



**SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AFFORDABILITY
JULY 2019**



GPO Box 848 Hobart Tasmania 7001 | www.shelertas.org.au
E: ceo@shelertas.org.au | P: 03 6224 5488 | M: 0419 536 100

SUPPORTED BY



Tasmanian
Government

Shelter Tas is supported by the Department of Communities Tasmania.

Submission to the House of Assembly Select Committee on Housing Affordability July 2019

About Shelter Tas

Shelter Tasmania is the peak body for housing and homelessness services in Tasmania. Shelter Tas has over 40 years' experience as an independent not-for-profit organisation representing the interests of low to moderate income housing consumers, housing providers and specialist homelessness organisations across Tasmania.

Shelter Tas is committed to working towards a fairer and more just housing system. Our vision is that every person has affordable, appropriate, safe and secure housing; our mission is to end homelessness in Tasmania. We provide an independent voice on housing rights and a link between governments and the community through consultation, research and policy advice.

All funded homelessness services and all registered Community Housing providers in Tasmania are members of Shelter Tas. Shelter Tas consults regularly with our members across the State.

Shelter Tas welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the House of Assembly Select Committee on Housing Affordability. We note that the Terms of Reference are extensive, and accordingly, we have kept our comments brief. Shelter Tas would be happy to elaborate on any part of our submission, including our recommendations, and to appear before the Committee if that would be helpful.

Our submission draws on the latest research, data and extensive consultation with our members, interstate colleagues and national peaks. The content of our submission is the responsibility of Shelter Tas and reflects our knowledge and expertise as the State's peak body for housing and homelessness services.

We have also attached a copy of our most recent submission to the State Budget Process 2019-20 as an appendix. The Shelter Tas Budget Submission presents our priorities based on research and extensive consultation with our members.

Executive Summary

A substantial inquiry into housing affordability is very timely, as Tasmania's housing system has changed dramatically since the most recent Parliamentary Inquiry into affordable housing was held in 2008. The Hon Terry Martin MLC then chaired the Parliament of Tasmania's Legislative Council inquiry into housing affordability, Shelter Tas gave evidence to the Committee and made a submission to the Inquiry.¹ Since 2008, and especially since 2016, Tasmanians have experienced an unprecedented surge in rental prices in the private rental market. Vacancy rates in Hobart's private rental market have fallen as low as 0.3%, reflecting a chronic shortage of rental accommodation. Increasing numbers of Tasmanian households are experiencing rental stress due to the combination of high rents and the lowest incomes in Australia.² Weekly incomes in Tasmania are 25% (over \$300) lower than the national average.³ The latest Rental Affordability Index, which compares rents to incomes, again confirms Hobart as the least affordable capital city in Australia.⁴ The rest of Tasmania has become the least affordable 'rest of the state' area.

Tasmania faces a housing and homelessness crisis. Homelessness will only end when there is an adequate supply of appropriate, affordable safe and secure housing, along with the support people need to stay housed. To achieve and maintain this outcome, all sides of politics, all levels of government, the community and private sectors need to work together. We need to sustain this commitment until all members of the Tasmanian community have access to the housing that we all need to thrive.

*All the evidence shows that the era of cheap rent in Tasmania's private rental market is long past. All the sources of evidence and trend analysis confirm the need to build more social housing, which stays affordable for people in the long term. To reduce homelessness and housing stress, we need more affordable housing. The private market is simply not delivering affordable housing to keep pace with demand. To be clear, **we need to build more affordable social rental housing as the absolute top priority for our state and federal governments.***

¹ www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Council/Archived/Reports/Housing%20Affordability%20Report.pdf

² ABS Census 2016.

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6?opendocument

³ ABS Census 2016.

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6?opendocument

⁴ The Rental Affordability Index is an independent report produced by National Shelter, SGS Economics, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Community Sector Banking. The November 2018 RAI Report is available at <http://www.sheltertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RAI-Nov-2018-high-quality.pdf>

Addressing the Terms of Reference

(a) The experiences of Tasmanians in housing stress or homelessness

The chronic shortage of affordable rentals is pushing an unacceptable number of Tasmanians into housing stress and homelessness. Housing stress is measured by the relationship between household income and housing costs. Households in the lowest two quintiles (40%) of income are in housing stress when their housing costs more than 30% of their income. The majority of low income Tasmanians live in private rental properties. About 27% of Tasmanian households, almost 40,000 households are renters.⁵ About 8,000 Tasmanian households were experiencing rental stress in 2016, and the figure would certainly be higher now.

As Shelter Tas noted in our 2018-19 Budget Submission:

Since 2014, the number of applicants on Tasmania's Social Housing Register has grown by 36%, or an average of 12% each year.⁶ Applicants wait 49 weeks on average for an allocation, with most allocations made to 'priority' applicants who have high needs (who are homeless, whose safety is at risk, or who have a physical or mental health condition).⁷ 'General' applicants can wait up to two years or more for an allocation.

Similar to the Social Housing Register, the level of homelessness has also grown. Census 2011 recorded an estimated 1,579 Tasmanians experiencing homelessness,⁸ since this Census the number of people seeking support from Specialist Homelessness Services has increased by 28%,⁹ so we expect to also see an increase in the Census 2016 estimates when they are released.

The trend of increasing rental hardship shows no sign of reversing in Tasmania. The *National Rental Affordability Index* has shown for over three years that Hobart continues to be the least affordable capital city in Australia. Households earning a moderate income are paying close to 30% of their income on rent.¹⁰

Tasmanian incomes remain the lowest in the country, while rents continue to rise. Tasmanian household incomes are on average \$300 lower per week than the national average and are falling further behind our surging rental prices. The combination of

⁵ Census, 2016,

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6?opendocument

⁶ Department for Health and Human Services 2016, Human Services Dashboard Statistics. Accessed 11/10/16, and 17/07/17 at <http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/humanservicesstats>

⁷ Housing Tasmania (2015). *The New Housing Assessment System*. Fact Sheet. Version 1.0 June 2015

⁸ Census 2011 cited in Homelessness Australia 2014. (Census 2016 homelessness data available in March 2018)

⁹ AIHW Special Homelessness Services 2011-12 and 2015-16, Supplementary Tables, Tasmania.

