (ABS, 2011) and declining home ownership affordability.[28] The difficulties are compounded in circumstances of particular need, such as where low income is accompanied by additional challenges.

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24 Queensland Government (2016). *Working Together for Better Housing and Sustainable Communities Discussion Paper*. Department of Housing and Public Works, March. At: www.hpw.qld.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/HousingDiscussionPaper.pdf

25 Queensland Government (2016). *Housing Strategy Consultation Summary*. Department of Housing and Public Works, Dec. p. 11. At: www.hpw.qld.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/HousingStrategyConsultationReport.pdf

26 Malo, Jim (2016). 'Brisbane's rental market tipped to favour tenants as vacancy rate rises'. 11 Dec. Domain website. At: www.domain.com.au/news/brisbanes-rental-market-tipped-to-favour-tenants-as-vacancy-rate-rises-20161209-gt7qj1

27 CHOICE, National Shelter and National Association of Tenant Organisations (NATO) (2017). *Unsettled: Life in Australia's Private Rental Market*. Feb., p. 16. At: www.shelter.org.au/sites/natshelter/files/public/documents/The%20Australian%20Rental%20Market%20Report%20Final%20Web.pdf

28 Tenants Queensland Inc. 2016. *Response to the Housing Strategy Discussion Paper*, p. 3. At: tenantsqld.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/TQ-Response-to-the-Housing-Discussion-PaperFINAL.pdf

The vulnerable include seniors, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with a disability, people experiencing a mental health issue, families escaping domestic and family violence, people impacted by drug and alcohol use, young people transitioning from care, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people exiting custody, returned services people and people with pets.[29]

The policy implications at both federal and state level are multi-pronged, and require a holistic view across the whole housing spectrum, from homelessness and social housing through to affordable rental and home ownership.

There is a continuing and pressing need to address income inadequacy (particularly the rates of Newstart and Youth Allowance) as a barrier to secure housing and meaningful social participation. Policy solutions that reduce overall budgetary pressures in low income rental households need to be urgently addressed — for example, helping to reduce spiralling energy costs for tenants by the development of minimum energy efficiency standards for rental housing.[30]

Barriers to affordable home ownership need to be tackled as a matter of priority. The 2016 Queensland Government Housing Strategy consultation identified a range of potential policy approaches to improve housing affordability (such as shared equity, rent-to-buy, incentives based programs, and inclusionary zoning). A detailed evaluation of these proposals is needed expeditiously, in close consultation with local government, stakeholder organisations and tenants. 'A well-lit pathway' to home ownership requires an achievable end point.

Conclusion

Many real estate industry commentators are expressing concern about the oversupply of inner city Brisbane apartments, and the resulting impact on purchase prices and rental returns for investors.[31] At the same time, eight years of monitoring the Brisbane market via the Snapshot has demonstrated that even a 'glut' of rental accommodation[32] has little real effect on the availability of properties that are both affordable and appropriate for families and individuals on low incomes. This group is increasingly struggling to find entry points to the market either as buyers or renters.

With projections for the Brisbane local government area to reach nearly 1.5 million people over the next 20 years, from a current population of 1.2 million,[33] the issue of affordability will become ever more pressing. It requires urgent action at both state and federal level to ensure that the pathway to safe, secure and affordable housing is indeed 'well lit'.

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29 Queensland Government (2016). *Housing Strategy Consultation Summary*. Op. cit., p. 13.

30 See for example, Tenants Queensland Inc. 2016. *Response to the Housing Strategy Discussion Paper*. Op. cit., p 22.

31 eg Malo, J. (2017). "Brisbane apartment oversupply: rents predicted to fall 10% this year". Domain website, 5 April. At: www.domain.com.au/news/brisbane-apartment-oversupply-rents-predicted-to-fall-10-this-year-20170405-gvdxoh; also Blucher, A. (2016). "Slowdown in Brisbane apartment building 'too late' to stop price falls from oversupply, expert says", ABC News (online), 28 Aug. At: www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-28/brisbane-apartment-slowdown-will-be-too-late-to-stop-price-fall/7792206

32 Blucher, A. (2016), ibid.

33 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). 'Projected population, by local government area, Queensland, 2011 to 2036' (medium series). At: www.qgso.qld.gov.au/subjects/demography/population-projections/tables/proj-pop-lga-qld/index.php.

Snapshot: Anglicare North Coast – North Coast of NSW

Introduction

Anglicare North Coast covers a broad demographic area, stretching from Port Macquarie in the south to Tweed Heads in the north. Within this area, we have several larger regional cities, but also large rural areas, with smaller networks of towns which assist in meeting housing demand. Whilst the larger urban areas are relatively well serviced in terms of infrastructure and services, residents outside of those areas face additional barriers to accessing services, employment and housing.

As stated in previous years, the North Coast is economically disadvantaged when compared to both the NSW average and the national average. Levels of unemployment remain high, with longer than average disengagement from the work force and an overall lower median household income. In fact, recent research by Conus Business Consultancy Services indicated that Grafton and Coffs Harbour have the highest rate of unemployment in NSW.

We have higher levels of households over 60yrs old, single parent households and single person households. Compared to an Indigenous population of 2.5% (NSW) and 2.3% (Australia), the North Coast has an Indigenous population of 4.1%. Typically, Indigenous households face further barriers and discrimination when trying to access housing.

In the last year, work has begun on the major upgrade of the Pacific Highway in this region, in particular the Far North Coast. On one hand, this is bringing work to the area but on the other, clients who access our services report increased competition for housing. Clients have stated to us that they believe that incoming workers are being preferenced as they potentially will pay substantially more rent during the next few years until the road works move away from the region.

Anglicare North Coast offers a range of services: Community Housing, Migrant Services, Partners in Recovery, Financial Counselling Problem Gambling, Disaster Recovery and Emergency Relief welfare provision.

Findings

On the weekend of 1-2 April, 795 private rentals were advertised for rent in 9 separate locations across the North Coast of NSW. Private rentals were surveyed using 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:

- 21 (3%) individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 165 (21%) individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, North Coast of NSW, 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)	1	0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	1	0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	21	3%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	2	0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	3	0%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	3	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)	162	20%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	7	1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	4	1%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	37	5%
	Total No of Properties	795		

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)
21	165

	Availability of affordable and appropriate rental properties, Broken down by regions in the nsw north coast of nsw, and by household type									
	Regions surveyed	**Ballina**	**Byron Bay**	**Casino**	**Clarence Valley**	**Coffs Harbour**	**Kempsey**	**Lismore**	**Port Macquarie**	**Tweed Heads**
TOTAL COUNT		**68**	**63**	**34**	**138**	**155**	**31**	**58**	**176**	**72**
Household Type	**Couple, 2 children Newstart**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1 (2%)**	**0**	**0**
	Single, 2 children, Parenting Payment	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1 (2%)**	**0**	**0**
	Couple, Age Pension	**1 (1%)**	**0**	**5 (15%)**	**3 (2%)**	**4(3%)**	**2 (6%)**	**2 (3%)**	**3 (2%)**	**0**
	Single, 1 child, Parenting Payment	**0**	**0**	**1 (3%)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1 (2%)**	**0**	**0**
	Single, 1 child, Newstart	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Single, Age pension	**0**	**0**	**1 (3%)**	**0**	**1 (1%)**	**0**	**0**	**1 (1%)**	**0**
	Single, 21 +, Disability	**0**	**0**	**1 (3%)**	**0**	**1 (1%)**	**0**	**0**	**1(1%)**	**0**

	Support Pension									
	Single, Newstart	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Single, 18 +, Youth Allowance	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Single (sharing), Youth Allowance	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Couple, 2 children, Min wage, FTB A&B	**1 (1%)**	**0**	**20 (59%)**	**35 (25%)**	**49 (32%)**	**6(9%)**	**9 (33%)**	**28 (19%)**	**4 (6%)**
	Single, 2 children, Min wage, FTB A&B	**0**	**0**	**2 (6%)**	**1 (10%)**	**1 (1%)**	**0**	**3 (5%)**	**0**	**0**
	Single, Min wage	**0**	**0**	**1(3%)**	**0**	**1 (1%)**	**0**	**0**	**1 (1%)**	**0**
	Couple, 2 children, Min wage, Parenting Partnered FTB A&B	**0**	**0**	**15 (44%)**	**14 (10%)**	**2 (1%)**	**0**	**6 (10%)**	**0**	**0**

Regional Variations

- Ballina, Byron Bay and Tweed Heads consistently remain inaccessible to any of the demographic groups included in this survey. Housing in these areas, which represents nearly 20% of all properties counted on the day, is realistically only affordable to those earning above the minimum wage.

- Since 2014, despite the number of properties available for rent remaining broadly the same or rising on the day of the data collection, across our region we have seen a general, consistent decline of affordable and appropriate housing across all demographics used in this research. The Clarence Valley, in particular this year, saw a marked decline in all categories.

- Single person households, out of the 795 properties counted, would find only 15 (2%) affordable and appropriate.

- Only 2 (0.25%) properties across the entire region were affordable to single parent families in receipt of Newstart or Single Parenting Pension. If the household was earning the minimum wage that figure rose to 7 out of 795, barely 1%

Discussion

Once again, single person households have the worst access to housing across the region surveyed. In most areas, any single household in receipt of a Centrelink benefit cannot access affordable accommodation in the private rental market. Although single person households on the Age Pension, Disability Support Pension and Parenting Pension can access housing, it is only a tiny percentage of houses and only in three or four of the areas surveyed.

It also worth noting that the North Coast has close to 20% single parent households, compared to 16% state-wide. This is a significant demographic, when you consider the scarcity of housing for single parent families on the Parenting Pension and the consistent lack, year after year, of any affordable appropriate housing for single parent families, where the parent claims Newstart.

Those in receipt of Newstart and Youth Allowance cannot afford any housing in the private rental market on the North Coast, a finding which is repeated every year of this research.

Rental property numbers continue to rise but those considered affordable and appropriate for those in the highest income bracket in this survey continue to fall which points to rental increases which are not matched by benefit or wage rises. In addition, major upgrades to the roads continue to have an impact across the region with the influx of road workers. We have clients reporting to us that there is increased competition for properties and there is a wide held belief that tenants are being given termination notices in order for workers to move in and pay higher rents. This belief is potentially borne out by the following advertisement in a local paper:

'LANDLORDS' "Top Tenant's" "Top Rent's"
Please read this.. We need properties Urgently.
Do you want great long term tenants paying top rent?
Is your property vacant? Or tenanted, but feel you should be getting better rent of (more reliable tenants?)
CALL NOW! We need properties to accommodate all the New Workers and Managers (lots of them) for the construction of the "New Bridge" and "Correctional Centre", Note: (properties with current tenants still needed for late arrival workers).. all types of accommodation will be required (Grafton and surrounding areas).
We need to supply a list of properties for the contractors by mid April, so, if you have a rental property, or know someone else who does?
WE NEED YOUR PROPERTY NOW!!
PROPERTY OWNERS.. WANT TO SELL??
Please read this.. With all the Workers and Managers coming to Grafton for the construction of the "New Bridge" and new "Correctional Centre" we have investors looking for properties to "Buy Right Now"... (Grafton and surrounding areas), all price ranges..
If you are thinking of selling, can't sell or even know someone else in this situation, please "Call Now!"
No obligation, just a chat to see if we can "Help You!"
...WE NEED PROPERTIES NOW...

Recent research indicated that Grafton and Coffs Harbour have the highest levels of unemployment in NSW, further underscoring the region's status as being in a low socio-economic bracket. Despite the road works being carried out in the area, road crews are often brought in by the construction companies from outside the area and what other work there is, is typically clustered around casual, insecure employment in hospitality, retail and social care. Given that the majority of properties considered affordable and appropriate are only accessible to those people who are in employment, it paints a bleak housing picture for the local population.

Transport remains a burdensome cost across the region. Public transport is minimal, with most residents relying daily on cars to access schools, work and other appointments. This imposes an extra, unavoidable cost for North Coast residents, further restricting their budgets.

Policy Implications

Lack of affordable housing across entire region

- There is a lack of affordable rental properties right across the region surveyed, with our research indicating decreasing levels of availability;

- The available stock does not meet the demographics of the region, with few properties available that are affordable for small households, particularly single person households and single parent families, both of which are over represented in our region compared to state and national levels;

- Homelessness and unaffordable housing can ultimately lead to persons affected suffering a range of detrimental issues, such as financial crises, mental health issues and family breakdown, which ultimately may require costly, government funded interventions.

Impact of major infrastructure works, such as the as the Pacific Highway upgrade

- We noted in previous years that the Pacific Highway upgrade had an impact on the availability of affordable properties in Coffs Harbour; we now note that the problem has moved further north, with a definite impact noted in the Clarence Valley in this year's research. Whilst such works may only impact for 1- 2 years, the situation can have a very harmful effect in that time.

Policy response

State and Federal Governments need to urgently develop policies and strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing, through both an increase in social housing and by harnessing private sector expertise and financing options. Further, the impact on housing demand for low income persons should be considered as part of the planning for major infrastructure works.

Conclusion

This research paints a very disappointing and grim picture for any low income persons in our region who are in need of an affordable rental property. Major infrastructure works continue to severely impact the cost of rent and availability of properties.

We believe that basic, affordable housing is a right for all members of our communities and the impact on those who are homeless or living in unaffordable rental accommodation can be very detrimental, leading to an increase in the demand for other services, such as mental health, financial counselling, emergency relief and family support. Both state and federal governments need to work together to develop a comprehensive plan to address this serious social issue.

Snapshot: Anglicare Northern Inland – Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell and Moree NSW

Introduction

Anglicare Northern Inland (ANI) provides professional, confidential counselling for individuals, couples, adolescents, children and families. Also on offer is a wide range of training in many valuable Life Skills areas.

Our services are available to all members of the community regardless of religious belief, or ability to pay. These services are provided across the Northern Statistical Division of NSW; a rural regional area that includes the major centres of Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell and Moree.

The region encompasses all the Snapshot household types with people living on income support payments comprising between a quarter and one third of each region's population. ANI provides service to all who present with an emphasis on providing support to the more vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community through the following:

- Counselling: individual, relational, family, gambling and financial issues;
- Education: family relationship education and skills training, financial management, anger management;
- Indigenous Community: family safety program, dedicated counselling, men's and women's healing programs, financial management, anger management program;
- Community support: Partners in Recovery program and Hope for Life teenage pregnancy support program.

Findings

On the weekend of 1 -2 April 2017, 436 private rentals were advertised for rent across the northern regions of New South Wales: Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell and Moree. Of the private rentals listed, there were:

- 91 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;
- 247 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Northern Inland Service Areas, 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)	112	3%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	82	2%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	85	19%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	44	5%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	15	1%
6	Single	Age Pension	26	6%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	26	6%
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)	380	49%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	176	9%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	37	8%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	248	22%
	Total No of Properties	436		

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)
91	2475

Discussion

The findings above show that while the average rent in the region has fallen to around $310 per week, making more properties affordable for those on minimum wages, people living in the Northern regions of NSW on income support payments are still priced out, with very few properties available and suitable. Housing costs exacerbate the issues that many households already experience, such as debt repayments and under or unemployment.

Employment in and around the major centres is predominantly available in those traditionally lower-paid sectors of agriculture, retail, and health care and social assistance. While some areas are experiencing a net population drain, others are experiencing a net gain. Both trends have impacts on the availability of jobs and thereby the capacity of households to absorb higher housing costs.

