

More affordable rental housing

What are we asking for?

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

Shelter Tasmania welcomes the announcement of targets for affordable housing by the major parties, but it is not clear how many of these will be public and community housing.

Time has proven that providing public and community housing is the only way to guarantee that housing will stay affordable in the long term. For too long we have not invested enough in new public and community housing, with demand now well outstripping supply. Our members are reporting an unprecedented shortage of rental housing, leading to levels of homelessness not seen before. This situation needs to be urgently addressed by all levels of government.



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 stressⁱ



14,500

Tasmanian households live in housing stressⁱⁱ

Tasmania needs at least 150 new public and community housing dwellings a year to help meet demand - this means housing that is owned and managed by the State Government or not for profit community housing providers. We can help pay for this by retiring our State's historic public housing debt which sees us paying half our federal housing grant back to the Australian Government each year (almost \$16m last year).

Why is this important?

The lack of affordable rental housing has implications for more than just individuals and families, it impacts the whole community. Access to secure housing underpins our community's health, education and the economy's ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce.

The chronic shortage of affordable housing is forcing many low to moderate income earners to make impossible choices between essentials such as food and heating or keeping their home. Single parent families, young people and single people (including our elderly) are the worst affected.

What is the issue?

The affordability of housing across Tasmania has declined markedly in recent years. House prices may be cheaper here compared to the mainland, but Tasmania has the highest proportion of low income households in Australia. The latest Rental Affordability Index (November 2017) shows housing stress rising up the income ladder, and now also affecting working families.ⁱ Hobart is Australia's second least affordable capital, after Sydney. More than 14,500 households in Tasmania live in housing stress (where households pay more than 30% of their income on housing).

Since 2014, the number of people applying for public and community housing on Tasmania's Social Housing Register has grown by 36%.ⁱⁱⁱ There are now 3,000 Tasmanians waiting for a housing allocation, which can take up to 2 years or more. The level of homelessness has also grown. The number of people seeking support from Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) providers has increased by 28% since 2011.^{iv} A recent Shelter Tasmania member survey indicated that there has been a surge in homelessness across the State in the past two years.

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28%^{vi}

The crisis support system is severely strained and members are increasingly unable to respond to requests for assistance. One provider reports that their unassisted requests for support have increased in the last 3 years from an average of 60 per month to 300 a month. The shelters are also blocked: people in shelters are staying for longer because they can't find an affordable rental property to move to. This keeps them in homelessness for longer and means that others in need of shelter can't get it. One of the groups most often affected are parents with children.

It follows that **our fastest growing homeless population is children and young people**: 1 in 5 homeless people in Tasmania are under 9 years old, while 1 in 3 are under 24 years.^v

We know the most effective way to end homelessness is to provide housing. We urgently need to increase our targets for public and community housing. A cross-sector Housing Summit would give us a starting point for working together on this.

Shelter Tasmania asks all parties to bring together government, community and private sector stakeholders in a Tasmanian Housing Summit, to find ways to work together to solve the housing crisis.



Further Information

Please see Shelter Tasmania's Election Priorities Overview for further information, available online at www.sheltertass.org.au/news/tas-election-2018/

End Notes

ⁱ SGS Economics and Planning 2017, *Rental Affordability Index, May 2017*. Community Sector Banking, National Shelter and SGS Economics and Planning

ⁱⁱ Where households pay more than 30% of their income on housing

ⁱⁱⁱ Department for Health and Human Services, Human Services Dashboard Statistics

^{iv} AIHW Special Homelessness Services 2011-12 and 2015-16, Supplementary Tables, Tasmania

^v Department of Health and Human Services