¹⁰ National Shelter, Community Sector Banking, Brotherhood of St Laurence and SGS Economics and Planning, November 2018 <https://www.sgsep.com.au/maps/thirdspace/australia-rental-affordability-index/>

rising rents and low incomes creates financial hardship for increasing numbers of people.

The July 2019 *CoreLogic Rent Review* shows yet another increase in Hobart rents.¹¹ This reinforces the trend of worsening affordability that we have seen consistently for several years. CoreLogic reports that rents in Hobart have increased by 45.7% over the last 10 years, far outstripping people's incomes and ability to pay.

Hobart's median rent is at \$457, only one dollar cheaper than renting in Melbourne. This cost is way beyond the reach of many low and middle income Tasmanians. We are paying rents in the private market unheard of just a few years ago. More and more Tasmanians are living in housing poverty.

(b) The management of social housing and delivery of new stock by Housing Tasmania and community housing providers

We refer to the detailed submissions from our community housing members: Centacare Evolve Housing, Community Housing Limited, Housing Choices, Mission Australia Housing and Salvation Army Tasmania.

Shelter Tas emphasises the need for:

- effective long term planning and funding, in place of multiple short term small contracts with community housing providers. Shorter smaller contracts can be inefficient and resource intensive, and do not allow for economies generated by longer term and larger relationships with construction firms;
- the extension of Better Housing *Futures* management agreements beyond their current expiry in 2025, to enable security of income for future construction loans (of 15 years duration and more); and
- the need for a national strategic housing and homelessness plan and reinstatement of the National Supply Council as called for by state-based Community Housing Providers and National Shelter.¹²

¹¹ <https://www.corelogic.com.au/reports/quarterly-rental-review> July 2019

¹² <http://shelter.org.au/site/wp-content/uploads/NSMR-010518-Policy-Priorities-release.pdf>

(c) The impact of a lack of affordable housing on the broader economic and social wellbeing of the Tasmanian community

Housing is essential social and economic infrastructure. It is the bedrock for people's wellbeing, participation in work and community activities, and underpins the care of dependent children. All Tasmanians deserve to live free of housing stress, poverty and homelessness.¹³

Housing is the highest household expense for people on low to moderate incomes. There are over 120,000 Tasmanians living in poverty.¹⁴ Single parent families, young people and people living alone, including our elderly, are struggling with rents and essential costs of living.

Productivity depends on people having safe and affordable homes as the basis for their social and economic participation. The lack of affordable, appropriate and secure housing directly undermines our community's economic and social wellbeing.¹⁵ Affordable housing underpins the growth of our economy by enabling people's participation and productivity.

Over one quarter of Tasmanian households, almost 40,000 households including the majority of low income households, are renters.¹⁶ With more than one in four Tasmanians renting their home, the combination of rising rent and low income growth has created unprecedented hardship for many people.

Increasing numbers of Tasmanian households are experiencing rental stress due to the combination of high rents and the lowest incomes in Australia.¹⁷ At worst, people become homeless because they are financially excluded from private rental opportunities.

Tasmanians face a lack of affordable housing across the entire State. Regional Tasmania has overtaken regional New South Wales as the least affordable of the 'rest of state' areas analysed in the Rental Affordable Index.¹⁸ Increasing demand that is not met by new supply intensifies the competition for affordable well-located rental housing.

¹³ As noted in the 2019-20 Budget Priority Statement by our sister peak TasCOSS, housing is a basic essential that all Tasmanians need to achieve their potential.

¹⁴ TasCOSS 2018 <https://www.tascoss.org.au/120000-tasmanians-live-in-poverty/>

¹⁵ Productivity Commission (2016). *Productivity Commission Study Report, Overview*, Canberra, November 2016 accessed 5/12/16 at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/human-services/identifying-reform/report>

¹⁶ ABS Census, 2016.

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6?opendocument

¹⁷ ABS Census 2016.

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6?opendocument

¹⁸ <http://www.sheltertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RAI-Nov-2018-high-quality.pdf>

(d) The impact of a lack of affordable housing on the implementation and outcomes of other State Government programs

All government programs depend on an adequate supply of affordable housing that meets people's needs. Many programs, such as the NDIS, are predicated on the availability and affordability of housing in the mainstream environment. However, the assumption that affordable appropriate housing will be available for all who need it is a false assumption.

Affordable, appropriate housing is clearly essential for everyone; especially for people escaping family violence, for keeping students engaged in education, for economic participation, for a healthy community, for people facing mental health challenges and for equal participation for recipients of NDIS funding.

(e) The effectiveness and limitations of current State and Federal Government strategies and services to alleviate the impact of poor housing affordability in the Tasmanian community

The lack of affordable housing is the major cause of homelessness and housing stress. The key limitation is the inadequate supply of long term affordable housing, especially for renters on low and moderate incomes.

With an increasing population, and intensifying demand from tourism and students, Tasmania needs to reframe our approach to affordable housing. Shelter Tas calls for the rate of affordable social housing to be raised from 5% to 10% of housing in order to keep pace with growing pressures, and prevent homelessness and housing stress from worsening.

As the peak body for housing and homelessness, Shelter Tas is acutely aware that poor housing affordability has a direct impact on people who are experiencing housing stress and homelessness and the services that support them. Our member services deal every day with people who cannot find affordable rentals, who are experiencing housing stress, and who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness.

Shelters and crisis accommodation across Tasmania are often filled to capacity, and forced to turn people away. Unless there is a pathway to affordable rentals, people cannot find a way out of temporary or crisis accommodation.

With such a chronic shortage of affordable homes, people face an increased risk of homelessness in Tasmania. There were over 1,600 Tasmanians experiencing homelessness according to the 2016 Census figures, and this figure will be higher now. Our members tell us and data shows growing numbers of singles and families with children seeking help from homelessness services, with one in ten clients now being children under ten years of age.

Older single women are the fastest growing cohort of people seeking assistance from homelessness services.¹⁹

Homelessness is often hidden – with people couch surfing, living in crowded and inadequate conditions, or precarious unsafe situations. Homelessness is far more common than people think, with only 8% of the homeless population sleeping rough. We need to consider the other 92% who are invisible: people in insecure, temporary, overcrowded unsafe places. This can mean people sleeping in a car, couch-surfing or in very short term accommodation.