In particular, whilst ANI works with a broad range of households, the groups most affected would be those engaged with ANI programs with a particular focus on:

- The Indigenous community;
- People experiencing financial stress because of unemployment, low income and high debt levels;
- People experiencing mental health issues.

Policy Implications

The capacity to earn a sufficient income to cover the basic costs of living and to provide housing without undue housing stress is stretched to the extremes in the face of low employment opportunities.

In this regard, a core policy focus should be addressing the barriers to affordable housing that exist due to inadequate income support payments.

Further, that the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) payment which seeks to aid housing affordability should be reviewed and reformed to keep pace with the changing costs relating to housing.

Finally, that policy mechanisms to support and revitalise the employment opportunities in rural Australia are revisited.

Conclusion

The small improvement in housing affordability in the Northern Inland region reflects changing employment opportunities and shifts in population. However for some groups, rental stress and the lack of affordable housing is entrenched, particularly for those relying on income support. From the experience of ANI, Indigenous communities and those experiencing mental ill-health are some of the hardest hit in these areas. The level of income support payments and the effectiveness of the CRA in improving housing affordability must be addressed. Polices to revitalise rural economies should also be considered.

Snapshot: The Samaritans Foundation – Central Coast, Hunter, Great Lakes & Taree

Introduction

Samaritans 2017 Rental Affordability Snapshot reports on rental properties advertised across several major NSW regions on 1st April 2017- Central Coast, the Hunter, Great Lakes and Taree. The regions span a total area of 40,000 sq kms with a combined total population of 1,057,193 (ABS 2015).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the major Snapshot regions

Area	Population*	Unemployed Population*	Income Support Recipients*
Central Coast	333,119	5.3%	32.7%
Newcastle & Lake Macquarie	370,945	5.7%	41.4%
Hunter Incl. Port Stephens	267,314	4.7%	44.6%
Great Lakes	36,720	6%	58.4%
Taree	49,095	6%	61.3%

* ABS Regional profile data 2015 *Dept of Employment Labour Market Portal * ABS 2015 Selected Income Benefits

Samaritans Foundation provides support to low-income incomes throughout the Central Coast, Hunter, Great Lakes and Taree through:

- Accommodation and support for homeless youth in the Newcastle, Hunter, Great Lakes and Taree regions
- Emergency relief services
- Youth and family support services
- Disability support services
- Out of Home Care (OOHC) programs and related support services

Findings

On 1st April 2017, 3,283 rental properties were advertised across the Central Coast, Newcastle, Hunter, Great Lakes and Taree regions. This number represents a small increase of 2.4% on last year's snapshot. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one income type, any individual property can only be rented out by one income type at any time. To this end, we found that:

- 304 individual properties were suitable for at least one income type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress. This is 14.2% more properties (38) that last year.

- 1109 individual properties were suitable for at least one income type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress. This is a 3.4% decrease (38 less properties) on last year's snapshot.

Table 2: Rental Affordability, Central Coast, Hunter, Great Lakes & Taree, 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)	30	1%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	21	1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	152	5%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	20	1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	5	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	178	5%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	35	1%
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)	815	25%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	95	3%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	301	9%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	190	6%
	Total No of Properties	3283		

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)
304	1109

Single People

Out of the total 3,283 properties, there were no affordable or appropriate properties for a single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance even in shared accommodation.

A single person on minimum wage could find a suitable rental property only in Newcastle, Taree or the Upper Hunter but very little elsewhere.

Single Parents and Single Aged Pensioners

Single parents on Newstart or Parenting Payment Single with one child would not find an affordable or appropriate rental property in most of the Snapshot region. There were only 5 properties in Newcastle and 15 properties in the Upper Hunter for this income type.

Newcastle had the largest amount of properties for a single Aged Pensioner (167). All other areas had either no properties or a very small number for this income type.

Families receiving income support

Families on the minimum wage had a significantly greater amount of properties for rent than all the other income types. 25% (815) of all rental properties in the snapshot were affordable and appropriate for couples with 2 children on the minimum wage and receiving Family Tax A Benefit.

However, this amount was an 8% decrease on amount of affordable and appropriate properties available for this income type in 2016.

Older people, and people with disabilities

Couples on the aged pension had a small number of properties affordable and appropriate in each region, with the highest amount of properties reported in Newcastle (71), the Upper Hunter (40), and Maitland (14).

People on a Disability Support Pension would find the largest number of properties for rent in the Newcastle area (27) and little or no properties throughout the rest of the snapshot region.

Discussion

The Snapshot highlights that despite the small increase on last year of the amount of properties for rent, there has been either no change or a slight decrease of affordable and appropriate properties for the majority of income types throughout this snapshot region.

Singles receiving an aged pension and singles on the minimum wage reported an small increase of suitable properties (3% – 5%). However these increases were reported only in Newcastle and could be attributed to an increased number of shared accommodation properties advertised.

However, for young people on Newstart, Youth Allowance, or the Disability Support Pension there are no rental properties affordable or appropriate across the total snapshot region – a situation that remains unchanged year after year.

Despite a slight increase in advertised properties in the Central Coast region, the rental market is still very grim, with no suitable properties for most income types. Similarly the Great Lakes and Taree regions which have higher unemployment have no rental properties for most income types.

The economy of the Hunter region reported strong growth for December 2016 quarter[34], with improved business confidence and strong job growth. The mining downturn has eased which is reflected in a decrease in the amount of rental properties advertised in Hunter Valley rural hubs.

Policy Implications

Many people in the Central Coast, Hunter, Great Lakes and Taree regions are struggling to find a suitable, affordable place to call home.

The findings of the Rental Snapshot for the Central Coast, Hunter Great Lakes and Taree highlight the lack of affordable and appropriate advertised rental properties available for all income types, especially for singles and single parent families.

With almost half of this snapshot region on some form of income support, it is imperative that all levels of government work together to devise a realistic social policy that will sustain well into the future, providing increased levels of social housing and eliminating homelessness for the most vulnerable in our society.

Conclusion

Samaritans Emergency Relief Centres have assisted 16,758 people across the snapshot footprint since January 2016 to present. Among the main support of food and food vouchers, are referrals to Financial Counsellors for more intensive/ financial support and payments for utilities. In addition, 50 applications have been processed for brokerage funds for rental arrears.

Samaritans Special Homelessness Services listed housing affordability stress in the top three reasons for people seeking support during 2016.

Homelessness and mental health problems caused by rental housing stress will continue to grow unless there is a widespread, realistic solution by government to address the supply of social housing.

[34] Hunter Research Foundation

Snapshot: Anglicare NSW South, West & ACT - Central West NSW

Introduction

The Central West, Far West and Orana comprise a large regional and rural area of NSW. Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo and Broken Hill are the major service centres, accounting for approximately half the area's population of around 330,000.

The economy of the regional area is strengthened through a range of industry sectors including agriculture, mining and manufacturing as well as education and healthcare. Manufacturing plays a more significant role in the Central West than it does for NSW as a whole.

Charles Sturt University campuses are located in Bathurst and Orange and several TAFE Western campuses provide education opportunities. In the 2011 Census, the highest post school qualification held was most commonly a Certificate III or IV. The sector is also supported by the National Logistics Hub in Parkes and the intermodal facilities in Blayney and Bathurst.

Unemployment in the Far West is close to national levels at 5.2%. However, youth unemployment is particularly high at 19.4%. The Central West region has a lesser disparity between low unemployment of 4.8% and youth unemployment of 13.1% (LMIP, February 2017).

Housing prices are significantly cheaper in the Western region than those in metropolitan centres. The median weekly rent for a 2-bedroom house in the Central West (including Bathurst, Dubbo and Mudgee) is $265-280 per week.

Major trends that affect the region include an ageing population, a shift to urban and coastal living, declining national productivity, accelerated global market integration and climate change.

Anglicare Western NSW supports low income households in Western NSW in the following ways:

- No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)
- A new Survive to Thrive Hub located in Orange, supporting families with young children
- Out-of-Home Care
- Community and parish based emergency relief programs

Findings

On the weekend of 1-2 April, 836 private rentals were advertised for rent in the Central West, Far West and Orana regions of NSW. Private rentals were surveyed from online sources[35]. While a

[35] In 2016, a data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection that we used before 2015, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

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:

- 230 individual properties, including rooms in shared houses where appropriate, were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.

- 550 individual properties, including rooms in shared houses where appropriate, were suitable for at least one household type living on the minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

While there were a considerable number of affordable options for low-waged households, some household types reliant on income support had very few rentals to select from, and some of the affordable properties were located in isolated areas which may not have been a reasonable option for that household type. There was little change between the 2016 and 2017 snapshot over this region; despite a 28% decrease in properties advertised, the percentage of properties accessible to the household types analysed remained very similar.

There were no affordable and appropriate options for any single person reliant on Youth Allowance, even in shared accommodation. There was only one place affordable to a person on Newstart, which was a share house in Cowra.

Most family types with a Centrelink income had a number of options in this market. However, only 2 properties found were affordable to single parent families whose only income was Newstart Allowance and Family Tax Benefit. The condition, location, and proximity to essential services of the more affordable options are likely to have been quite variable.

A small number of properties were found for people living on the Aged or Disability Pension. Approximately half of those affordable to single people were in shared housing, which in many cases would not be appropriate for people eligible for these payments. Additionally, some of these were in small regional towns which may have lacked the support, health or public transport infrastructure needed by elderly people or those with disabilities.

A reasonable proportion of properties was affordable and appropriate to families with one or two minimum wage incomes. Again, the condition, location, and proximity to essential services of the more affordable options are likely to have been quite variable.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Western NSW, 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)	86	10%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	53	6%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	172	21%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	57	7%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	2	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	49	6%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	24	3%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	1	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)	465	56%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	161	19%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	93	11%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	274	33%
	Total No of Properties	836		

On the Snapshot weekend, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
230	550

Discussion

The results of the snapshot show that families receiving income support and earning the minimum wage have a larger variety of options in this market compared to other regions of NSW. However, a large number of these properties are in distant regional areas where employment, essential services and public transport may not be easily accessible. 2017 results are very similar to the results for 2016. More than 50% of properties are suitable and affordable to a family with 2 minimum wage incomes, and even single parent families receiving Parenting Payment and two parent families receiving Newstart have a number of options, although it is likely that many of these are still in inaccessible or poorly serviced areas. However, single parents reliant on the Newstart Allowance still have very few options in this market.

Single income households are again very disadvantaged in this market, with no options for young people receiving Youth Allowance, a single property affordable to someone on Newstart Allowance, 3% for people receiving Disability Support Pension (DSP), and 6% of the market suitable for a single older person living on the Age Pension. The discrepancy between DSP and Age Pension recipients relates to the methodology, and indicates that half of the properties deemed suitable for Age Pension recipients are share houses – which may or may not be a practical option. Local services note that affordable options for older people are frequently under-serviced and inaccessible to public transport and support systems, compromising their ability to age in place at their home.

As a provider of out-of-home care services to young people without family support, Anglicare is particularly concerned about the impact on young people of the expensive private rental market. More options need to be provided for young people leaving foster, kinship or residential care to transition to independence in a safe, affordable environment well-linked to support services and opportunities for education, training and employment.

The Orange region has seen an impact of the mining downturn in terms of a decline in new businesses opening, which may affect the availability of jobs. The effect on the economy of changes to the mining industry is complex, as fly-in/fly-out work arrangements mean that many high-income workers do not spend much of their money in the region they work, or conversely, can cause prices to increase to a level that excludes people employed in other sectors. Another factor impacting on construction and housing development is a current shortage of tradespeople in certain fields, increasing prices for services and delaying projects.

Other groups experiencing difficulties and discrimination in the private rental market in the Central and Far West areas are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and single parents. They may be forced to rent in the far more remote areas outside of the town centres which then compromises their access to community, social and medical support services. Overcrowded dwellings are also an issue in Western NSW, representing one of the top five reasons for people seeking emergency accommodation.

Policy Implications

Although waged households have access to affordable housing in this region, a number of vulnerable household types would experience considerable difficulty in finding appropriate, affordable housing within reach of needed services and transport links to the community. In order for our region to be inclusive of all of its residents, policies which continue to promote the increase of rental prices need to be modified and incentives to provide lower cost, appropriate accommodation for low income families and individuals must be provided.

Messages for the NSW Government

Government investment in social housing and affordable housing options, as well as providing incentives for non-government investors to increase the supply of affordable housing, will be required to address the disparity between subsidised accommodation and the unaffordable private market. A continuation of the current program to upgrade dilapidated social housing properties is crucial to improve the utility of existing housing stock and ensure quality of life and sustainable lifestyle for the residents.

While there are more affordable options in Western NSW than in metropolitan areas, the lack of public transport available between more regional areas and even within regional hubs mean that affordable accommodation can mean isolation or heavy reliance on a personal vehicle. The cost of fuel in regional and remote areas often significantly exceeds that in the cities. Good public transport arrangements in and between regional centres is essential to promote social inclusion and access to community infrastructure for low income households.

One of the most vulnerable populations experiencing exclusion from the housing market is young people in care. Anglicare Western NSW's main activity is foster care and residential care for children and young people in statutory care. Findings from the Swinburne University of Technology's study 'The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia' reveal that almost two-thirds of homeless youth had spent time in state care. This demonstrates the need for a major government review at a policy and systems level if we are to break the cycle of disadvantage experienced by this cohort of youth. Currently, there is no ongoing financial support provided to carers once their foster children turn 18, which can make it difficult for young people to remain at their home. As Anglicare Victoria's *Home Stretch* campaign highlights, providing young people in care the opportunity to be supported for longer if they wish needs to be discussed as a potential solution, as well as a more sustainable, gradual and supported transition from care into affordable, safe independent housing when young people are ready to move on. The NSW government's current roll-out of a program supporting young people leaving care to maintain stable housing is encouraging and we look forward to its implementation in the Central West area.

There are few options in the private rental market for people reliant on pensions, especially older people and people with disabilities who live alone. Not only do these groups require affordable accommodation, but it needs to be safe and appropriate to their needs and well-linked to community and health resources. Elderly people living alone also may need to live in particular areas to receive family support or provide it, for example to a partner in an aged care facility or providing care to grandchildren, and their ability to drive may be limited. Similarly, people with disabilities often would not have the option of moving away from support systems, or would struggle to maintain wellbeing and quality of life if they moved to an isolated area in search of affordable housing. Supply of social housing appropriate for people with special needs must be increased across regional NSW.

Housing NSW waiting periods

Across NSW, the waiting period to access a Housing NSW property is significant. Low income households who cannot afford the cost of rent in their area may spend many years on waiting lists falling deeper into poverty and social exclusion. In Western NSW, estimated wait times for Housing NSW properties are:

- Bathurst: 5-10 years (all property types)
- Cowra: 2-5 years (1, 2 or 4 bedroom properties), up to 2 years (3 bedroom properties)
- Dubbo: 5-10 years (all property types)
- Orange: 5-10 years (1-3 bedroom properties), up to 2 years (4 bedroom properties)
- Parkes: 2-5 years (1, 2 & 4 bedroom properties), up to 2 years (3 bedroom properties)

Messages for the Federal Government

At the Federal Government level, it is important that current tax concessions including Negative Gearing and Capital Gains Tax exemptions are examined to ensure they are supporting equity in the housing market and not creating an unfair advantage for any group of taxpayers. Income inequality is also driving housing stress for households reliant on government benefits, which have not kept pace with the increases in the cost of living, particularly with regard to housing. Both of these issues are discussed in greater detail in the overarching National report.

