

## Overview

### Housing Solutions for ALL Tasmanians

Secure, appropriate and affordable housing is a foundation for a healthy community and sound economy. Housing is a basic need – it's hard to study, work or be part of the community without a secure home.

Increased housing costs are adding greatly to the cost of living for Tasmanians. Many people with low to moderate incomes are now paying 30 to 60% of their income on rent in the private market.<sup>1</sup> Costly housing across Tasmania is forcing many people to make impossible choices between essentials such as food and heating, or keeping their home.

Tasmania's economy is doing well, but the benefits need to be shared. While the booming housing market is good for some, many ordinary Tasmanians are struggling to afford to rent or buy a home. Tasmania's economic and population growth must be matched with a well-resourced housing strategy. For many Tasmanians, owning their own home will only ever be a dream.

There is no easy solution, but a committed government, working together with the community and private sectors towards a sound strategy, has the best chance of creating lasting solutions for all Tasmanians. Shelter Tas supports Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025 and ongoing Action Plans, however more is needed through a whole of government approach.

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## Shelter Tasmania calls for:

Priority 1: **More affordable rental housing**

Priority 2: **Improved security for private renters**

Priority 3: **Greater support for young people**

Priority 4: **Better planning for affordable housing**

## WORKING TOGETHER

*Now is the time to work together to consider how best to address Tasmania's housing crisis. Shelter Tasmania called for a Housing Summit prior to the March election, and we were pleased to see the announcement of the first Housing Summit shortly after the election. The Summit brought together government, community and private sector stakeholders to work together to solve the housing crisis. We must continue this process of combining our shared knowledge, tools, resources and creativity to give us the best chance to find solutions that will work. Shelter Tas calls for this continued collaboration to inform the next version of Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan, ensuring we work together towards the common goal of housing all Tasmanians.*

# Priority 1

## More affordable rental housing

**WE NEED:** Clear and firm targets for increased affordable rental housing, in the form of public and community housing, to meet growing demand and reduce homelessness.

Since 2014, Tasmania has had a **36%** increase in social housing applications<sup>ii</sup>

Over 3,000 households are on Tasmania's Social Housing Register and homelessness is on the rise. We welcome the broad targets for affordable housing announced by the major parties, but it is not clear how many of these will be allocated as public and community housing (ie housing that is owned and managed by the State Government or not for profit community housing providers).

Time has proven that public and community housing is housing that stays affordable in the long term. We have not invested enough in new public and community housing, this needs to improve.

 **14,500** Tasmanian households live in housing stress<sup>iii</sup>

Tasmania needs at least 150 new public and community housing dwellings each year to keep up with current demand.

# Priority 2

## Improved security for private renters

**WE NEED:** Recognition that more and more Tasmanians are renting their home, and for longer periods of time. Shelter Tas calls for improved housing security provisions in the Residential Tenancy Act, 1997 and to make sure it provides for the needs of our young, elderly and disabled community members who are renting. Better regulation of online short term accommodation (such as Airbnb and Stayz) is also needed.

In Tasmania, 1 in 4 households rent their home, with more than 40% renting for longer than 10 years. For thousands of Tasmanians, a rental property is their home and not just a place they pass through. However, many renters worry about their lease not being renewed or being able to afford a rent rise. Young, elderly and disabled renters are particularly vulnerable. Rental properties are also scarce. In Hobart, vacancy rates are at an all-time low (0.4%), yet some 600 entire houses have been diverted for short term rental use through online platforms (such as Airbnb and Stayz).<sup>iv</sup> Renters in Tasmania deserve a better deal.

**4 in 5** Tenants have leases of 12 months or less, or no fixed term at all<sup>v</sup>

*A multi-stakeholder taskforce needs to be formed to review the Residential Tenancy Act to help find ways to improve security conditions for tenants.*

*We also need stronger regulation of short term online accommodation to protect our long-term housing supply.*

# Priority 3

## Greater support for young people

**WE NEED:** Increased accommodation options and levels of support available to young people, to help them make a positive start in life and prevent their risk of homelessness.

nearly **1 in 3** Tasmanian social housing applicants are under 24

less than **1 in 200** Social housing tenancies are held by young people in Tas<sup>vi</sup>

Being able to afford a home is important for all Tasmanians, but young people are particularly disadvantaged. Finding somewhere affordable to live is hard for many young people who rely on casual work or income support. Discrimination is common. Many young people live in housing that is overcrowded or sub-standard and others are homeless.

As well as providing more affordable rental housing (see Priority 1), increasing the housing options for young people, and the support needed to help them learn how to live independently are some of the best measures we can take to avoid homelessness. Early intervention to reduce family breakup and domestic violence is also needed.

*Proposals to increase housing options for young people need to be developed in consultation with the community sector to make sure they will succeed. Funds to operate facilities and services must also be guaranteed.*

# Priority 4

## Better planning for affordable housing

**WE NEED:** Tasmania's planning system to play its part in meeting our housing needs by encouraging affordable housing in our cities and towns.

How we regulate development through Tasmania's planning system affects the type and location of housing that we get. Flexible planning regulations can encourage different kinds of housing such as separate houses, flats and apartments; homes designed for living with a disability; and homes people can age in. Planning can also increase the supply of affordable housing. Coupled with the use of government-owned land, the planning system can increase the supply of affordable rental housing in the form of public and community housing. The opportunity for this to happen has been lost at Hobart's Macquarie Point Redevelopment – this should not happen again.

 If housing costs exceed **30%** of a low income household's (households with the lowest 40% of income) gross income, then that household is experiencing housing stress<sup>i</sup>

*Tasmania's planning legislation lacks any clear policy on housing. It is time we followed other States' lead and modernised our planning system to help deliver affordable housing for Tasmanians.*

*We also need a commitment for the release of any government land for residential development to include affordable rental housing in the form of public and community housing.*



## Further Information

Please see Shelter Tasmania's detailed fact sheets for further information on each of our priorities, available online at <http://www.sheltertass.org.au/priorities/>

## End Notes

- <sup>i</sup> SGS Economics & Planning 2017, *Rental Affordability Index, May 2017*. Community Sector Banking, National Shelter, SGS Economics & Planning
- <sup>ii</sup> Department for Health and Human Services, Human Services Dashboard Statistics
- <sup>iii</sup> Where households pay more than 30% of their income on housing
- <sup>iv</sup> Anglicare Tasmania 2017, *Rental Affordability Snapshot Tasmania*
- <sup>v</sup> Choice (2017). *Unsettled: Life in Australia's private rental market*.
- <sup>vi</sup> Department of Health and Human Services