It is unacceptable that anyone in Tasmania is living in overcrowded or substandard conditions, at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness. Governments at all levels need to resolve the housing crisis and ensure that everyone can find the safe, secure, affordable appropriate housing that they need. This means a substantial increase in the supply of affordable social rental housing, up to 10% of dwellings in Tasmania.

(f) The impact of historic housing debt on the management and delivery of social housing

Repayment of the historic housing debt of \$157M to the Commonwealth continues to be a drag on the State's capacity to deliver affordable housing and sustain the system of public housing. In 2018-19, repayments to the Federal Government have taken over \$15 million out of the State's resources for housing, in line with previous years. This means that half of the federal housing grant of \$30M is repaid to the Australian government every year before a cent is spent on housing in Tasmania.

Shelter Tas calls for the burden of Tasmania's historic housing debt to be shared across all of government, not just the housing portfolio. Retirement of this historic housing debt would enable much needed capital investment in affordable housing, which we need now more than ever. At the time of writing (July 2019) Tasmania was still waiting for any definite result from the negotiations between Senator Jacqui Lambie and the Federal Government that is hoped will relieve or reduce the housing debt.

(g) Strategies to address the \$73 million maintenance liability of Housing Tasmania and community housing providers

We refer to the detailed submissions from our community housing members: Centacare Evolve Housing, Community Housing Limited, Housing Choices, Mission Australia Housing and Salvation Army Tasmania.

¹⁹ https://www.sheltertass.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ST_FACT-SHEET_Homelessness-v4_June2019.pdf

(h) The impact of population growth and market developments on housing supply

With more people living in Tasmania, we need to plan and deliver greater supply to meet this demand. Shelter Tas has called repeatedly for a housing impact assessment for all relevant government policies, such as population growth. Without this broad strategic approach, and without an accompanying commitment to increase the proportion of affordable rental housing, Tasmania's increasing population will increase the number of Tasmanians experiencing housing hardship, rental stress and the risk and reality of homelessness.

Population growth increases competition for the limited supply of rental properties. This supply is further depleted by the demand from short-stay visitors seeking accommodation. The increase in tourism numbers is another form of population growth that demands accommodation. Between 2016 and 2018, the Airbnb listings in Tasmania increased by 162% from 1,827 listings to 4,783.²⁰

The short-stay accommodation industry has a significant impact on the homelessness and affordable housing sector in Tasmania. Research, statistical analysis and feedback provided by our members show that increases in short term accommodation displace long term rental properties from the housing market. For example, the University of Tasmania's Institute for the Study of Social Change has stated that "We may not know exactly how many of the 2,055 high filter entire homes currently listed on Airbnb in Tasmania have been taken out of long term housing supply, but mounting evidence, both here in Tasmania and beyond, suggests that the 'conversion rate' in inner city markets in particular is likely around 75%."²¹ In a context of an absolute shortage of housing, historically low vacancy rates in rental housing and not enough new supply, this loss of rental properties has substantial impact on housing and homelessness services and the low income and vulnerable Tasmanians they assist.

In our 2018 State-wide Member Survey, over 35% of Shelter Tas members identified "Reform of Tasmania's planning system to provide affordable housing and better regulate AirBnB" as one of their top five priorities.

Baseline data and ongoing monitoring of affordable housing supply and demand is crucial to managing the impact of population growth and market development. Shelter Tas has repeatedly called for an integrated and comprehensive government approach that recognises housing as essential infrastructure, including a Housing Impact Analysis for all relevant policies such as population, tourism, student numbers, regional economic development and City Deals.²²

²⁰ UTAS Housing Update August 2018.

²¹ *Tasmanian Housing Update*, August 2018, p. 21. <http://www.utas.edu.au/social-change/publications/housing/tasmanian-housing-update-aug-2018>

²² <https://www.sheltertass.org.au/shelter-tas-budget-submission-2019-2020/>

(i) The relationship between housing, health and education

People cannot be healthy, and cannot participate effectively in education without safe, appropriate and affordable homes.

Overcrowding, housing stress, and precarious housing all impact negatively on people's wellbeing, health and capacity to engage in education. It is well known that housing stress, the fear of eviction and housing poverty can trigger new mental health conditions, exacerbate existing conditions, and prevent, disrupt or delay recovery from mental illness. Lived experience of homelessness damages people's mental health.²³

There is an urgent need to address the housing shortage in Tasmania to both prevent people's mental health getting worse, and to aid people's recovery. The major reason people give for accessing emergency housing services is that they have nowhere else to go, which reflects the shortages across the housing system. Both housing and clinical services need appropriate resources to support people's mental health, especially where people are facing both of these challenges. An affordable, appropriate, safe and secure home for everyone is needed to obtain the social and economic benefits of improving mental health.

Clients with mental health conditions (diagnosed and undiagnosed) are seen regularly in crisis shelters and in the community housing system. People are regularly discharged from hospital into crisis accommodation as a housing of last resort. The lack of mental health services for clients presents significant challenges in the housing and homelessness sector, which is already facing a critical shortfall of affordable accommodation.²⁴

*We all need a home we can count on. It is very difficult to raise a family, go to work, be part of our local communities or maintain our health and wellbeing without a good place to call home.*²⁵

(j) Changes to Tasmania's residential tenancy laws that could improve housing affordability, security and living standards in Tasmania

Shelter Tas and our members, especially the Tenants' Union of Tasmania, are strong advocates for the 40,000 Tasmanian households (more than 27% of all households) who are renting their homes.²⁶ As people spend more time as renters, we need to ensure that residential tenancy laws are well designed and responsive to consumer needs. Renting in

²³ https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/29381/Housing-homelessness-and-mental-health-towards-systems-change.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.shelertas.org.au/submission-to-the-productivity-commission-the-social-and-economic-benefits-of-improving-mental-health/>

²⁵ Choice and NATO – *Disrupted* 2018

²⁶ <https://www.shelertas.org.au/private-rental-market-in-tasmania/>

the private rental market is no longer just a short term option. More than 40% of Tasmanian renters spend over 10 years in the rental market.²⁷ The recent report *Disrupted: the consumer experience of renting in Australia* reveals that despite paying thousands of dollars each year, tenants face unsatisfactory conditions and are often too afraid to complain. In this context it is crucial to maintain a well-functioning system that protects both tenants and landlords, and enables people who rent their homes to flourish.