Conclusion

Although affordable housing may be more readily available in rural parts of NSW, it is not always appropriate. The consequences of a housing shortage have long-term effects which impact on a range of government services, as they attempt to address poor educational outcomes for children and the breakdown of families and relationships.

The current rental market is beyond the affordable price range of people on income support. The level of income received by people on benefits is only sufficient to pay for extremely cheap accommodation, which simply does not exist. For households trying to make ends meet without at least two minimum wage incomes, affordable and appropriate rental housing in the Central West, Far West and Orana region is difficult to find.

Snapshot: Anglicare Sydney – Greater Sydney and the Illawarra

Introduction

Anglicare Sydney's Rental Affordability Snapshot covers Greater Sydney[36] and the Illawarra Region (including Shoalhaven and the Southern Highlands)[37]. The aim of the snapshot is to highlight issues of affordability and appropriateness for people looking for rental accommodation on low incomes.

According to the 2011 Census, there were around 1.6 million households in Sydney (including Central Coast) and 160,000 in the Illawarra and surrounds – collectively accounting for about two-thirds (67%) of households in NSW. Almost a third of households in Sydney (30%) and about a quarter of households in the Illawarra (26%) were renting their home. In 2011, the 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 Region, and in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven Statistical Area ($896 per week). However, some aspects of household expenditure were also higher in Greater Sydney than in the Illawarra and surrounds, including rentals and mortgage repayments. .

Findings

On the Snapshot weekend, **13,447** private rentals were advertised for rent in Greater Sydney and the Illawarra. Private rentals were surveyed from realestate.com.au. 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:

- **26** unique properties were affordable and appropriate for people living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress. The majority of these properties were located in Greater Sydney (n=21 properties) with the remainder located the Illawarra (n=5)

- **625** unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on the minimum wage without placing them in housing stress. The majority of these properties were located in Greater Sydney (n=524), with the remainder in the Illawarra (n=101)

Among households receiving income support payments, couples on the Aged Pension had the largest number of affordable and appropriate properties available to them across Sydney and the Illawarra (n=18), followed by single people on the Aged Pension (n=8). No suitable properties were found for households living on the Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance, or Disability Support Pension. Results reveal that some Minimum Wage earners had a greater chance of obtaining housing without being under rental stress. Prospects were best for couple families where both partners earned the Minimum Wage (n=602), followed by families with two children where one partner was earning the Minimum Wage and the other partner was receiving the Parenting Payment (n=26), and single persons earning the Minimum Wage (n=23).

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[36] Greater Sydney is here defined as the Sydney Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA).

[37] The Illawarra Region is here defined as the Illawarra Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4), plus the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven SA4. Anglicare Sydney has also prepared an extended report focusing on this region, including the Central Coast of NSW. Central Coast data has been excluded from this summary as it is included in the Samaritans Foundation section. The full Anglicare Sydney report can be downloaded at www.anglicare.org.au

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Greater Sydney and the Illawarra, 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	18	Less than 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	8	Less than 1%
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)	602	4%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	1	Less than 1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	23	Less than 1%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	26	Less than 1%
	Total No. of Properties	13,447		

On the Snapshot weekend, these were the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
26	**625**

The online classifieds website Gumtree (gumtree.com.au) is another source of housing for single persons. An indicative search of 'Flatshare/Houseshare' listings for the Sydney Region[38] revealed that at face value, there were around 700 share-houses that were affordable for single people on the Minimum Wage. In the 'Wollongong' and 'South Coast' regions, there were less than 50 affordable options for single people on the Minimum Wage. No analysis of suitability has been conducted on these share-houses, with many advertisements seeking a person of a particular gender, race, religion, etc.

Discussion

Within Greater Sydney, most affordable and appropriate rental properties for households dependent upon income support payments were in the Outer Ring (n=11), at least 20km from the Sydney CBD. Of the remaining properties, 4 were in the Middle Ring (5-20km from CBD) and 6 were in the Inner Ring (within 5km of the CBD). However, these suitable properties in the Middle or Inner Ring were only affordable and appropriate for households receiving the Aged Pension. Within the Illawarra Region, all such properties were located in the Shoalhaven (n=5). This result confirms that rather than being a solution to Sydney's lack of suitable housing, the Illawarra also faces its own critical lack of affordable and appropriate housing.

For couples with two children, where both partners earn the minimum wage, the vast majority of affordable and appropriate rental properties were in the Outer Ring (n=492). Within Greater Sydney, only 11 suitable properties were identified in the Middle Ring and none in the Inner Ring. A further 99 suitable properties were available in the Illawarra Region. However, disturbingly, there were very few suitable properties across Greater Sydney and the Illawarra for a couple with children where only one of the partners was earning the minimum wage (n=26) or for a single parent earning the minimum wage (n=1). This shows that unaffordable rentals and, hence, situations of rental stress are the norm for any household where there is only one, minimum wage income.

Policy Implications

The issue of rental affordability facing thousands of Greater Sydney and Illawarra residents requires an urgent and long-term commitment to improve affordability from all levels of government, community and business sectors.

[38] Gumtree regions used

On a national level, housing affordability must be addressed by a Cabinet portfolio and with funding for the re-establishment of an independent housing specialist entity to gather and analyse data on housing supply and demand in Australia. All levels of government need to commit to long-term agreements such as the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, with strategies and funding commitment for at least five years. The Federal Government needs to work with all levels of government to commit to a formal five-year plan with numerical targets to increase the supply of social and affordable housing. Recipients of Newstart and Commonwealth Rent Assistance desperately need increased income support to help prevent them entering rental stress in the Greater Sydney and Illawarra area.

On a state level, attention must be directed to the social housing crisis. With over 60,000 approved applicants for social housing waiting on the NSW Housing Register and many low income households in extreme rental stress in the private rental market, immediate action must be taken to increase the supply and availability of social housing.

Snapshot: Anglicare NSW South, West & ACT – South East NSW

Introduction

The population of this region is approximately 220,000 (ABS 2013) and 3% have an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, many of whom live in the South Coast area. While the South Coast's fastest growing demographic is people aged 55 and over, the Southern Tablelands is growing fastest in the 15-24 age group. Major regional hubs in this area include Goulburn, Batemans Bay, Bega, Yass, and Queanbeyan[39].

South-Eastern NSW has a relatively low unemployment rate of 4.4%, with youth unemployment higher at 10.0% (LMIP February 2017). Many young people move away to metropolitan areas, citing lack of opportunities for work and study, particularly from the South Coast area. The population on average is older; the average age in the region is 43 compared to Australia's average of 37.

A major population driver in the Capital Region is the housing affordability crisis in the ACT. At least 10% of Canberra workers live in nearby NSW, and workers in Queanbeyan, Palerang and Yass Valley areas are more likely to be employed in the ACT than in their own LGA[40]. To a lesser extent, towns further away including Goulburn and Cooma are home to ACT workers. Some NSW resident ACT workers also elect to live in the region for lifestyle benefits such as larger blocks/acreage.

Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT provides support to low-income households in South-Eastern NSW through

- Housing services and homelessness support in the South Coast, Goulburn and Yass regions
- Emergency relief assistance
- Youth and family support services
- Disability support services
- Out-of-Home Care programs and related support services

Findings

On the weekend of 1-2 April, 525 private rentals and shared living arrangements were advertised for rent in South-Eastern NSW. 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.

[39] Queanbeyan is also included in the ACT/Queanbeyan report, since its housing market interacts closely with that of the ACT.
[40] http://www.sgsep.com.au/publications/capital-region-growth-canberra-leaking-over-border

To this end, we found that:

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

While there were a reasonable number of affordable options for low-waged households, households reliant on income support had very few rentals to select from. However, despite a decrease in available properties since 2016, there was a 7% increase in affordable options in this region.

There were no affordable and appropriate options for any single person reliant on Youth Allowance, even in shared accommodation. A small bedsitter in Young was the only property affordable to a single Newstart recipient.

A small proportion of properties in South-Eastern NSW were affordable to couple or single parent families receiving income support. There was only one place affordable to single parent families whose only income was Newstart Allowance and Family Tax Benefit.

A small number of properties were found for people living on the Aged or Disability Pension, several of which were in shared housing which in many cases would not be appropriate to people eligible for these payments. Additionally, some of these were in small regional towns which may have lacked the support, health or public transport infrastructure needed by elderly people or those with disabilities.

A small proportion of properties was affordable and appropriate to families with one or two minimum wage incomes, with 9% affordable to single parents with a minimum wage income and 36% affordable to a family with two minimum wage incomes. However, the condition, location, and proximity to essential services of the more affordable options are likely to have been quite variable.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, South-Eastern NSW, 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)	11	2%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	3	1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	56	11%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	14	3%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	1	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	20	4%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	9	2%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	1	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)	190	36%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	48	9%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	42	8%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	90	17%
	Total No of Properties	525		

On the Snapshot weekend, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
75	231

Discussion

The Capital Region has considerable diversity within its area in terms of industry and socio-economic disadvantage. While the major affordability issues in Canberra and Queanbeyan continue to have an effect on the broader Capital Region as people seek cheaper housing outside the capital, the coastal towns experience different seasonal pressures. As the ACT report found, a total absence of affordable accommodation for several household types including single parent households and single individuals means that low-income and even low-waged households can only find affordable accommodation in towns outside the ACT.

As a major Out-of-Home Care provider in this region, a significant concern for Anglicare was the total lack of options for young people reliant on Youth Allowance. Young people who have left Out-of-Home Care are at particular disadvantage in their early years of independence, especially with regard to finding and maintaining stable housing. The absence of any affordable accommodation for single people living on Youth Allowance or Newstart Allowance means that young care leavers pursuing further education or seeking work are at particular risk of financial disadvantage, particularly in light of high rates of unemployment in the 15-19 year old age group, and the fact that young people leaving OOHC at 18 are likely to still be completing post-school training or even high school.

Discrimination and limitations for low-income and disadvantaged households

In a context where there is a very limited supply of affordably priced housing, competition between prospective tenants is high. As a result, landlords can pick and choose the tenant they prefer, leaving single parent families, Centrelink-supported households, Indigenous households, young people and people with disabilities facing repeated rejections, owing to discriminatory perceptions about these groups being less desirable tenants.

Households whose incomes are derived from Centrelink benefits are often unable to move to regions where housing is more affordable. Those required to look for work as part of their Centrelink obligations risk losing their benefits for up to 6 months if they move to a town with significantly worse unemployment, even if they do so in search of affordable housing. The relatively high employment rates and housing costs of towns close to the ACT means households in this situation could be trapped in an unaffordable area.

Seasonal issues in the South Coast area

A large number of properties for rent in the South Coast area are only available for short-term holiday rentals, which distort the housing supply issues faced by the area. While there may be a large number of houses, many are not available to long-term tenants, leaving a shortage for permanent residents of the area and resulting in higher prices. In some ways this mimics the situation in major cities, where efforts to increase housing supply are undermined by investment properties being left unoccupied for long periods of time.

Policy Implications

Although waged households have access to affordable housing in this region, a number of vulnerable household types would experience considerable difficulty in finding appropriate, affordable housing within reach of needed services and transport links to the community. In order for our region to be inclusive of all of its residents, policies which continue to promote the increase of rental prices need to be modified and incentives to provide lower cost, appropriate accommodation for low income families and individuals must be provided.

Messages for the NSW Government

There is a need to increase supply of housing across NSW, both in total and with regard to the NSW Government's social housing portfolio. Ever-increasing private rental costs put pressure on social housing, meaning that in some regions the expected waiting time for housing exceeds 10 years.

Young people transitioning from Out-of-Home Care at age 18 need more options to rent affordable, safe accommodation with access to the supports they need. Providing young people in care the opportunity to remain in care longer if they wish needs to be discussed as a potential solution, as the *Home Stretch* campaign advocates, while a more sustainable, gradual and supported transition from care into affordable, safe independent housing is vital for when young people are ready to move on. The NSW government's current roll-out of a program supporting young people leaving care to maintain stable housing is encouraging and we look forward to its implementation in the Capital Region area.

South-East NSW's population is older overall, yet there are few options in the private rental market for people reliant on the Age Pension, particularly single people. Not only do older people require affordable accommodation but it needs to be safe and appropriate to their needs and well-linked to community and health resources. Older people living alone also may need to live in particular areas to receive family support or provide it, for example to a partner in an aged care facility or providing care to grandchildren, and their ability to drive may be limited. Supply of social housing appropriate for older people needs to be increased across regional NSW.

The close interaction between the ACT and surrounding NSW means that governments must work in partnership to provide infrastructure for those who travel between the two. Public transport links, particularly between Queanbeyan and Canberra, are vital and must be continually supported and made affordable for low-income commuters.

Social Housing wait times in South-East NSW

Across NSW, the waiting period to access a Housing NSW property is significant. Low income households who cannot afford the cost of rent in their area may spend many years on waiting lists falling deeper into poverty and social exclusion. In South-East NSW, estimated wait times for Housing NSW properties are:

- Goulburn: 5-10 years (1 or 3 bedroom properties), 10+ years (2 bedroom properties) or 2-5 years (4 bedroom properties)
- Yass: 5-10 years (1, 3 or 4 bedroom properties) or 2-5 years (2 bedroom properties)
- Bateman's Bay: 5-10 years (3 bedroom properties) or 10+ years (1, 2 or 4 bedroom properties)

- Moruya: 10+ years (1 bedroom properties), 5-10 years (2 bedroom properties) or 2-5 years (3 or 4 bedroom properties)

- Queanbeyan: 5-10 years (1, 2 or 3 bedroom properties) or 2-5 years (4 bedroom properties)

Messages for the Federal Government

At the Federal Government level, it is important that current tax concessions including Negative Gearing and Capital Gains Tax exemptions are examined to ensure they are supporting equity in the housing market. Income inequality is also driving housing stress for households reliant on government benefits, which have not kept pace with increases in the cost of living, particularly with regard to housing. Both of these issues are discussed in greater detail in the overarching National report.

Conclusion

The private rental market in South-East NSW has 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, single aged pensioners, single parents, disability pensioners, unemployed people and families, and students have virtually no access to appropriate and affordable housing.

Snapshot: Anglicare NSW South, West & ACT - ACT and Queanbeyan, NSW

Introduction

The absence of affordable housing in the ACT means that a significant number of people commute from nearby Queanbeyan and other southern NSW towns, since the ACT population is almost entirely urban and suburban. The population of Canberra is 398,000 (approx.) and a further 42,000 (approx.) in Queanbeyan (ABS 2016), giving a total of about 440,000 people. Around 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). Approximately 40% of this region's workforce is employed in the public sector. The ACT also enjoys relatively low unemployment of 3.8% although youth unemployment is 10.0% (LMIP February 2017). The result of such high public sector employment and relatively low unemployment is that the region's residents have, on average, a larger amount of disposable income than the Australian population more generally.

Combined with an insufficient supply of housing, higher average disposable incomes also results in upward pressures on rental prices and developers favouring more expensive housing projects. Higher income households have the capital necessary to make negative gearing investments, resulting in higher prices overall for housing and increased difficulty for lower income households in entering the property market. This results in a group of households who otherwise would purchase homes continuing to rent, increasing the pressure on the private rental market.