Shelter Tas refers to the detailed submission from our member organisation the Tenants' Union of Tasmania. In addition, we emphasise:

- the need for Tasmania to modernise and strengthen the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* to achieve best practice on matters such as energy efficiency, fairness with respect to rent increases and security of tenancy, digital rights and protections, health and safety and pets. Stronger tenancy protections are particularly important when the private rental market is so competitive;
- the need for increasing longer term secure funding, and increased resources for the Tenants' Union of Tasmania and the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to ensure that all tenants across the State have access to appropriate advice and support, and existing rights and protections under the RTA are upheld;
- the need for longer leases that reflect the longer periods that people are spending in the private rental market; and
- implement best national practice on matters such as pets, digital rights, energy efficiency and emerging disruptive technologies such as apps for tenants and landlords.

(k) Successful strategies in other jurisdictions that could be effective in improving affordability in Tasmania

It is important to acknowledge the many successful strategies and programs already operating in Tasmania. The *Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-25*, *Better Housing Futures* and our Specialist Homelessness Services display significant expertise and effectiveness. In many cases, rather than looking elsewhere for new ideas, the need is to scale up the existing services and to address other neighbouring areas such as income support, mental health services, transport, education and employment. While other jurisdictions may offer good models, we need to understand their contextual environments and be clear about evidence for how effectiveness and scale would translate into Tasmania.

²⁷ Choice, NATO and National Shelter *Disrupted: the consumer experience of renting in Australia* 2018 <https://www.choice.com.au/money/property/renting/articles/choice-rental-rights-report-dec-2018>

Shelter Tas acknowledges two important areas where there are opportunities to improve Tasmania's performance: consumer engagement and inclusionary zoning.

Shelter Tas has called for an independent consultation mechanism for consumers of housing and homelessness services. Shelter Tas and our members have identified this as a gap in the current Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plans. We recommend adapting the current Peer Education and Support Program model established in Victoria.²⁸ A best practice model for Tasmania would incorporate co-design, and address emerging technology and digital communications. We recommend:

- a new initiative to incorporate consumer engagement in all service agreements in the housing and homelessness sector and to assist services to develop a consumer engagement and feedback program;
- a consultation mechanism for engagement with housing and homelessness service consumers, so that decisions and policies can include a voice from 'experts in experience'; and
- an independent complaints and feedback pathway for consumers of housing and homelessness support services.

The second opportunity is Inclusionary zoning. Inclusionary zoning is successfully used in many jurisdictions. It introduces a mechanism within the planning system to increase the supply of affordable housing. Inclusionary zoning mandates or incentivises the inclusion of affordable housing within new residential developments. South Australia presents a useful model on which to draw.

Inclusionary zoning will enhance Tasmania's planning system, which is currently silent on affordable housing. Tasmania's planning system needs to play its part in meeting our housing needs by encouraging affordable housing in our cities and towns, but that is not happening. Despite Tasmania's current housing crisis, there continues to be some resistance to using planning mechanisms, such as inclusionary zoning, to address the chronic shortage of affordable housing.

A report by National Shelter released in 2019 shows the effectiveness of inclusionary zoning to support the development of affordable housing in other jurisdictions.²⁹

²⁸ <http://chp.org.au/services/pesp/>

²⁹ <http://shelter.org.au/site/wp-content/uploads/190325-Inclusionary-Zoning-Report-V6-Final.pdf>

(l) Any other matters incidental thereto

To improve housing affordability in Tasmania, Shelter Tas makes the following recommendations:

1. Tasmania needs more ambitious targets for increasing the supply of affordable public and community rental housing.

The *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-25* provides short term project-based targets, but with increasing population and other pressures demand continues to outstrip supply. We call for the State Government to endorse a long term percentage-based social housing target for affordable housing. The recently released *National Plan for Affordable Housing* by the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) sets targets to guide investment and action over the next decade.

Shelter Tas advocates that a medium-long term target for Tasmania of up to 10% of dwellings be affordable social rental housing.³⁰

2. Tasmania needs an integrated and comprehensive government approach that recognises housing as essential infrastructure, including a Housing Impact Analysis for all relevant policies such as population, tourism, student numbers, regional economic development and City Deals.
3. Tasmania needs better data on housing supply and demand that is objective, centralised and comprehensive. At present, data and information are fragmented, piecemeal and often track activity rather than outcome. To support good decision-making and ensure effective monitoring of targets, we need regular, reliable and robust data.
4. Tasmania needs a mechanism to ensure that 'experts in experience' have a say in all decisions and policies. A systemic consumer voice can also contribute to an independent complaints and feedback pathway for consumers of housing and homelessness support services.
5. Tasmania needs to make affordable housing an explicit planning priority in Tasmania's planning legislation. The planning system has a significant influence on housing outcomes, impacting the nature of housing supply, type, size, location, accessibility and affordability. We need a plan to phase in inclusionary zoning that will ensure urban design, regional and local planning all include the delivery of affordable housing, because affordable housing is essential infrastructure that shapes our lives and our communities, towns and cities.³¹

³⁰ <https://www.communityhousing.com.au/national-plan/>

³¹ See Shelter Tas Priorities Statement 2018 <http://www.sheltertass.org.au/priorities/>

6. Tasmania needs to modernise and strengthen the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* to achieve best practice on matters such as energy efficiency, fairness with respect to rent increases and security of tenancy, digital rights and protections, health and safety and pets. Stronger tenancy protections are particularly important when the private rental market is so competitive. Shelter Tas recommends increasing longer term secure funding, increased resources for the Tenants' Union of Tasmania and reviewing the role of the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to ensure that all tenants across the state have access to appropriate advice and support, and existing rights and protections under the RTA are upheld.
7. Specialist Homelessness Services need standards in areas including caseloads, worker ratios and support periods. Until national standards are available, Tasmania needs to develop and implement robust standards and benchmarks.

Shelter Tas appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the House of Assembly Select Committee Inquiry into Housing Affordability. Please see also our attached Submission to the State Budget Process 2019-20. We look forward to contributing further during the Select Committee process.

For further information on this submission, please contact:

Pattie Chugg

Chief Executive Officer Shelter Tas

ceo@sheltertass.org.au



HOUSING: THE ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**SUBMISSION TO THE STATE GOVERNMENT
BUDGET PROCESS 2019-2020**



Shelter Tas is happy to discuss any of the recommendations in this submission.
If you have any queries, please contact:
Pattie Chugg, Executive Officer
P: 03 6224 5488
E: eo@sheltertass.org.au

SUPPORTED BY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
ACHIEVING AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING FOR TASMANIA.....	3
1. Additional resources to increase the supply of social housing stock	3
2. More ambitious targets for increasing rental housing.....	4
3. Recognise housing as essential infrastructure	4
4. Strengthen oversight and accountability	4
5. Manage the impact of the short stay accommodation sector	5
6. Ensure Housing Connect and support services funding meets demand.....	5
7. Appropriate resources for homelessness and housing services	5
8. Appropriate regulation for new and emerging models	5
CONSUMER VOICE AND PROTECTIONS	6
1. Funding to support Homelessness Week	6
2. Consultation mechanism for consumers	6
3. Improving conditions in the private rental market	6
PRIORITY ASKS FROM OUR MEMBERS	8
1. Mental health support.....	8
2. Younger Tasmanians.....	8
3. Older Tasmanians	9
4. Men with and without children in the North West.....	9
5. Extended hours for homelessness support	9
6. Tasmanians with a disability.....	10
7. Family reunification	10
8. Indexation and ERO	10

INTRODUCTION

Shelter Tas is the peak body representing the interests of low to moderate income housing consumers, housing providers and specialist homelessness services across Tasmania. Shelter Tas is pleased to accept the Treasurer's invitation to make a submission to the 2019-20 State Budget on behalf of our members and the housing and homelessness sector. This submission is informed by research and extensive consultation with our members across the social housing and homelessness sector.

Housing is essential social and economic infrastructure. It is the bedrock for people's wellbeing, participation in work and community activities, and underpins the care of dependent children. No Tasmanian deserves to live in housing stress, poverty or homelessness.¹

Affordable, appropriate and secure housing directly impacts our community's health, education and overall wellbeing.² It underpins the growth of our economy by enabling people's participation and productivity. However, increasing numbers of Tasmanian households are experiencing rental stress due to the combination of high rents and the lowest incomes in Australia.³ Incomes in Tasmania are 25% (over \$300) less than the national average.⁴ The latest Rental Affordability Index, which compares rents to incomes, again confirms Hobart as the least affordable capital city in Australia.⁵ In Greater Hobart, rents are now becoming unaffordable for half of all rental households.

Tasmania's housing problem is much wider than Hobart. Regional Tasmania has overtaken regional NSW as the least affordable of the 'rest of state' areas analysed in the Rental Affordability Index.⁶ Increasing demand that is not met by new supply intensifies the competition for affordable well-located rental housing. About 27% of Tasmanian households, almost 40,000 households, and most low income households are renters.⁷ With more than one in four Tasmanians renting their home, the combination of rising rent and low income growth has created unprecedented hardship for many people.

Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025, the *Action Plan 2015-2019* and the second *Action Plan 2019-24* (currently under development) provide an important strategic and co-ordinated approach to addressing the state's housing needs. Shelter Tas welcomes the significant investment by the Tasmanian Government in the *Strategy* and looks forward to continuing to support the development and implementation of the second *Action Plan*. However, to respond adequately to rapidly increasing pressures in the Tasmanian housing market, the second *Action Plan* requires

¹ As noted in the 2019-20 Budget Priority Statement by our sister peak TasCOSS, housing is a basic essential that all Tasmanians need to achieve their potential.

² Productivity Commission (2016). *Productivity Commission Study Report, Overview*. Canberra. November 2016 accessed 5/12/16 at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/human-services/identifying-reform/report>

³ ABS Census 2016.

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6?opendocument

⁴ ABS Census 2016.

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6?opendocument

⁵ The Rental Affordability Index is an independent report produced by National Shelter, SGS Economics, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Community Sector Banking. The November 2018 RAI Report is available at <http://www.sheltertass.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RAI-Nov-2018-high-quality.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.sheltertass.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RAI-Nov-2018-high-quality.pdf>

⁷ Census, 2016,

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6?opendocument

detailed reporting of housing demand and outcomes at specific cohort/client and regional level. Detailed evaluation and reporting are needed to understand which policy actions work best and to inform the most effective policy responses.

The *Strategy's* positive initiatives need to be scaled up significantly. The chronic shortage of affordable housing and high cost of renting forces many low and moderate income earners to make impossible choices between essentials such as food and heating or keeping their home. We have over 120,000 Tasmanians living in poverty.⁸ Single parent families, young people and people living alone, including our elderly, are struggling with rents and essential costs of living. In contrast, other Tasmanians are enjoying a booming economy. Shelter Tas calls for the benefits of economic growth and GST gains to be shared, first and foremost by ensuring that every Tasmanian has the home they need.⁹

Clear trends continuing through 2018 all show that Tasmania is experiencing an ongoing housing crisis.¹⁰ The vacancy rate in Greater Hobart has reached a low of 0.3%, and there is a chronic shortage of affordable private rentals for people on low incomes across the state. Rising student numbers in Hobart, and increasingly in Launceston, are placing additional pressure on an already stretched housing system.¹¹ Rents are increasing at unprecedented rates and rising numbers of Tasmanians are experiencing rental and mortgage stress.¹² The social housing waiting list is at 3,216 applications, and the average time to house priority applicants is over 60 weeks.¹³ To alleviate the pressures on the housing system, Shelter Tas calls for an increase to the supply of social housing (public and community providers) as a proven way of ensuring housing stays affordable for tenants in the long term.