While Queanbeyan was once known as the cheaper option for people working in the ACT, its popularity has meant that low income earners are also unable to cope with rents in this city. The added costs of expensive public transport over the border, or needing to run a personal vehicle, increase the difficulties for low income families. As shown below, people employed in lower paid industries or reliant on Centrelink benefits have next to no options aside from share housing.

Anglicare ACT supports low income households in Canberra and Queanbeyan by:

- Supporting young people at risk of homelessness in supported housing programs
- Supporting young people to remain engaged in their education and transition to the workforce
- Providing disability support services
- Recycled clothing, emergency relief and other food assistance programs
- Providing subsidised rental units for aged pensioners
- Supporting at-risk young families to access subsidised early childhood education and care

Findings

On the weekend of 1-2 April, 1,280 private rentals were advertised for rent in ACT and Queanbeyan. Private rentals and shared houses were surveyed from online sources[41]. 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:

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

While there was an overall decrease in the number of properties advertised in 2017 compared to 2016, the percentage of properties affordable and appropriate remained similarly low across most household types. One notable exception was that the steep decline in dwellings suitable for a family with 2 minimum wage incomes and requiring 3 bedrooms has continued over the past 2 years, from 7.2% of properties advertised in 2015 and 6.8% of properties in 2016 to 2.3% of properties advertised in 2017. This clearly indicates that the minimum wage is not keeping up with the housing costs of living in the ACT or Queanbeyan.

Aside from a small number of dwellings affordable to Aged Pensioner households, there were only two appropriate housing options affordable to any household which derived its income from a Centrelink benefit. Of particular concern to Anglicare was the lack of any affordable rental options for young people on Youth Allowance, Newstart Allowance recipients, Disability Support Pension recipients, or Parenting Payment (single) recipients.

Young people reliant on income support had no affordable options in this market, even in shared accommodation. This is a significant issue especially as proposed Centrelink policy changes extend the age for Youth Allowance to age 24. The underlying assumption that young people can rely on family support until they are financially secure enough to afford rent is highly problematic to many Anglicare clients who experience abusive or unstable family backgrounds, and in particular, young people leaving the Out of Home Care system at age 18.

Single parents, even those working full-time in a low-paid job, similarly lacked affordable options in this market; while they had a slightly larger budget, the requirement for more than one bedroom meant that across the ACT and Queanbeyan, there were no affordable and appropriate settings in which the children could grow with privacy and independence. Low-income single parents negotiating custody arrangements would find this choice between affordability and appropriateness of their dwelling a further disadvantage.

The 24 properties which were affordable to single aged pensioners were, with the exception of a granny flat and an apartment in Queanbeyan, all rooms in shared houses. In many cases this would not be appropriate for an older person, and similarly would not be an arrangement of choice for the other housemates. This reinforces the increasing community awareness of homelessness affecting single older women. There were 16 properties considered affordable and appropriate options for couples on the Aged Pension, and most were located in Queanbeyan.

[41] ACT and Queanbeyan data was sourced from Allhomes.com.au. Share housing was sourced from Allhomes.com.au and Gumtree.com.au.

This is a slight reduction from 2016 when 19 properties were considered appropriate and affordable.

Only 51, or 4.0% of the properties advertised on the Snapshot weekend were affordable and appropriate to single minimum wage earners, and the vast majority of these were in shared accommodation arrangements. The variability of informal shared accommodation advertisements makes it difficult to compare between years. As usual, most non-shared accommodation options that did exist were located in Queanbeyan, making it more likely that the cost of running a vehicle would need to be added to their budget.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, ACT & Queanbeyan, 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	0.0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	16	1.3%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	24	1.9%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	2	0.2%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	29	2.3%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	0	0.0%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	51	4.0%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	1	0.1%
	Total No of Properties	1280		

On the Snapshot weekend, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
38	80

Discussion

As an organisation which aims to support children, young people and families, a major concern for Anglicare is the difficulty vulnerable young adults are likely to experience in this market as a result of inadequate government supports, exclusion from the workforce, and unaffordable housing. Without access to stable housing, young people face difficulties in completing education as well as finding and sustaining workforce participation, further excluding them from opportunities and stability into the future. Of particular concern is the lack of support for young people who reach the age of 18 after spending their youth in Out-of-Home Care, although the ACT Government should be commended for their planned scheme supporting young people to remain in their placement if needed until the age of 21. Nevertheless, young people who are continuing their studies or looking for work in their early twenties are only eligible for Youth Allowance, which year after year has proved insufficient for any affordable accommodation options in the ACT or Queanbeyan market, even in share housing. For young people combining part time work and study, or in the early stages of their career and in a low-skilled job or apprenticeship, rental costs are likely to have a significant impact on their finances and ability to participate in their community. Young people are also at risk of experiencing discrimination, especially if they are supported by Centrelink payments.

Meanwhile, continuing an ongoing trend from previous years, it is particularly concerning that so few properties are affordable even for households with a minimum wage income. While a small proportion of properties (2.3%, or 29 properties) were found for families with two full-time minimum wage incomes, zero properties were 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; most of the 51 dwellings we found affordable to this group were shared houses.

More broadly, these figures do not indicate the level of competition for any affordable option. Rental applicants may find themselves up against many other applicants for a property or a room in a house. This means that a landlord can select from a large group of applicants and people with lower incomes, disabilities or other characteristics are often overlooked. Unfortunately, this can mask other forms of discrimination too, including racism, homophobia, ageism and ableism, meaning that people already facing a number of barriers to participating in society have difficulty securing housing as well.[42]

Further, for those people where a shared accommodation option is appropriate, any number of factors may impact the household's selection of housemate. In the Rental Affordability Snapshot, share houses which explicitly specified characteristics of their desired housemate (gender, employment status etc) were excluded as 'conditional' accommodation. However, as the selection is a personal matter, it is likely that some people will be disadvantaged in finding appropriate share accommodation options.

[42] See for example: https://www.tuv.org.au/articles/files/housing_statistics/Position_Paper_Improving_access.pdf;

While Canberra and Queanbeyan have seen a large number of new developments built over recent years, rental affordability for the most disadvantaged groups has not yet seen any noticeable difference. Market forces such as these have reduced median rents in the Territory by a small amount over the past years; however, there has been little change to the lowest-priced end of the market. It is possible that factors affecting the market such as negative gearing tax deductions may take away the imperative to have an investment property occupied for it to continue to have financial benefit to the owner, meaning that dropping the price to a level that a lower income household could afford is unnecessary. Larger capital cities are seeing many thousands of properties sitting empty over the long term, undermining efforts to increase housing supply and having no benefit to the city's residents.

Policy Implications

The consistent lack of affordable housing in the ACT and Queanbeyan areas indicates significant structural issues in the local housing market and broader economy. In order for our region to be inclusive of all of its residents, policies which continue to promote the increase of rental prices need to be modified and incentives to provide lower cost, appropriate accommodation for low income families and individuals must be provided.

Messages for the ACT Government

At the Territory level, the ACT needs a whole of government commitment to address homelessness. Every government portfolio needs to recognise the effects of unaffordable housing, from financial stress and exclusion to crisis and homelessness, on every aspect of life for many Canberra families. ACTCOSS is calling for each ACT Directorate to respond to this by allocating one percent of its budget towards housing services.

Housing supply continues to lag behind community demand, with the exception of some types of housing which do not closely match the needs of the community. Land release in greenfields developments must be accompanied by strong public transport links and infrastructure, and must include options for a range of household incomes. Creative reuse of existing built spaces is another option, provided it is appropriate.

Government investment in social housing and affordable housing options, as well as providing incentives for non-government investors to increase the supply of affordable housing, will be required to address the disparity between subsidised accommodation and the unaffordable private market. Bridging this gap would also enable a smoother transition for social housing tenants into the private market when appropriate, and provide options other than government housing for those in housing crisis.

The ACT might consider initiatives that leverage the private market and community goodwill such as Melbourne's Homeground real estate agent, which manages properties to let at below market rates and can arrange tax deductions for the landlord's imputed donation. However, even properties provided at 75% market rates (one definition of affordable housing) are out of reach of households such as those in the Snapshot[43]. Other factors which impact disadvantaged families' access to the rental market such as discrimination (or simply competition) might also be addressed through supportive real estate agents or incentives. Again, this opportunity to bridge the gap between social housing and the private market would take pressure off government housing waiting times.

[43] As shown for example in National Shelter's (2015) Rental Affordability Index http://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/RAI-Release-Report-Final-231115.pdf

Social Housing in the ACT & Queanbeyan

- ACT: average housing wait times are 288 days (priority), 716 days (high needs) or 848 days (standard)
- Queanbeyan: 5-10 years (1, 2 or 3 bedroom properties) or 2-5 years (4 bedroom properties)

Messages for the Federal Government

At the Federal Government level, it is important that current tax concessions including Negative Gearing and Capital Gains Tax exemptions are examined to ensure they are supporting equity in the housing market and not creating an unfair advantage for any group of taxpayers. Proposed adjustments to this policy include focusing it on increasing supply of new housing and/or targeting the tax concession to properties offered at an affordable rate. Any change to tax policy around housing must even the playing field for first home buyers in comparison to property investors, which in turn would take potential home buyers out of the rental market and reduce the pressure on rental prices.

Income inequality is also driving housing stress for households reliant on government benefits. Centrelink benefits, including allowances, payments and the Commonwealth Rent Assistance supplement have not kept pace with the increases in the cost of living, particularly with regard to housing. The disproportionate relationship between housing costs and income support must be addressed for our more vulnerable members of society to participate to their greatest capacity, including having the greatest chance to enter or re-enter the workforce. It is particularly important for the Federal Government to note that low income families' housing affordability problems may be ameliorated but are not solved simply by entering the workforce; single parents in full time low paid work and receiving eligible family tax benefits are still unable to afford any rental properties in this area.

Conclusion

The private rental market in Canberra and Queanbeyan is extremely unaffordable for people 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. The highly vulnerable in our community, including young people without family support, people with disabilities, single parents, unemployed families and older people reliant on income support payments have next to no options in this market. The ACT Government needs to consider a range of options to reduce the affordability gap between highly subsidised government housing and very expensive private housing, potentially leveraging the private market to create more options, and ensure that potential homebuyers have options in order to leave the rental market.

Snapshot: Anglicare NSW South, West & ACT – Riverina NSW

Introduction

The Riverina is made up of urban, rural and rural-residential areas in the Murrumbidgee and Murray region with a population of nearly 300,000 people. The City of Wagga Wagga, Albury and Griffith are the major centres of the Riverina, home to approximately 63,000, 50,000 and 24,000 respectively. These centres are hubs for the provision of health, education, and other government services.

According to the 2011 Census, the median individual weekly income within the Riverina (Murrumbidgee SA4) region is $521, slightly lower than the NSW average. The Wagga Wagga LGA consists of around 25,000 private dwellings, with the current median weekly rental cost of $333 (house) or $227 (unit) which is relatively high for the region but below median for NSW excluding Sydney. The Riverina area has unemployment of 4.5% and youth unemployment 11.9%, while the Murray region further to the west has unemployment at 5.7% and youth unemployment 10.0% (LMIP February 2017).

The region has a strong education base with Charles Sturt University campuses located at Wagga Wagga and Albury, and TAFE NSW Riverina Institute in 12 different locations. The capacity to attract and retain skilled labour in the region continues to be a challenge especially considering the ageing population and migration of younger people aged 20-35 years.

Anglicare Riverina supports low income households in the Riverina in the following ways:

- Ashmont Community Resource Centre, including a new Survive to Thrive Hub located in Wagga Wagga, supporting families with young children
- No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)
- Community based emergency relief programs
- Child and Family support programs
- HIPPY parenting and early learning program

Findings

On the Snapshot weekend, 997 private rentals were advertised for rent in Riverina NSW. Private rentals were surveyed from realestate.com.au and shared housing was surveyed from gumtree.com.au. 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:

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

Overall, affordability was better in the Riverina/Murray region than many other areas of Australia, including regional locations. A higher prevalence of larger, detached housing options than found in metro areas meant that affordable houses were more likely to also be suitable for a family needing multiple bedrooms. As well, reliance on shared housing options was less pronounced here than in other regions, since individual units or houses were within the reach of more low income household types. There was very little change between 2016 and 2017; despite an 18% decrease in properties advertised, the percentage of properties accessible to the household types analysed remained very similar.

A small proportion of properties in the Riverina/Murray region was affordable to couple or single parent families with children receiving income support. Only 1% of the market (10 properties) was affordable and appropriate to single parent families whose only income was Newstart Allowance and Family Tax Benefit; however, most regions in Australia had nothing at all available for this household type.

Even in the relatively affordable market of the Riverina/Murray area, there were no properties affordable to any single person whose only income was derived from Youth Allowance, including in shared accommodation options. Two affordable options were available to a single person living on Newstart; one share house in Albury and a small flat in Deniliquin.

There was a reasonable variety of properties affordable and appropriate to families with one or two minimum wage incomes. However, the condition, location, and proximity to essential services of the more affordable options are likely to have been quite variable.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Riverina NSW, 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)	76	8%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	41	4%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	253	25%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	100	10%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	10	1%
6	Single	Age Pension	58	6%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	44	4%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	2	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)	502	50%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	193	19%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	123	12%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	336	34%
	Total No of Properties	997		

On the Snapshot weekend, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
299	621

Discussion

While there is more affordable housing available in rural locations, many of these options are located in areas with limited public transport or access to services. Households reliant on services for health (e.g. people with disabilities or older people) or families with children would encounter disadvantages and heavier reliance on personal vehicle transport resulting from the distance and isolation of many areas. Meanwhile, jobseekers reliant on Centrelink benefits may have restrictions on where they can move to. For example, moving to an area with worse unemployment might find cheaper accommodation but result in a six month suspension from income support.

Despite the overall greater accessibility of the rental market in the Riverina/Murray area, there were still zero affordable options for young people reliant on Youth Allowance, even in shared housing. As a provider of foster care and residential out-of-home care services in the region, Anglicare is committed to assist young people who turn 18 and become independent to find suitable, safe, affordable accommodation while they may still be studying, training or looking for work. The low rates of Youth Allowance young people receive make this already difficult process even more challenging for vulnerable young people reaching total independence at such an early age.

For families relying on income support, the proportion of affordable and appropriate rentals was greatest in areas away from the main population centres. Those within main centres like Wagga Wagga were located in known disadvantaged suburbs such as Ashmont. As an organisation delivering front line services such as emergency relief, there is an evident link between food insecurity and rental stress, which can be seen frequently at our Ashmont Community Resource Centre. It is also important to note that the figures do not indicate the level of competition for any affordable option. Rental applicants may find themselves competing against many other applicants for a property or a room in a house and there is anecdotal evidence that many landlords are more likely to choose a wage earner rather than a Centrelink recipient when given the choice. People with disabilities, those from diverse cultural backgrounds, and young people report experiencing discrimination which compounds the difficulty they experience in finding affordable accommodation.

Ageing government housing is also impacting several Riverina communities. Houses that are severely damaged in suburbs such as Mount Austin and Tolland have been boarded up by Housing NSW and removed from the availability lists in Wagga Wagga, and some ageing properties have been sold. However, there are encouraging projects under way providing wrap around services to social housing including family programs and transport, and funds raised from selling old housing stock has been reinvested to build 5 new properties in the region.

Policy Implications

Although waged households have access to affordable housing in this region, a number of vulnerable household types would experience considerable difficulty in finding appropriate, affordable housing within reach of needed services and transport links to the community. In order for our region to be inclusive of all of its residents, policies which continue to promote the increase of rental prices need to be modified and incentives to provide lower cost, appropriate accommodation for low income families and individuals must be provided.

Messages for the NSW Government

There is a need to increase the supply of housing across NSW, both in total and with regard to the NSW Government's social housing portfolio. Ever-increasing private rental costs put increasing pressure on social housing meaning that in some regions the expected waiting time for housing exceeds 10 years. The Riverina/Murray area is less heavily affected by long waiting periods than some, however the geographically dispersed nature of the region and low stock in small towns means that a person may face an extremely long wait or need to move out of the town where their family and social supports may reside to access government housing.

Government investment in social housing and affordable housing options, as well as providing incentives for non-government investors to increase the supply of affordable housing, will be required to address the disparity between subsidised accommodation and the unaffordable private market. A continuation of the current program to upgrade dilapidated social housing properties is crucial to improve the utility of existing housing stock and ensure a high quality of life and sustainable lifestyle for the residents.

One of the most vulnerable populations experiencing exclusion from the housing market is young people leaving care into independence. Anglicare Riverina's main activity is providing foster care and residential care for children and young people in statutory care. Findings from the Swinburne University of Technology's study 'The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia' revealed that almost two-thirds of homeless youth had spent time in state care. This demonstrates the need for a major government review at a policy and systems level if we are to break the cycle of disadvantage experienced by these vulnerable young people. There is no ongoing financial support provided to carers once their foster children turn 18, which can make it difficult for them to continue providing care. Providing young people in care the opportunity to remain in care longer if they wish needs to be discussed as a potential solution, as the *Home Stretch* campaign advocates, while a more sustainable, gradual and supported transition from care into affordable, safe independent housing is vital for when young people are ready to move on. The NSW government's current roll-out of a program supporting young people leaving care to maintain stable housing is encouraging and we look forward to its implementation in the Riverina area.

Across NSW, the waiting period to access a Housing NSW property is significant. Low income households who cannot afford the cost of rent in their area may spend many years on waiting lists falling deeper into poverty and social exclusion. In Riverina/Murray, estimated wait times for Housing NSW properties are:

- Wagga Wagga: up to 2 years (2 and 4 bedroom properties); 2-5 years (1 and 3 bedroom properties)
- Albury: 2-5 years (2 and 4 bedroom properties); 5-10 years (1 and 3 bedroom properties)
- Griffith: 2-5 years (4 bedroom properties); 5-10 years (1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties)
- Leeton: 2-5 years (1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties); up to 2 years (1 bedroom properties)

Messages for the Federal Government

At the Federal Government level, it is important that current tax concessions including Negative Gearing and Capital Gains Tax exemptions are examined to ensure they are supporting equity in the housing market and not creating an unfair advantage for any group of taxpayers. Income inequality is also driving housing stress for households reliant on government benefits. Centrelink benefits, including allowances, payments and the Commonwealth Rent Assistance supplement have not kept pace with the increases in the cost of living, particularly with regard to housing. Both of these issues are discussed in greater detail in the overarching National report.

Conclusion

Appropriate, secure and affordable housing is the basic foundation for the well-being of individuals, families and communities. The data from this year's snapshot adds to the growing body of evidence reflecting the housing crisis facing vulnerable people in our community. It is clear young people are severely impacted by the lack of suitable housing options across the Riverina and this has been an ongoing trend since the start of the snapshot in 2009. Similarly, single parents are also facing exclusion from the rental market with limited options in the major centres. The reality is that while families with one or both partners earning a minimum wage are better off than any other household group, the options available are frequently associated with increased social exclusion and vulnerability.

Snapshot: Anglicare Victoria – Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional/Coastal Regions

Introduction

Anglicare Victoria's 2017 *Rental Affordability Snapshot (RAS)* was conducted as part of the national Snapshot undertaken by Anglicare Australia. The aim of the Snapshot is to calculate the proportion of advertised rental properties that are both affordable and appropriate for different household types on the minimum wage, or on a Commonwealth income support payment or pension. This is the 8th consecutive annual Snapshot.

The Victorian Snapshot covered 48 Local Government Areas (LGAs) from across metropolitan Melbourne, as well as regional and coastal areas of Victoria, consistent with Anglicare Victoria service localities.

Anglicare Victoria provides a range of services for individuals, children, youth and families across Victoria. These include:

- Out-of-home care services for children and young people, and post-care support
- Family support services, including family counselling, case management and parenting education
- Family violence programs
- Disability support services and respite
- Alcohol-and-other-drug (AoD) treatment services, mental health services and problem gambling services
- Emergency relief and financial counselling services
- Emergency relief and financial counselling services

Findings

After data cleaning, there were 14,203 private rentals advertised in Metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. While a property can 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. Accordingly, we found that:

- 492 individual Victorian properties (**3.5%** of the total available) were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 4,458 individual Victorian properties (**31.4%** of the total available) were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

There was a marked difference in the proportion of properties that were affordable and appropriate for low-income earners and families when comparing metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

In regional Victoria:

- 419 individual properties (**13.7%** of the total available) were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 1,811 individual properties (**59.2%** of the total available) were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

In metropolitan Melbourne:

- 73 individual properties (**0.7%** of the total available) were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 2,647 individual properties (**23.7%** of the total available) were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

As with previous years, there was a dearth of appropriate and affordable rentals for most categories of low income earners. Single people (with and without children) on any income support or pension were the most disadvantaged group. This pattern extends to single people on the minimum wage, who across the 48 Victorian LGAs have access to only **159** (1.1%) rental properties that are affordable and appropriate.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Victoria, 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)	139	1.0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	58	0.4%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	397	2.8%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	73	0.5%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	5	<0.1%
6	Single	Age Pension	80	0.6%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	65	0.5%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	2	<0.1%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	1	<0.1%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	3	<0.1%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	4,303	30.3%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	539	3.8%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	159	1.1%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	1,316	9.3%
	Total No of Properties	14,203		

Metropolitan Melbourne

A total of 30 LGAs were captured across Metropolitan Melbourne. Across these 30 LGAs there were 11,146 advertised rentals, representing 78% of the total listings captured on Friday 30th March.

Table 2: Rental Affordability, Victoria, Melbourne Metropolitan LGAs

#	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	65	1%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	1	0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	1	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	13	0%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	5	0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	1	0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	1	0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	2	0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	2617	23%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	41	0%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	30	0%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	354	3%
	Total No of Properties	11,146		

Households on income support are effectively locked out of the market in Metropolitan Melbourne. This is a significant finding as the boundaries of Metropolitan Melbourne extend outwards to the 'growth corridors' in the Northern and Western areas. Despite this expansion into traditionally lower SES, semi-rural areas individuals and families on income support continue to be pushed out of the rental market through the absence of appropriate *and* affordable properties.

There is a similar pattern for individuals and families on the minimum wage. Singles on the minimum wage, and families where only one partner is earning the minimum wage will struggle to find appropriate and affordable private rental accommodation in Metropolitan Melbourne.

Table 3: Top 10 Affordable Metropolitan LGAs for households on the minimum wage

	LGA	% of suitable listings	Total number of listings
1	Melton	86.1%	122
2	Cardinia	75.2%	303
3	Latrobe	75.2%	254
4	Nillumbik	67.9%	106
5	Wyndham	65.7%	530
6	Casey	61.2%	595
7	Hume	59.4%	261
8	Whittlesea	57.5%	259
9	Brimbank	49.1%	71
10	Frankston	39.2%	355

Table 3 provides a ranking of the most affordable LGAs in Metropolitan Melbourne for households where the primary source of income is the minimum wage. The proportion of suitable listings was calculated based on the **unique number of properties** that were affordable and appropriate for individuals or families earning the minimum wage.

Households that rely on income support or pensions have been excluded from this analysis as based on the information contained in Table 2 they do not have access to appropriate and affordable properties anywhere within the boundaries of Metropolitan Melbourne.

In large part there has been little change from 2016 in the top 10 affordable LGAs. Latrobe and Nillumbik have made the top 10 rankings in 2017, and Melton has emerged as the most affordable LGA for households on the minimum wage, up from a ranking of 8th in 2016.

Of note, however, is that three of the top 10 most affordable LGAs have suburbs that are amongst the most disadvantaged in Victoria. According to the *Dropping off the Edge Report*[44] suburbs in the City of Casey, City of Hume and City of Brimbank are in the top 5% of disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria. These postcodes are characterised by high unemployment including youth unemployment, criminal convictions, disabilities, child maltreatment rates and domestic violence rates. They are also characterised by low overall education and a population with generally low academic qualifications, resulting in greater welfare dependence. Therefore, while these areas contain a high proportion of affordable and appropriate rental properties, they are also highly disadvantaged and likely to contribute to entrenched social and economic disadvantage and marginalisation for its residents.

[44] Vinson, T., & Rawsthorne, M. (2015). *Dropping off the edge, 2015: Persistent communal disadvantage in Australia.* Melbourne, Victoria: Jesuit Social Services/ Catholic Social Services Australia.

Regional Victoria

Data for regional Victoria captures large regional hubs such as Ballarat, Gippsland, Bendigo and Mildura, large coastal areas including Geelong, and smaller regional/rural locations. In total, 18 regional, rural and coastal LGAs were included in the 2017 snapshot. Across these LGAs there were 3,057 private rentals listed on Friday 30th March.

Table 4: Rental Affordability, Victoria, Regional, rural and coastal LGAs

#	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)	139	5%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	58	2%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	332	11%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	72	2%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	4	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	67	2%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	60	2%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	1	0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	1	0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	1686	55%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	498	16%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	129	4%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	962	31%
	Total No of Properties	3,057		

There were very few affordable and appropriate properties in regional Victoria for most households on income support. This was especially the case for singles, where between 0% and 2% of properties were categorised as both affordable and appropriate. Couples on the Age Pension had the highest access, with 11% of listed rentals classified as affordable and appropriate.

In contrast, over 50% of advertised rentals were appropriate and affordable for a family where both partners were on the minimum wage. A single person on the minimum wage with access to Family Tax Benefits will find a greater stock of appropriate and affordable rental properties in regional Victoria compared to metropolitan Melbourne (16% vs 0%), but single people on the minimum wage are locked out of the regional, rural and coastal rental market in Victoria.

Table 5: Top 10 Affordable regional, rural and coastal LGAs for households on the minimum wage

	LGA	% of suitable listings	Total number of listings
1	Mitchell	100%	6
2	Swan Hill	100%	7
3	Murrindindi	81.3%	32
4	Gannawarra	79.4%	39
5	Macedon Ranges	78.6%	154
6	Central Goldfields	75.5%	45
7	Ararat	75%	4
8	Wodonga	74.8%	111
9	Bass Coast	73.9%	115
10	Campaspe	72.1%	122

Table 5 provides a ranking of the most affordable LGAs in regional, rural and coastal LGAs for households where the primary source of income is the minimum wage. As can be seen, despite the high proportion of affordable and appropriate rentals across these LGAs, the number of unique properties available on the day of the snapshot was in some instances very low. This means that while low income earners may not be priced out of the rental market in these areas, they nevertheless are likely to be competing for a very scarce resource. Interestingly, only one LGA in the top 10 most affordable was characterised by high levels of disadvantage.

Discussion

Consistent with previous years the 2017 Victorian Rental Affordability Snapshot shows households on income support or pensions, and many households on the minimum wage continue to be locked out of the private rental market.

This year there was an appreciable decline in the total number of rental properties on the market at the time of the snapshot, perhaps signalling the start of a shift away from home ownership towards long-term rentals among middle income earners. Despite this drop, the broad patterns of unaffordability remain unchanged.

Within Metropolitan Melbourne, appropriate rental properties are, in effect, entirely unaffordable for most households on income support payments or pensions. Families on the minimum wage have slightly greater access to the private rental market, but even here less than 25% of available rentals are appropriate and affordable. Importantly, three of the 10 most affordable LGAs are characterised by high levels of social and economic disadvantage. As such, individuals and families are faced with the choice of affordable housing in locations where there is high unemployment and crime, and few opportunities for employment or education.

The picture is a little less dire for regional, rural and coastal areas of Victoria, where households on the minimum wage have greater access to affordable and appropriate private rental properties. However, individuals and families on income support payments are largely locked out of this market also.

A key theme to emerge from this year's data is the near complete absence of affordable and appropriate rentals for single people, regardless of whether they have children, or their income stream. Across metropolitan, regional, rural and coastal areas, between 0% and 2% of available rental properties are affordable and appropriate for single people. This increases to 16% (in regional locations only) but only for single parents on the minimum wage who are also eligible for Family Tax Benefits.

Similarly, young people on income support payments, especially Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance simply do not have access to any affordable and appropriate accommodation in the private rental market. While some of this cohort is likely to be living at home with parents or family while studying, there is a non-trivial proportion that will be experiencing significant adversity, including hardship. Young people in the juvenile justice system, those leaving care, and those experiencing mental health and/or substance abuse difficulties are particularly at risk of homelessness in the current climate.

Finally, using the single with children categories (Parenting Payment, Newstart and minimum wage with access to Family Tax Benefits) it can be assumed that a considerable number of women with children who are leaving family violence situations are likely to experience significant housing stress. Single parents with children whose primary source of income is the Parenting Payment or Newstart have access to **one** rental property across the 30 LGAs in Metropolitan Melbourne. While in raw terms single parents on the minimum wage have greater access to the rental market, based on the figures in this snapshot **0%** of these properties is both affordable and appropriate. There is slightly greater access for single parents on income support in regional, rural and coastal LGAs, but even here only 2% of available listings are appropriate and affordable.

This raises serious concerns about the safety of women and children who have experienced family violence. Given that some of the most affordable LGAs in metropolitan Melbourne are characterised by high levels of crime, child maltreatment and family violence, the 'choices' available to women and their children are limited. Moreover, regional and rural locations may not be as socially and economically disadvantaged, but may come with other problems linked with social isolation, and lack of access to appropriate supports.

Policy Implications

1. **State-funded out of home care should be available to young people up to 21 years of age.** It is well-established that young people leaving the state care system, particularly residential care, experience a range of poor outcomes, including greater involvement in the criminal justice system, homelessness, unemployment and consequently, longer-term and more entrenched welfare dependence.

These young people represent some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our communities, yet have limited access to supports from the state post their 18th birthdays. Too many of these young people end up either homelessness or in the criminal justice system. Government funded housing options for these young people would result in demonstrably improved outcomes.

2. **Increase the rate of the Youth Allowance and the Newstart Allowance to reflect the cost of living including rental costs.** This would open up opportunities in the share accommodation market for people who otherwise struggle to gain appropriate and affordable housing. Lack of access to basic, safe and appropriate housing is a logical precursor to homelessness.

3. **Greater government investment in targeted social and public housing**. Victoria appears to have experienced a significant drop in rental stock in the 12 months between the 2016 and 2017 snapshots. Given that individuals and families on low incomes have traditionally been locked out of the private rental market, such a sharp decline in listed properties raises serious concerns. As such, all levels of government need to consider alternative and creative solutions to the housing affordability crisis ***for all segments of society***, not just first home buyers. This will necessitate greater engagement with community service organisations, the homelessness sector and the private sector. It will also necessitate a willingness to implement creative funding models, including social impact investment.

4. **Ongoing work to ensure that parents and children leaving family violence have access to dedicated, safe and affordable housing.**

Conclusion

In summary, the 8th annual Rental Affordability Snapshot continues to highlight that low income earners, particular those who rely on income support, are systematically excluded from the private rental market. Families where both partners are earning the minimum wage are slightly better off, but in general are locked out of large portions of the private rental market as well. The areas where rental properties are available and affordable within Metropolitan Melbourne are typically characterised by very high levels of social and economic disadvantage.