The 2019-20 Shelter Tas submission to the State Budget process has three sections. In Section 1 we call for the introduction of an integrated approach to housing issues across portfolios. Section 2 presents consumer-related initiatives, and in Section 3 we outline the priority asks from our members. These are opportunities to build on the work of the *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-25*, where population cohorts or regional areas are in urgent need of targeted responses.

⁸ TasCOSS 2018 <https://www.tascoss.org.au/120000-tasmanians-live-in-poverty/>

⁹ See, for example, Saul Eslake *The Tasmania Report 2018* available at <http://www.tcci.com.au/Services/Policies-Research/Tasmania-Report>

¹⁰ See, for example, the Rental Affordability Index, Productivity Commission *2017 Report on Government Services* <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2017/housing-and-homelessness>, and CoreLogic reports on rental vacancy rates <https://www.corelogic.com.au/reports/top-performing-rental-suburbs>.

¹¹ During the last two years, international student enrolments at the University of Tasmania have increased from 3411 in 2016 to 5036 in 2018, an additional 1,625 students. In that time the University has built 750 new apartments. See <http://www.utas.edu.au/social-change/publications/housing/tasmanian-housing-update-aug-2018> section 1.3 and fig 1.5.

¹² Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot <http://www.anglicare.asn.au/our-work/research-reports/the-rental-affordability-snapshot/docs/default-source/default-document-library/final---rental-affordability-snapshotad11d9309d6962baacc1ff0000899bca>,

¹³ https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/humanservicesstats/human_services_dashboard accessed November 2018.

ACHIEVING AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING FOR TASMANIA

It makes good economic sense to meet the housing needs of all Tasmanians. There is an urgent need to boost the supply of social housing and address Tasmania's rental affordability crisis, and to close the growing divide between those who are benefiting from the state's economic boom, and those who are left behind. The Community Housing Sector has a proven track record in Tasmania, currently managing 6076 properties.¹⁴ The Better Housing *Futures* program has a strong record of supporting tenants and providing successful housing options to a diverse range of clients. Shelter Tas recommends drawing on the skills of Community Housing providers and their ability to attract large scale investment and development to address Tasmania's housing crisis.

Shelter Tas has identified eight systemic measures that go beyond the scope of the *Affordable Housing Strategy*, and will help to achieve its outcomes.

- 1. The Tasmanian Government needs to direct additional resources (above current commitments) to increase the supply of social housing stock to a level that can meet our state's escalating housing needs. The State Government can invest more in social housing by:**
 - a. investing the state's stamp duty windfall from higher house purchase prices;
 - b. negotiating the relief of Tasmania's historic housing debt to the Australian Government, a legacy of the former Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, to free up funds to deliver more social housing;¹⁵
 - c. introducing a visitor levy¹⁶ or nightly charge for short stay accommodation and directing the contributions collected towards affordable housing; and
 - d. developing equity partnerships and co-investment models with the community housing sector to broker increased funds from the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation, bond aggregator, and superannuation investment funds.¹⁷

¹⁴ Productivity Commission *2017 Report on Government Services*

<https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2017/housing-and-homelessness>

¹⁵ Each year the Tasmanian Government refunds half the state's funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement to the Australian Government, to repay an historic debt from the former Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. In 2016-17 this meant returning \$15.7m of the \$28.6m received. Tasmania is locked into this arrangement until 2042, when the debt will finally be paid out. Other states have significantly less debt relative to Tasmania, while South Australia and Victoria have succeeded in removing the debt from their housing budgets altogether.

¹⁶ "There may also be merit in giving further consideration to the suggestion of a levy on short-term tourist accommodation, as recently proposed by Airbnb and the Lord Mayor of Hobart. Although this proposal has been promptly rejected by both Government and Opposition, as well as by representatives of the tourism industry, such levies are commonplace in overseas tourist destinations, and may provide a means not only of funding additional tourism-related infrastructure investment, but also of demonstrating to the broader Tasmanian community that the benefits of rapid growth in tourism are being widely shared." Saul Eslake, *Tasmania Report 2018* p 80.

¹⁷ <https://www.communityhousing.com.au/national-plan/>; Michael Lennon presentation at the Shelter Tas 2018 AGM <http://www.shelbertas.org.au/resources/papers-and-reports-2/>

Tasmania's property boom has delivered increased revenue to the State Government through stamp duty on sales prices. However, in response to higher prices, owners seek higher rents or divert properties to the short stay visitor market. Increased investment in social housing can alleviate these negative effects on renters.

The upcoming Federal Election is a perfect opportunity to negotiate the relief of Tasmania's longstanding housing debt to the Commonwealth, with the support of the community sector. In 2018-19 Tasmania's debt repayment was over \$15 million.

A visitor levy or nightly charge is an additional source of revenue to ensure the benefits of the visitor economy are shared with the whole community. Revenue gained can be dedicated to increasing affordable housing, and support for people at risk of homelessness. Many international jurisdictions use this approach to offset the impacts of the tourist accommodation.

2. Tasmania needs more ambitious targets for increasing the supply of public and community rental housing.

The *TAHS 2015-25* provides short term project-based targets, but with increasing population and other pressures demand continues to outstrip supply. We call for the State Government to endorse a long term percentage based social housing target for affordable housing. The recently released *National Plan for Affordable Housing* by the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) sets targets to guide investment and action over the next decade. **Shelter Tas advocates a medium-long term target for Tasmania of up to 10% of dwellings to be affordable social rental housing.**¹⁸

3. Implement an integrated and comprehensive government approach that recognises housing as essential infrastructure, including a Housing Impact Analysis for all relevant policies such as population, tourism, student numbers, regional economic development and City Deals.

- a. Make affordable housing an explicit planning priority in Tasmania's planning legislation. The planning system has a significant influence on housing outcomes, impacting the nature of housing supply, type, size, location, accessibility and affordability. Ensure urban design, regional and local planning all include the delivery of affordable housing, as housing is essential infrastructure that shapes our lives and our communities, towns and cities.¹⁹
- b. Introduce a Housing Impact Analysis as a requirement for all relevant policies, including planning for increased enrolments at educational institutions.
- c. Update and strengthen the procedures for divestment of government land and buildings to ensure that wherever possible these assets are directed to affordable and fair housing solutions. Extend the period of time when government land is offered to other departments from 21 to 90 days before it is made available on the open market. Implement an agreement across government departments that housing will be treated as a top priority for the duration of the state's housing crisis.