There continues to be regional versus urban divide, whereby low income earners have much greater access to appropriate and affordable housing in regional, rural and coastal areas of Victoria. Even so, the overall rental stock in these areas can be quite low resulting in potentially high competition for a scarce resource.

As a result, low income earners in Victoria continue to be faced with a range of unacceptable choices, including paying more than they can afford and/or living in demonstrably inappropriate housing for their needs.

For the 8th year in a row, this data points to the lack of action by successive state and federal governments to improve the housing outcomes of people on low incomes, and to the on-going need to invest in creative social and public housing solutions for those who need it most.

Snapshot: Anglicare Tasmania – Tasmania

Introduction

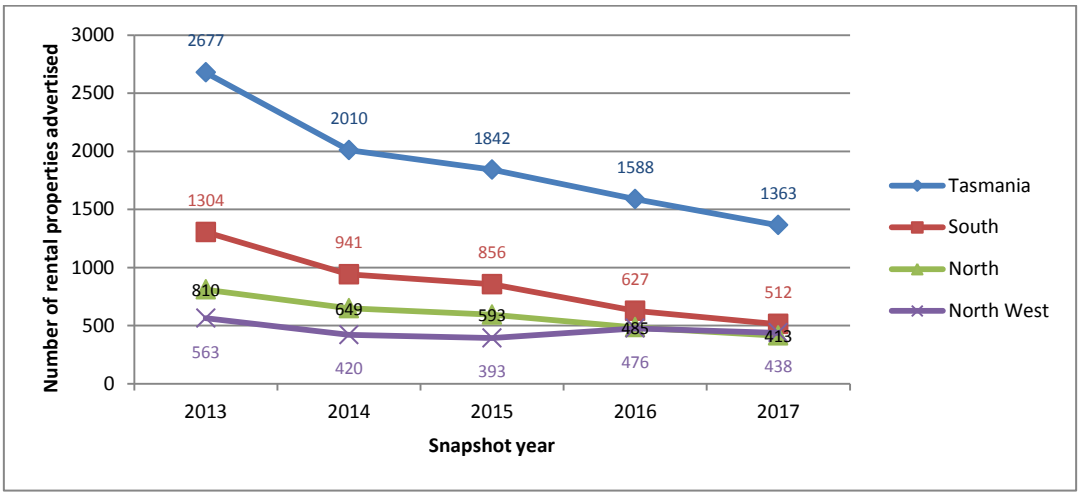
Anglicare Tasmania is the largest community service organisation in Tasmania with offices in Hobart, Glenorchy, Launceston, St Helens, Devonport, Burnie and Zeehan and a range of programs in rural areas. Anglicare Tasmania's services include crisis services, accommodation support, mental health services, acquired injury, disability and aged care services, alcohol and other drug services and family support. In addition, Anglicare Tasmania's Social Action and Research Centre conducts research, policy and advocacy work with a focus on issues affecting Tasmanians on low incomes.

Findings

On the weekend of 1-2 April, (1,363) private rentals were advertised for rent in Tasmania. Private rentals were surveyed from classifieds in the three main Tasmanian newspapers – the Mercury, The Examiner and The Advocate and online sources, realestate.com, Flatshare and Gumtree.

To understand more about how the Tasmanian rental market might be changing, we talked with real estate representatives across Tasmania and examined data relating to price and demand in the rental market, such as real estate enquiries, properties available, vacancy rates and rental deposits over the last five years.[45]

Fig 1: Number of advertised rental properties over the snapshot weekend 2013 to 2017: Tasmania and each region



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.

[45] Social Action and Research Centre 2017, *REA Industry Interviews for the Rental Affordability Snapshot 2017*. SARC undertook discussions with members of Tasmania's rental estate industry to better understand what is happening in the private rental market across the state. Sources will not be named in this report, at the request of the stakeholders. But SARC has been granted permission to use the data and observations shared by one real estate agent as a case study to illustrate the current market dynamics. SARC would like to acknowledge the time spent by real estate industry members in sharing their experiences with us.

To this end, we found that:

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

There were 14% fewer rental properties advertised across Tasmania compared to this time last year and 49% fewer rental properties compared to the number of properties advertised over the snapshot weekend in April in 2013 (see Fig 1).[46] This decline in available properties has specifically happened in Tasmania's southern and northern markets, with a 61% (n=792) and 49% (n=397) drop in numbers respectively over five years. The rental stock in the north west of the state has stayed fairly consistent over five years.

Single person households – accessing affordable housing is still dire

The number of affordable and appropriate rentals remains dire for single young people and adults. Single young people still have no suitable properties to apply for across the state. Single adults on Newstart and Disability Support Pension continue to have extremely little choice of affordable and appropriate properties to apply for – with less than 1% (n=6) and only 5% (n=63) of the market suitable respectively (see Table 1). But there has been a noticeable increase in affordable properties for single older people on the Age Pension: a 4% increase (n=+35) in the proportion of properties affordable and available (see Table 1). This is driven by what's happened in the north, where there has been a 7% (n=+23) increase in the proportion of the stock that's affordable and appropriate for older single Tasmanians.

Our methodology allows single adults on the Aged Pension to access shared housing, but not those on the Disability Support Pension. As the income levels for these households are the same, the difference in suitable private rentals will be entirely due to shared housing within our advertised properties. We added Flatshare to our data sources this year, so it is possible that this has increased the number of shared properties in our snapshot of advertised rental properties this year. We consider the increase in the proportion of properties that are affordable and appropriate for single adults receiving the Age Pension to be due to a change in our methodology, rather than a change in the affordability of the market.

A big challenge for families' access to affordable and appropriate housing year on year

Single parents whose main income is Newstart continue to be the family household type that struggles the most to find affordable and appropriate accommodation in the Tasmanian rental market, with only 2% (n=29) of the advertised properties being suitable. (see Table 1). The biggest changes for families this year are for those households whose main income is through the minimum wage, particularly in the north of the state – a 2% decline in the proportion of affordable and appropriate northern Tasmanian properties for working couples with two children whose main income is two minimum wages (n=-41) and a 5% decline for couples where one adult is working for the minimum wage and the other adult receives Parenting Payment (partnered) to care for their children (n=-43).

[46] We consistently take a snapshot of advertised rental properties every year over a weekend in April. We do this so that, over the years, we can build a picture about how the Tasmanian rental market might be changing for low income Tasmanians at that time every year. We can talk about trends at that point each year. We do not know how the number of adverts fluctuate each month over a year and each month between years. So we can not talk about seasonal trends.

This compared to a 2% (n=-112) and 1% (n=-81) decline respectively across the state (see Table 1). Similarly, there has been an 4% (n=-31) decline in the proportion of northern Tasmanian properties affordable and appropriate for our single parent household with two children, whose main income is the minimum wage. This compares to a 1% (n=-53) decline across the state.

Watching older couples

It is worth noting that the proportion of properties affordable and appropriate for older couples on the Aged Pension has declined year on year by 3% (n=-86). Again, this is particularly the case in the northern market – a 9% drop in the proportion of properties that are affordable and appropriate - that's 52 fewer properties.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Tasmania, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate	% change 2016-2017	% change 2013-17
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	103	8%	-	-
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	73	5%	-	+1
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	238	17%	-3	+2
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	103	8%	+1	+3
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	29	2%	-	+1
6	Single	Age Pension	195	14%	+4	+6
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	64	5%	+1	+3
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	6	0%	-1	-1
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)	533	39%	-2	+5
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	243	18%	-1	+1
13	Single	Minimum Wage	279	20%	-	+6
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	352	26%	-1	+6
	Total No of Properties	1363				

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)		
398	760		

Our regional markets continue to behave differently

Affordability best in the north west market: Consistent with previous years, the north west market has acted differently to the other two Tasmanian regions, and continues to offer the most affordable and appropriate options, particularly for low income families and single people on Disability Support Pension. It also has the most stability in the number of advertised properties (see Fig 1).

Affordability best in the north west market: Consistent with previous years, the north west market has acted differently to the other two Tasmanian regions, and continues to offer the most

appropriate options, particularly for low income families and single people on Disability Support Pension. It also has the most stability in the number of advertised properties (see Fig 1).

Most inaccessible market is the south: The south remains the most unaffordable rental market across the state both for households whose main income is through income support and for those whose main income is through the minimum wage, with an average of 2% (n=8) and 13% (n=68) of properties advertised in the south being affordable and available to these families respectively, compared to 4% (n=18) and 26% (n=108) of advertised properties in the north and 13% (n=55) and 40% (n=177) of properties advertised in the north west. The south also has the most dramatically declining rental stock year on year and over five years (see Fig 1).

Northern market has experienced the most dramatic change: The northern rental market appears to have shifted the most in relation to low income households in the past year, particularly for families. It is also experiencing a continuing decline in the number of advertised properties year on year (see Fig. 1), with the 2/3 bedroomed property market having shifted the most noticeably this year.

SARC's full state report on rental affordability and rental stress provides further analysis of low income households' potential access to the Tasmanian private rental sector, including a more detailed regional breakdown and analysis of trends over the last five years. This year, we have also looked closely at increased competition in the private rental market.[47]

Discussion

Affordable, appropriate and stable housing are crucial ingredients for all Tasmanian adults and children to be able to sustain health and wellbeing, to have positive educational engagement and to consistently participate in social and economic life. However, we have found that some groups in Tasmania will struggle to find an appropriate and affordable private rental. This years snapshot indicates that Tasmania's private rental market appears to remain a challenge for single adults and young people. But, relatively, it appears to have become more of a challenge for families in the south and north of the state. And this seems to be driven by a number of changes in the market: a shrinking in the number of properties available, increased demand for rental properties and possibly a change in the types of rental properties being offered. We explore these trends below.

[47] See: https://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/

Affordable housing likely to remain a priority issue

Demand for low cost housing is high in Tasmania and is likely to remain so. This is because Tasmania has Australia's highest proportion of low income households[48]: median incomes are around $100 per week less that the national average[49] and a third of households receive their main source of income from income support payments[50], with nearly a third of Tasmanian households (30.7%) surviving on less than $600 per week.[51] Additionally, almost a quarter (14,618) of Tasmania's low income households are in housing stress or crisis.[52] Of these, most likely to be in housing stress or crisis are single people, one parent families and couples with children. Housing stress affects both private renters and home buyers. Data from 2014 tells us:

- 50,750 households rented their homes in Tasmania and 7901 (16%) of those were in rental stress. For low income renters, 39% were in rental stress.[53]

- 65,819 Tasmanian households were buying their homes and 5996 (9%) of those were in mortgage stress. For low income home buyers, 47% were in mortgage stress.[54]

The Tasmanian public sector housing waiting list continues to grow: it was 3,573 in June 2016 – a 29% increase on the previous year, which itself had been a 24% increase year on year. It is estimated that Tasmania needs an average of 2392 new dwellings a year to meet its long-term supply needs through to 2031 and 656 of these per year (27%) need to be low priced affordable homes.[55]

Rent rises

Tasmanian rents have risen significantly over the last year. There was a 41% increase in rental values year on year for properties advertised through realestate.com February to February; that's the second largest increase in Monthly Index Values across Australia.[56] By the last quarter of 2016, Hobart had the second worst rent affordability after Greater Sydney taking average weekly household income into account.

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[48] That is households with incomes between 21% and 40% of all Australian household incomes, or those in the second lowest quintile of earnings.
[49] ABS 2011, *QuickStats 2011: Tasmania.*
[50] ABS 2013:9, *Household Income and Income Distribution Australia*, 2011-12, Australia, Cat No. 6523.0, Table 17, Canberra, ABS. Tasmania has a mean equalised disposable household income 15% below the national average (SA 8%, Victoria 4%.) Cited in Tasmanian's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025:14
[51] ABS 2011, *QuickStats 2011: Tasmania.*
[52] Housing stress describes a household in the lowest 40% of Australia's household income that spends more than 30% of its income on rent or mortgage payments. See Yates 2007,*Housing Affordability and Financial Stress*, NRV3 Research Paper 6, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne. Cited in Rowley, S. and Ong, R. 2012:15, Household Wellbeing in Australia, AHURI Final Report No.192.
[53] Housing Tasmania 2014a:12, *Current and projected demand for dwellings in Tasmania*, final report, unpublished paper, Department of Health and Human Services, Hobart. Cited in Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy, 2015-2025:14.
[54] Housing Tasmania 2014a:12, *Current and projected demand for dwellings in Tasmania*, final report, unpublished paper, Department of Health and Human Services, Hobart. Cited in Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy, 2015-2025:14.
[55] Housing Tasmania 2014a, *Current and projected demand for dwellings in Tasmania, final report*, unpublished paper, Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania, cited in Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2015:12.
[56]REA Group 2017, *Property Demand Index (March 2017).* REA Group.

The last Rental Affordability Index showed that rents remained 'extremely unaffordable', particularly for the average low income family household in both the Greater Hobart and the 'rest of Tasmania'.[57]

As government incomes and minimum wage increases are not in line with rental increases, it is likely that more rental properties are out of the reach of low income households, or it is likely to be forcing more low income households into rental stress or extreme rental stress to secure a home.

Competition for Tasmanian private rental accommodation is increasing

As acknowledged in the Tasmanian Government's Affordable Housing Strategy, private rental housing has become the default housing tenure for many households. This is due to a number of dynamics coalescing. A significant one is the lack of sufficient social housing stock to meet the needs of households with very low incomes.[58] This means that more very low income households who can't access social housing are being forced into the private rental market.

From the other 'side' of the housing market, another significant dynamic is that more households are being locked out of an unaffordable house purchasing market.[59] This means that more affordable private rental dwellings are being occupied by households that could afford to pay more, but are choosing to pay less to cut household expenditure costs, save for a house deposit, or live in an area they cannot afford to buy property in.[60]

Snapshot figures from one Tasmanian real estate agent show that there has been both a decrease in rental properties becoming vacant and an increase in enquiries for rental properties over the last five years. This trend has particularly intensified over the past year in the state's north and south.[61]

Increased competition for properties is, of course, likely to lessen the chances of low income households securing an appropriate property, unless they are viewed as a 'good bet' by prospective landlords, relative to other prospective tenants. It is also likely to prolong the search for a home for many Tasmanian households.

The Air bnb effect

Tasmania has a burgeoning tourism industry. The rising popularity of Airbnb to cater for the tourist market may be taking some of the housing stock out of the private rental market, particularly in the south and north of Tasmania.[62] But we do not have evidence to confirm whether this is the case.

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[57] SGS Economics and Planning 2016, Rental Affordability Index, November 2016. SGS Economics and Planning, National Shelter, Community Sector Banking: Canberra.
[58] That is, households with incomes at 20% or less of all Australian household incomes, or those in the lowest quintile of earnings.
[59] Cited in Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy, 2015-2025:12 and Tually, S., Oakley, S., and Faulkner, D. 2015:4, *The role of private rental support programs in housing outcomes for vulnerable Australians*. The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Positioning paper 162.
[60] Hulse, K., Reynolds, M., Stone, W., Yates, J., and Wulff, M. August 2015, *Shortage of Affordable Private Rental Housing Increasing*, AHURI Research and Policy Bulletin and Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy, 2015-2015:12. REA Group 2017, *ibid.*
[61] SARC 2017, *ibid*.
[62] Tourism is booming in Tasmania, which may be encouraging more housing investors who traditionally rented to tenants to look at Airbnb as a more profitable option: The number of international visitors to Tasmania rose by 20% in 2015 compared to 2014. Source: Hodgman, W (Premier) 2016, *Massive increase*

The impacts of transient renting on competition and rental stock

Our interviews with the Tasmanian real estate sector tell us that there are a number of other dynamics increasing demand for rentals and demand for transient rentals in particular – i.e. short term and/or furnished accommodation - within the Tasmanian private rental markets in Hobart and Launceston. Such renters include fly in, fly out workers, or those who may be seconded to Tasmania for a temporary period; households who have sold a property, but not purchased another as yet; PhD students and lecturers visiting the university to complete a thesis or to partner on work; doctors, dentists and nurses undertaking their regional placements; tree and sea changers from interstate locations, trying out Tasmania before they purchase a property, who make up a significant proportion of the transient renters in Tasmania;[63] those who have recently separated from their partners (who, for our case study Real Estate Agent, can make up about 15 per cent of the furnished rental market); and international students.[64] These households are often well resourced. Given that furnished rented property is commanding an average of $100 a week more than unfurnished property in Tasmania,[65] this may be contributing to driving up the price of rental property in the north and south of the state, as well as increasing competition for private rentals, exacerbating issues of affordability and appropriate properties.

Policy Implications

So with decreasing rental stock, increasing demand for that stock from a range of tenants and burgeoning tourist and investment economies potentially putting future demands on Tasmanian property, how do we ensure that the needs of low income households for affordable and stable accommodation does not get lost in the shifting dynamics of our three housing sectors – social and private rental and house purchasing?

Housing affordability is a complex issue to address; it requires a strategic and deliberate will to steer markets and policies in a way that serves a broad range of households and interest groups that may have competing needs. Purposefully addressing housing affordability requires a refocus of federal and state housing policy goals towards creating homes for more households, as well as encouraging investments for wealth creation.

Anglicare Tasmania supports the development of federal and state government policies that will deliver the policy goals of increasing the supply of appropriate housing and reducing competition within the private rental sector. Anglicare Tasmania recognises that to achieve these goals requires adjustments across three housing sectors – social housing, private sector rentals and house purchasing. It requires consideration of a range of strategic initiatives, which may include:

- ***Incentives that stimulate the development of more affordable housing for rent and purchase***, for example through federal and state government policy levers across taxation and planning, such as inclusionary zoning, impact fees for developments that remove properties from the rental market, incentives for private developers and investors to invest

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in international visitors to Tasmania, media release, Tourism Tasmania, 2 March.' AirBNB Australian general manager Sam McDonagh said the service had more than doubled its hosts in Tasmania each year.' In article for the Sunday Tasmanian by David Beniuk, 9 April 2015, *'Airbnb presses for State Government for rules clarity'.* Calculations by finder.com.au show that renting out a room in Howrah on Airbnb receives a profit margin 497% over housing rental Source: finder.com.au 2015, '*Australia's most profitable Airbnb locations revealed*', http://www.finder.com.au/airbnb-australia-rental-profits.

[63] SARC 2017, *ibid*.

[64] SARC 2017, *ibid*.

[65] SARC 2017, *ibid*.

in appropriate development that meets the needs of a range of low income households, bond aggregators that boost finance available to entities to build social housing.

- ***Incentives that encourage landlords to embrace low income households as tenants***, such as government-funded risk management initiatives and broader encouragement of landlord insurance to minimise landlords' perceived risks associated with having low income tenants.

- ***Incentives that enable more households currently in rental accommodation to transfer to home ownership***,

- ***Reviewing government support for low income households to ensure government payment meet the costs of living***

Anglicare is also aware that the housing markets shift quickly; residential development and availability can be easily affected by other sectors of the economy, such as tourism. So, we also support initiatives that work to better understand the impacts that market dynamics elsewhere are having on affordable housing stock, such as the impacts of Air BnB on the private rental sector stock.[66]

Anglicare Tasmania plans to further develop a range of state-based priorities for change in liaison with those who rent, those who support low income households to find homes, and those who provide private rental properties.

[66] Existing literature includes Gurran N. and Phibbs P. 2017, When Tourists Move In: how should urban planners respond to Airbnb?, in the *Journal of American Planning Association*, Vol.83, No.1, Winter 2017. American Planning Association: Chicago, IL.

Snapshot: Ac.care Southern Country Regions of SA – Limestone Coast, Murraylands/Adelaide Hills, Riverland

Introduction

Ac.care provides specialist homeless services to clients across the Southern Country regions of SA. The three regions covered are: Limestone Coast, Murraylands/Adelaide Hills and the Riverland. The issues regarding homelessness and housing affordability are similar across all 3 regions.

Major issues faced by people on income support payments in regional South Australia include limited access to affordable and/or appropriate housing, limited employment opportunities, social exclusion, and isolation.

Ac.care's homelessness services work closely with clients and real estate agents to ensure quality outcomes for those who are able to access private rental properties, and assist others to access Housing SA properties. The homeless services also provide Intensive Tenancy Support to assist those facing eviction to maintain and sustain their tenancy, and Supported Transitional Housing to provide case management to address the issues which caused the initial homelessness.

New and innovative programs are required in regional areas in collaboration with other agencies, business and partners to ensure resources are used to achieve the best possible outcomes for clients. Some of those innovations are:

- Collaboration with G4S to assist released prisoners into housing and social participation
- Collaboration with education facilities to provide transitional housing to young people while enabling them to remain engaged in education
- Collaborating with the business community to provide opportunities for those who are disadvantaged

As mentioned above, one of the main issues causing homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. Ac.care conducted a rental affordability snapshot across the three regions, in conjunction with Anglicare Australia.

Findings

On the weekend of 1-2 April 306 private rentals were advertised for rent across the Southern regions of SA, including Limestone Coast, Murraylands/Adelaide Hills, and Riverland. Private rentals were surveyed from newspapers and 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:

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

The total number of 306 properties is 66 less than the total number available in the Rental Snapshot period last year.

This report does not disaggregate for the 3 regions.

For the purposes of this report an “affordable” rental is one which is less than 30% of total income. Appropriateness of properties was assessed on the basis of the number of bedrooms in relation to the number of occupants. Although there were 131 appropriate and affordable houses for people living on income support, none of these properties were affordable for single people on Newstart or Youth Allowance.

While a couple with 2 children on minimum wage and FTB A had access to 207 properties that were affordable and appropriate, a couple with 2 children on Newstart Allowance only had access to 66 properties. Only 41 properties were considered affordable and appropriate for a single parent with 2 children receiving Parenting Payment, and 145 properties were affordable and appropriate for a single parent with 2 children receiving a minimum wage with FTB A & B.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, region analysed, 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)	66	22%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	69	13%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	108	35%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	54	18%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	9	3%
6	Single	Age Pension	20	7%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	20	7%
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)	207	68%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	145	47%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	46	15%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	174	57%
	Total No of Properties	306		

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)
131	243

Discussion

Ac.care has participated in the data collection for the Rental Affordability Snapshot for the past 3 years. It is disappointing to note that over that period there has been no increase in the number of affordable properties for single people receiving Newstart or Youth Allowance. The unemployment rate for youth also remains high, leaving little or no opportunity for our young people to break the cycle of poverty and build a better life for themselves and their children.

Many of the single people in the regions are youth. Youth homelessness and Youth unemployment are both significant issues in country regions. In the 2015/16 financial year the Limestone Coast Homeless service had a total of 475 clients of which 29% were aged 15-24. The Murray Bridge/Adelaide Hills Homeless Service had a total of 544 clients of which 24% were aged 15-24, and the Riverland Homeless Service had a total of 420 clients of which 27% were aged 15-24.

While single unemployed people had no access to affordable properties, the outcome for single parents with one or two children on income support was also poor. A single person with one child under 8 on Parenting Payment Single had access to 54 (18%) properties across the region. A single person with one child over 8 receiving Newstart had access to only 9 (3%) of the available properties.

The cost of renting a property in the first instance is just the beginning of housing stress. If a single person or a family are lucky enough to access affordable housing, they then have the added cost of utilities. South Australia has the most expensive electricity in the country which is causing levels of disadvantage to rise. Many people find it extremely difficult to reduce utility bills as low cost properties are often not insulated and the heating that is fitted is cheap to buy, but expensive to run. Disadvantage also removes choice, and those who are existing from week to week on income support are not fortunate enough to be able to choose the efficiency rating of their heating, cooling or appliances.

Policy Implications

As mentioned previously, access to affordable housing has not improved over the last 3 years in regional SA, with single people on income support being the most disadvantaged. There is a desperate need for an increase in social housing, employment opportunities, and the provision of affordable private housing.

Some policy changes that could assist:

- Increase Newstart/Youth Allowance
- Remove the policy that transfers single parents to Newstart when their youngest child turns 8

- Develop and implement policies that generate jobs in rural/regional areas
- Reduce the cost of electricity and gas
- Provide supervised youth accommodation in regional areas
- Develop and implement early intervention policies to assist young people to remain in the family home
- Local governments provide a reduction in rates to landlords who are prepared to pass this on via lower rental rates for tenants, and therefore provide an increase in affordable rental properties.

Conclusion

This report highlights the disadvantage suffered by single people on income support in regional areas. There are very few employment options for those who have faced social isolation due to a generational cycle of disadvantage. These young people have been excluded from sporting activities and other recreational pursuits such as music or other hobbies. Families on income support are struggling to provide the necessities for their children, leaving little or no funds for other activities.

Accessing employment opportunities in regional areas is still based on who you know, who your parents know, and relationships built within the community as you are growing up. Children of disadvantaged families don't have the opportunity to build those relationships. They don't get to play sport with the kids of local business owners; parents don't have relationships with people who will be able to provide opportunities for their children, so the cycle of poverty goes on. High unemployment rates coupled with minimal or no access to affordable housing is contributing to social isolation, family breakdown, and substance abuse within our communities.

Homeless rates within our regional areas will continue to rise if people don't have access to affordable housing. To gain access to long term housing, and be able to provide their families with some form of stability, people need employment. No access to affordable housing has a domino effect on families and their children. A lack of stability means children often miss school or have to change schools and their education suffers. Housing stress causes tension within the family which often leads to family breakdown.

Government policies have not delivered any greater access to affordable housing in the regional areas. Governments at all levels should be introducing policies to achieve equity, access and inclusion outcomes.

This report shows that the situation for single people on income support has not improved. Communities also need to realise that government policy alone will not fix the problem. All levels of community must work together to provide opportunities to those who are disadvantaged.

Snapshot: AnglicareSA – Adelaide

Introduction

The AnglicareSA Rental Affordability Snapshot was undertaken in conjunction with the Australian Centre for Community Services Research at Flinders University. The snapshot surveyed rental properties available in the Adelaide area on the weekend of 1-2 April. The survey used rental listings on realestate.com.au.

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 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, electricity supplements) 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.

Findings

On the weekend of 1-2 April, 3,661 private rentals were advertised for rent in and around Adelaide. 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:

- 134 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 1536 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Adelaide, 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)	71	2%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	35	1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	95	3%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	13	0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	10	0%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	4	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)	1516	41%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	247	7%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	23	1%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	601	16%
	Total No of Properties	3661		

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)
134	1536

Discussion

On the day of the snapshot, 134 appropriate and affordable houses were available for rent in the aggregate by households on income support payment. This was equivalent to 3.6% of the rental market. 1536 appropriate and affordable houses were available to rent in the aggregate for households on a minimum wage. This was equivalent to 42% of the rental market.

Appropriate and affordable rental accommodation was in extremely short supply for households on income support as a whole category, but the property availability figures were lower than the aggregate figure of 3.6% for each household type analysed. Disaggregating the figures for household type, 2% of properties were available at the time of the snapshot for couples on Newstart allowance with two children, and 3% of properties were available to couples on the Age Pension with no children. 1% of properties were available to a single parent on Parenting Payment with two children.

Similarly, disaggregated figures for households on the minimum wage reveal 1% of the rental market (or 23 properties) being available as affordable and appropriate housing for a single person on the minimum wage at the time of the snapshot.

This survey does not take in to account suitability of properties in regards to physical accessibility, nor does it account for suitability of neighbourhood or region.

An additional stressor which is not addressed in this snapshot is the bond payments. In South Australia, the Residential Tenancies Act 1995 (SA) 61(3) indicates that the bond is calculated according to weekly rent. If the rent amount is lower or equivalent to $250 per week, the maximum bond is four weeks rent. However, where the weekly rent is greater than $250, the maximum bond is the equivalent of six weeks rent. For households that require more than 1 bedroom the demands on bond payments may be considerable.

Policy Implications

Over the eight years of the Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot, AnglicareSA has shown repeatedly that housing unaffordability is at crisis levels for people living on low incomes across the Adelaide area. Action must be taken with a coordinated, systemic and broad approach to addressing housing affordability.

The Commonwealth Government has acknowledged that reform is required in Australia's housing market to increase social and affordable housing options, and it has proposed an aggregated bond model. We support this proposal as one component of a broader and more complex solution.

We call for a national plan for social and affordable housing, which includes the following key priority areas:

1. Grow the supply of social housing.
2. Reform the current tax system including negative gearing to support lower cost housing.
3. Supply a mix of housing that meets the different needs of people.

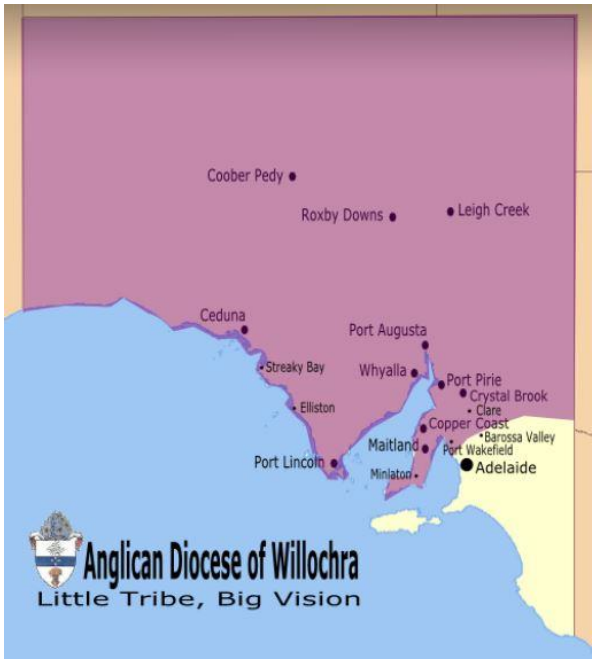
Conclusion

This snapshot assessed the degree of access to the housing rental market for 14 household types on 2 April 2017, when housing was assessed against criteria for affordability and appropriateness. All disaggregated household types reliant on income support payment had access to less than 3.6% of the rental market, with 7 household types having access to 0% of the rental market at the time that the snapshot was taken.

Snapshot: Anglicare Willochra – North and West Country region SA

Introduction

Anglicare Willochra is the caring and welfare arm of the Anglican Diocese of Willochra, a large rural diocese covering a diversity of communities across 900,000 square kilometres of rural and regional South Australia. With a concern for the welfare of rural people, Anglicare Willochra partners with ministry groups in the Diocese, and with Anglicare SA to find ways to be 'good neighbours' within our communities.