4. Strengthen the oversight and accountability measures for the *Affordable Housing Strategy* and second *Action Plan*

Establish an independent Affordable Housing Action Plan 2 Oversight Group, using expertise from the community sector and other stakeholders. A genuine partnership model will ensure the expertise and on the ground experience from the community sector are available to support

¹⁸ <https://www.communityhousing.com.au/national-plan/>

¹⁹ See Shelter Tas Priorities Statement 2018 <http://www.sheltertass.org.au/priorities/>

the *Strategy* and second *Action Plan*, and enable well-informed and timely responses to broader issues affecting the housing system, such as Airbnb and national initiatives.

5. Establish a stakeholder group to work with government on managing the disruptive impacts of the rapidly expanding short stay accommodation sector.

Shelter Tas is aware of the recent steps by the State Government to collect short stay data and strengthen compliance. Shelter Tas recommends the State Government establishes an advisory group including TICT, UTAS, Shelter Tas, LGAT, TasCOSS and government representatives charged to ensure best understanding, interpretation and use of this data and its wider context, and to develop strong evidence-based policy recommendations. This will benefit Tasmania directly and enhance the leadership role that the state's introduction of strong data collection measures can provide to other jurisdictions.

6. Ensure funding levels for Housing Connect and support services are aligned to increasing demand.

A review of the Housing Connect system is underway. Members report that staff are experiencing increasing workloads. Client numbers are increasing, and more people have higher and more complex needs, while funding and resources have not kept pace. As an outcome of this review, Shelter Tas expects to see increased investment to support staff and services to assist clients appropriately, to deliver early intervention and prevention and better outcomes for clients. Measures may include:

- a. Exploring efficiencies such as introducing online services, where applicable, to relieve pressure on Front Door services and enable more direct early intervention and client work rather than administrative tasks;²⁰ and
- b. Explore best practice for setting caseworker-client levels and ensure these are sustainable.

7. Ensure homelessness and housing services are appropriately resourced in an environment of rapidly escalating demand and pressure. Consult with the sector to develop and implement benchmarks for caseloads and support periods in crisis accommodation in the absence of national or state standards.

8. Ensure new and emerging models such as Build to Rent (BTR) are appropriately regulated and targeted.

New build to rent models are rapidly being introduced in the national marketplace. However, to ensure the models deliver affordable housing and maximum community benefit, Shelter Tas recommends any initiatives are developed and managed by community housing providers who focus on outcomes for Tasmanians most in need, in alignment with the principles of the *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-25*.²¹

²⁰ For example, NSW has delivered a range of digital initiatives, enabling more client facing services.

²¹ <https://cityfutures.be.unsw.edu.au/research/projects/how-can-australian-build-rent-product-contribute-urban-renewal-and-affordable-housing-supply/>

CONSUMER VOICE AND PROTECTIONS

1. Key project funding to support Homelessness Week.

Homelessness Week is a national event that aims to address stigma, raise awareness, highlight the voices and experiences of people who have experienced homelessness and the issues they face, and promote the range of services in the homelessness sector that deliver positive outcomes.²² To build on the growing momentum of last year's Homelessness Week in Tasmania, to foster collaboration between services, and to enhance the effectiveness of Homelessness Week in all Tasmanian regions, Shelter Tas requests funding of \$45,000 per year for the next 4 years.²³

2. Establish an independent consultation mechanism for consumers of housing and homelessness services.

Shelter Tas and our members have identified an opportunity to develop an independent consultation mechanism for consumers of housing and homelessness services, which is a gap in the current *Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plans*. This would be adapted from the current best practice model established in Victoria,²⁴ incorporate co-design, emerging technology and digital communications, and would include:

- a. a new initiative to incorporate consumer engagement in all service agreements in the housing and homelessness sector and assist services to develop a consumer engagement and feedback plan;
- b. a consultation mechanism for engagement with housing and homelessness service consumers so that decisions and policies can include a voice from 'experts in experience'; and
- c. an independent complaints and feedback pathway for consumers of housing and homelessness support services.

Shelter Tas requests funding for the initial scoping project and development of a business case that would be undertaken over two years, in consultation with services, and including some trials, at a cost of \$140,000.²⁵

3. Improving conditions in the private rental market.

Renting in the private rental market is no longer just a short term option. More than 40% of Tasmanian renters spend over 10 years in the rental market.²⁶ The very recent report *Disrupted: the consumer experience of renting in Australia* reveals that despite paying thousands of dollars each year, tenants face unsatisfactory conditions and are often too afraid to complain. In this context it is crucial to maintain a well-functioning system that protects both tenants and landlords, and enables people who rent their homes to flourish.

²² To see the range of activities in Homelessness Week 2018 in Tasmania, please see www.sheltertas.org.au/homelessness-week-2018

²³ This period of time aligns with the Shelter Tas Core Funding Contract. A more detailed proposal can be provided on request.

²⁴ <http://chp.org.au/services/pesp/>

²⁵ A more detailed proposal can be provided on request.

²⁶ Choice, NATO and National Shelter *Disrupted: the consumer experience of renting in Australia* 2018 <https://www.choice.com.au/money/property/renting/articles/choice-rental-rights-report-dec-2018>

Shelter Tas recommends:

- a. The establishment of a working group to modernise the Residential Tenancy Act and improve the tenancy security of all Tasmanians in private rental housing. This aligns with recommendation 1.2 from COTA's Budget Priority Statement, and would assist Tasmania to align with best national practice on matters such as pets, digital rights, energy efficiency and emerging disruptive technologies such as apps for tenants and landlords;**
- b. An audit of the funds held by the Residential Deposit Authority, to ensure transparency about the holdings and uses of bond money and introducing an annual report showing how these funds are allocated to the benefit of tenants; and**
- c. Adequate funding for the Tenants' Union of Tasmania to ensure a sustainable model for legal representation of tenants across the state.**

PRIORITY ASKS FROM OUR MEMBERS

There is clear evidence from research, data and member reports that since the *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-25* was initiated in 2014, the housing situation in Tasmania has changed dramatically. Our targeted consultation and survey show that particular groups and regions still need additional resources. These new proposals will complement and add to the value of the *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-25*, and will require funds additional to those already allocated.