The 2017 Willochra Rental Affordability Snapshot surveyed private rental properties across the Willochra Diocese, focusing on the larger towns and regional centres within the area - the regional cities of Whyalla, Port Augusta and Port Pirie, the mining township of Roxby Downs and the Copper Coast LGA.

Findings

Anglicare Willochra collected data on a total of 777 rental listings advertised online on the weekend of 1 April, and calculated the advertised properties' affordability and appropriateness for a range of household types. 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:

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

These headline figures mask a complex situation across a range of locales that are discussed below.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Willochra Region, 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)	493	39%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	423	33%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	425	55%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	326	37%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	130	14%
6	Single	Age Pension	161	21%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	161	21%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	6	1%
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)	762	71%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	634	55%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	274	35%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	710	64%
	Total No of Properties	777		

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)
473	660

Discussion

The rental market of the region continues to reflect the turbulence in the employment futures of key centres, particularly Whyalla, with a decrease of 21% in the number of available rental properties, and a decrease in median rent from $230 to $217, continuing a trend of declining rental prices. As a result there has been a welcome increase in the number of affordable and appropriate properties for particular household types reliant on income support, notably couples with two children on Newstart, couples on the Aged Pension, and singles on the Aged Pension and Disability Support Pension. However consistent with previous years there is a near total lack of private rental option available across the Willochra region that would be affordable for a single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance. Once again this finding demonstrates the inadequacy of these allowances, even in a region with more affordable rental options.

With South Australia and our region continuing to experience particularly high youth unemployment, the inadequacy of youth income support payments and affordable housing as a result is a serious issue.

Of note is the decrease in houses affordable and suitable for families on the minimum wage. This suggests that properties previously available to rent may have been withdrawn from the market.

Whyalla

The ongoing reliance of Whyalla on key employers now winding up the process of voluntary administration has continued to influence the local rental market significantly. The number of properties for rent has declined along with rents, meaning there are more properties affordable for people on low incomes (with median rent dropping to around $180 a week) but fewer properties available.

Affordability has accordingly increased for all household types, except for the standout single household on Newstart or Youth Allowance who still have no viable options, even in this depressed housing market.

Copper Coast

In contrast to Whyalla, The Copper Coast, including the townships of Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta has continued its trend of steady increases in median rental prices, rising to $277 per week, up from $265 in 2016. There has been a correlated decrease in affordable options for all household types receiving government assistance. Notable again is the lack of a single private housing option for single households, including single parent households, and youth unemployment remains a critical issue.

Policy Implications

The plight of our region's economy serves to exemplify a number of vital policy changes that have been needed for some time. The most critical is an increase in Youth Allowance and Newstart payments in particular, as they are clearly insufficient for young people or single parent families to access a level of housing that is appropriate and affordable.

The need for regional renewal programs to create diverse and enduring employment options, rather than a passive acceptance that local economies, historically reliant on single industries, will simply disappear. On this front there is some hope with efforts to promote renewable energy generation and infrastructure in the region, but this promise has yet to deliver. In the meantime it is not enough to leave people in dire circumstances on government support payments that are so low they cannot even rent affordably in highly depressed markets like Whyalla; or in order to take advantage of lower rents in regional centres like this, have to accept a lack of employment opportunities.

Conclusion

Rental affordability results across the Willochra region have been quite different when individual communities are disaggregated. The Whyalla community is in the middle of a major disruption which has already influenced its rental market, with an associated increase in affordability. This is not necessarily a positive indication regarding affordability of housing, as there is no reason for accessing housing in an area if there are no accompanying opportunities for employment.

A home, along with life and employment opportunities, is an essential ingredient for the wellbeing of individuals and families who live in our regional communities. Intervention of both State and Federal governments are needed to assist regional South Australia at this time.

Snapshot: Anglicare WA – Western Australia

Introduction

Western Australia is home to 2.9 million people including 240,000 who are living below the poverty line with a further 150,000 at risk of financial hardship.[i] Anglicare WA works together with people, their families and their communities to enhance their abilities to cope with the challenges of life and relationships. Anglicare WA's vision is that 'we live in a just and fair society in which all people thrive'. As a leading not-for-profit organisation providing services in 48 locations across the state, Anglicare WA plays an important role in building strong communities and supporting families to enhance their resilience and capacity to thrive.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot highlights the challenges low income households face in obtaining rental accommodation at an affordable rate. People on the lowest incomes, and those at greatest disadvantage in the rental market, are those on fixed incomes including pensioners, people living with disability, job seekers and single parents. In many cases, the social safety net provided by Government is simply not enough to meet the cost of housing and other living expenses. Being able to access affordable housing can mean the difference between a daily struggle to survive and thriving as a valued member of society.

Findings

On 1 April 2017, 14,123 private rentals were advertised for rent in three regions of Western Australia covering (1) Greater Perth Metropolitan Area (including Peel), (2) South West and Great Southern (including Bunbury and Albany), and (3) the North West (including Pilbara and Kimberley). The number of rentals listed was up 8% from 2016.

Private rentals were surveyed from realestate.com.au. 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 across the three regions:

- 528 individual properties (3.7%) were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 6,840 individual properties (48%) were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Families on a minimum wage fared better this year compared to last year, while households on income support still struggled to find any affordable rental accommodation across the three regions.

Greater Metropolitan Perth, WA

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Perth Metropolitan Area, 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)	55	0.4%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	11	0.1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	257	2.1%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	9	0.1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	1	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	83	0.7%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	5	0.0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	5817	46.8%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	764	6.1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	124	1.0%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	2244	18.0%
	Total No of Properties	12,437		

On the Snapshot weekend, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
379	5,941

Median Rent

Following the same trend of the past two years, the number of private listings in the Greater Perth Metropolitan area increased in 2017 and the median rent per week decreased. There were 12,437 private rental listings in the Perth Metropolitan Area, up 11% from 2016. The median weekly rent decreased by 10% from $390 per week in 2016 to $350 per week in 2017.

Government Benefits

This year's Snapshot found an increase in the number of unique properties that were appropriate and affordable for households on income support payments, from 57 properties in 2016 to 379 properties in 2017. Although this appears to be a significant improvement, it is still insufficient as 8 of the 10 household types on benefits were virtually locked out of the private rental market altogether with less than 1% of the listed properties found to be affordable and appropriate. The only household types that saw a marginal improvement were couples on an Aged Pension, which increased from less than 0.3% in 2016 to 2% in 2017 and singles on an Aged Pension which increased half of a percent (0.5%) from 2016 to 2017.

There were no properties in the entire Perth Metropolitan area that were affordable for people on a Youth Allowance or Newstart Allowance, even when including boarding houses and share houses where rooms are rented out individually.

Less than one percent of listings (n=55) were affordable and appropriate for a couple on Newstart with two children. Single parents with two children on a Parenting Payment had even fewer options with only 11 properties found to be affordable and appropriate.

Minimum Wage Earners

Households on minimum wages had more affordable housing options than those on government benefits. In this year's Snapshot, there were a total of 5,941 properties that were affordable and appropriate for minimum wage earners, a 36% increase from 2016.

Families where both parents earn a full-time minimum wage had the highest proportion of appropriate and affordable properties (47%) of all household types. Families where one parent worked full time and the other was in receipt of a Parenting Payment had fewer housing options (18%).

Single parents on a minimum wage saw a considerable increase in the number of properties that were affordable and appropriate for them, from 0.6% in 2016 to 6.1% in 2017.

Only 1% of listed properties were affordable for a single person on a minimum wage, which included boarding houses or renting a room in a share house.

Southwest and Great Southern, WA

Table 2: Rental Affordability, Southwest and Great Southern WA, 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)	40	4.1%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	21	2.2%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	84	8.7%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	32	3.3%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	4	0.4%
6	Single	Age Pension	12	1.2%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	12	1.2%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	635	65.5%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	146	15.1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	27	2.8%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	275	28.4%
	Total No of Properties	970		

On the Snapshot weekend, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
103	654

Median Rent

In WA's Southwest and Great Southern there was a slight increase in the number of private listings from 902 in 2016 to 970 in 2017, an increase of 7.5%. The median rent per week dropped from $350 in 2016 to $330 in 2017.

Government Benefits

The total number of dwellings in the Southwest and Great Southern that were appropriate and affordable for households on government benefits rose from 54 in 2016 to 103 in 2017. Couples on an Aged Pension were able to afford 9% of the listed properties, up from 5% in the previous year. Families where both parents were on Newstart saw an improvement in affordability from 1.7% to 4.1%. Single parent households with two children on a Parenting Payment had an increase from 0.4% in 2016 to 2.2% in 2017.

Similar to the Perth Metropolitan Area, there were no affordable properties in the Southwest and Great Southern region for singles on Youth Allowance or Newstart.

Minimum Wage Earners

The circumstances for households earning a minimum wage improved in the Southwest and Great Southern from the previous year, nevertheless there were still limited options for singles. A single person on a minimum wage had access to less than 3% of the total properties. Single parents on a minimum wage had more options with 15% of properties deemed to be affordable and appropriate.

Two parent households, both earning minimum wage, could access 65% (n=645) of total properties. Two parent households with only one wage earner had fewer options, but could still access 28% of listed properties, an increase of 7.7% from 2016.

Northwest, WA

Table 3: Rental Affordability, Northwest WA, 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)	18	2.5%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	11	1.5%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	37	5.2%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	7	1.0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	10	1.4%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	8	1.1%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	234	32.7%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	55	7.7%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	13	1.8%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	103	14.4%
	Total No of Properties	716		

On the Snapshot weekend, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
46	245

Median Rent

Unlike the Southwest where the number of listed properties remained consistent between 2016 and 2017, and in Perth where the number of properties increased, the Northwest region had a significant drop in the number of listed properties. In 2016, there were 1,009 properties compared to 716 in 2017, a decrease of 29%.

The median weekly rental price in the Northwest decreased by 7% from $400 in 2016 to $375 in 2017.

Government Benefits

Despite the drop in rents, there remained few housing options for people on income support in the Northwest. Only 1.5% of properties were affordable and appropriate for a single parent on a Parenting Payment and only 2.5% of properties were suitable for a two parent household with children in receipt of Newstart.

Seniors fared slightly better, but in the entire Northwest region there were only 37 affordable properties for couples and 10 properties for singles on an Aged Pension.

There were no affordable properties for people on Newstart or a Youth Allowance in the entire Northwest region.

Minimum Wage Earners

Almost 33% of properties were suitable for families with two parents earning a minimum wage; 14% were affordable and appropriate for families on one minimum wage and in receipt of Parenting Payment. Singles on a minimum wage had fewer options, with only 1.8% (n=13) affordable and appropriate for singles without children and 7.7% (n=55) for singles with children.

These were worrying figures as apart from the single parent with two children household all other minimum wage earners saw a decrease in the number of appropriate and affordable properties available to them this year due to decreasing overall stock.

Discussion

Consistent with previous years, this year's Snapshot found a severe lack of housing options in WA for people on income support payments. With over 18,500 households on the waitlist for social housing with an average wait time of three years, most low income households must find somewhere to live in the private rental market.[ii] When housing is unaffordable, low income households end up paying a large percentage of their income on rent causing significant financial hardship, foregoing basic necessities, borrowing money from friends or family and, in some cases, experiencing homelessness.

The number of people at risk of homelessness is increasing every year, with 24,203 Western Australians seeking assistance from a homelessness specialist service in 2015/2016, an increase of 5% from the previous year.[iii]

Households with two parents working full-time fared better in this year's Snapshot than in previous years. Falling rents, following the highs during the mining boom, have brought some relief to working families struggling to keep up with bills, although many working families continue to struggle to cover the cost of childcare to enable full time employment. Nevertheless, lower rents mean more household funds are available for other living expenses including food, school uniforms, family outings and saving for the future. Alongside lower housing costs, the slowing of the WA economy has also brought economic uncertainty to many working families. With growing rates of unemployment, under-employment and increased casualisation of the workforce, many Western Australian households are in precarious financial circumstances.

There are 57,000 Western Australians in receipt of a Disability Support Pension with limited options in the private rental market. Less than 0.2% (n=25) of the properties across all three regions were affordable for someone on a Disability Support Pension. While those 25 properties were deemed affordable, they may not be suitable for a tenant's individualised needs in terms of location or universal design.

Over 220,000 people receive the Aged Pension in WA, approximately a quarter of whom are renters.[iv] Decreasing rates of homeownership suggest there will be a growing number of retirees who will be renting in the future.[v] Less than 1% of properties in the Snapshot were affordable and appropriate for a single person on the Aged Pension and among those limited properties, many are not likely to be suitable for people with mobility issues.

The changing rental market in WA will provide a bargain for some and create a burden for others. For example, in this year's Snapshot there were a substantial number of properties that offered incentives to prospective tenants including one or two weeks free rent or a $100 gift card to entice potential tenants. The flipside of falling rents are challenges facing tenants when they have to break a lease, often due to poor health or a job loss. When a tenant breaks their lease, they are liable for the difference between the original rent on their lease and the reduced rent for new tenants. This can cause considerable financial hardship as they end up paying partial rent for a home they no longer live in.

Policy Implications

Commonwealth and State Governments need to work together to improve affordability in the rental market.

Increase supply of social housing

- Increase the net supply of social housing to provide safe, affordable accommodation for those priced out of the private rental market. Target 6% of total housing stock to be social housing by 2025.

- Develop financing mechanisms, such as Affordable Housing Bonds, to provide capital for social housing providers to build more housing.

Increase adequacy of income support

- The current rate of Newstart ($268 per week) is insufficient to cover accommodation and living expenses and must be increased to ensure a basic standard of living for jobseekers.

- The Disability Support Pension should be increased to provide a basic standard of living for people with disability in the private rental market.

Support long-term investment and sustainability in the rental market

- Remove distortions in the tax system that inflate the cost of housing and discourage institutional investment in the private rental sector.

- Increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance to improve housing affordability for people on low incomes.

Conclusion

Affordable housing provides the foundation people need to engage in employment, attend school and maintain healthy relationships.

Following years of inflated rents during the mining boom, Western Australia is seeing some marked improvements in rental affordability. Downward pressure on rents has been particularly pronounced for higher-end properties; however rents for more moderate properties have also come down creating more favourable conditions for working families. For households with two full-time minimum wage earners, there are more affordable and appropriate properties available this year than were available at the same time last year.

Nevertheless, the situation remains dire for households on fixed incomes including pensioners, people with disability, job seekers and single parents. These households will continue to struggle unless rental accommodation becomes more affordable.

Appendix 1: Assumptions regarding affordability & 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 on the internet and 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).[67]
- 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.
- 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 two properties.
- 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 bedroom property is suitable for a family with one child, while a family with 2 children would require a 3 bedroom property
- Share houses and bed-sits/studios are not suitable for couples; the exception is for couples on the age pension (assumption we have adopted in the past but not stipulated).

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

[67] As in previous years, this year's rental listings were retrieved and exported by REA Group from the realestate.com.au website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors, for example, instead of the highest rents being captured from the rents that were banded, the median or the lower band might have been picked up by the system. Where possible the effect has been minimised and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

[i] Unpublished figures produced for WACOSS by the Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW and ACOSS
[ii] WA Housing Authority Annual Report 2015-2016
[iii] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. Specialist homelessness services 2015–16: Western Australia fact sheet. Cat. no. HOU 287. Canberra: AIHW.
[iv] Based on 52,482 renters over 60 years of age as of ABS (2011) Census.
[v] Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees (2017) No Place Like Home: The impact of falling rates of homeownership on retirement.