Member Priorities:

1. Mental health support for people in crisis accommodation and the workers who support them.

Shelter Tas members report an urgent and escalating need for appropriate mental health pathways for people in crisis accommodation.²⁷ Shelter Tas is extremely concerned about the growing risk to clients and workers. The situation reflects both a lack of resources and the lack of integration between mental health and housing/homelessness services. A clear response pathway that delivers appropriate support for clients and workers is needed urgently.

This is a widespread issue affecting young people, people who have experienced family violence and men accessing homelessness services. There is an opportunity to pilot a response model in alignment with the Mental Health Council's call for *Centralised Mental Health Access Service (CMHAS)*. As MHCT notes, "The CMHAS will address known concerns expressed by various stakeholders including community members about the need for a centralised service providing advice and navigation around available supports and referral pathways preventatively, to support mental health literacy and access."²⁸ In addition, a comprehensive and well-resourced system will be crucial to deliver long term outcomes. The care model needs to follow individuals as they transition across housing types.

2. Younger Tasmanians.

Young people are particularly disadvantaged in the current competitive and expensive rental housing market. Providing more affordable rental housing, increasing the housing options for young people, and securing the support needed to help them learn how to live independently are effective measures to avoid and reduce homelessness. To be successful, options for young people need to be developed in consultation with the community sector and ongoing operating funds need to be guaranteed.

Shelter Tas supports YNOT's call for the State Government to invest in a policy response and a continuum of services to address the care and accommodation needs of unaccompanied homeless children aged under 16 years in Tasmania.²⁹ The gap in appropriate services for this cohort has long been identified by Shelter Tas and the members of the Tasmanian Youth Housing and Homelessness Group (TYHHG) and was articulated in parts of the *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy* and *Youth at Risk Strategy*. Shelter Tas and TYHHG welcome the

²⁷ Currently, as many Shelters have a 'one worker model' if a client is in extreme distress, self-harming, or displaying behaviour suggesting acute mental ill-health, the only option is to call police or ambulance. The expense and disruption of emergency service call outs could in many cases be avoided if early intervention and support were in place.

²⁸ MHCT *Budget Priorities Statement* 2019-20.

²⁹ See for example, <https://www.socialactionresearchcentre.org.au/research/in-limbo-exploring-income-and-housing-barriers-for-reunifying-tasmanian-families/>; <https://www.socialactionresearchcentre.org.au/research/who-cares/>

introduction of Colville Place (transitional housing for under 16s), but note that it is not designed for people needing longer term housing solutions. With TYHHG, Shelter Tas calls for longer term housing and assistance models to ensure all young people at risk who are not in out of home care can be kept out of homelessness and supported to reach their full potential. Trinity Hill, Thyne House and Eveline House have demonstrated successful outcomes for young people.

Shelter Tas calls for the establishment of three new Foyer housing models for young people, one in each region of the state.

3. Older Tasmanians.

Nearly one in five people seeking assistance from Tasmania's Homelessness Services are aged over 55. In the 2016 Census, older people experiencing homelessness were growing both as an absolute number, and as a proportion of Tasmanians experiencing homelessness.³⁰ Older single women are particularly vulnerable due to having lower levels of income and assets.³¹ Shelter Tas welcomes the announcement of Wintringham-style accommodation in the south, which is a successful response to growing need and can draw on aged care funds.

Shelter Tas encourages the State Government to develop a similar model to accommodate both men and women in the North and North-West regions.

Along with our sister peak COTA, we recommend the State Government commits to sustained investment over the longer term to ensure Tasmania can meet current and projected demand for accessible, appropriate and affordable housing, and introduce incentives for landlords to modify properties to support ageing in place.

Shelter Tas recommends the establishment of a Wintringham model for the North and North-West regions

4. Crisis and longer term accommodation in the north-west for men with and without children.

There is an urgent need for more crisis accommodation and support for men with and without children in the state's north-west. This is a longstanding gap in the system. Successful models include Orana in the north and DIY Dads in the south. Funding needs to include capital expenditure and ongoing operational funding.

Shelter Tas recommends the establishment of a crisis accommodation facility and longer term accommodation options for men for the North-West region.

5. Extended hours for homelessness support.

Consumers have identified a need for additional support for people experiencing homelessness outside the current Monday to Friday office hours (9-5) system. From 5pm Friday to 9am Monday is a long time for vulnerable people to be without access to shelter and support services. **Shelter Tas recommends exploring options for a 'drop in facility' to be delivered by extending hours of an existing service, provisionally as a pilot in the south and evaluated after a 2 year trial.**³²

³⁰http://www.sheltertass.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-03-20-ST_FACT-SHEET_Homelessness-2016-Census.pdf

³¹ See, for example, *The Time of Our Lives Report* <https://www.lmcf.org.au/images/2016-Time-of-Our-Lives-Report-LMCF.pdf>

³² One possibility would be to extend the hours of the Richmond Fellowship Connect In Centre currently open from Monday to Thursday, from 9am to 3pm.

6. Tasmanians with a disability.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) does not address its clients' need for affordable housing in Tasmania. Only 7% of NDIS recipients will be eligible for Specialist Disability Accommodation. The social housing waiting list is at 3,216 applications, and the average time to house priority applicants is over 60 weeks.³³ In addition to new social housing stock, Shelter Tas urges the State Government to facilitate the increased supply of suitable private housing by applying universal design principles to new housing developments through Tasmania's planning system.

To meet emerging need, Tasmania needs to:

- **Increase the amount of social housing stock to meet new demand emerging from Tasmanians with a disability, especially the 94% of NDIS recipients not receiving Specialist Disability Accommodation funding;**
- **Ensure there is no net loss of the existing public housing stock from the re-use of public housing for SDA accommodation; and**
- **Resource the additional tenancy support required of community housing providers for tenants for needs not currently funded within their NDIS support packages.**

7. Family reunification.

Families whose children have been removed for child safety reasons need a suite of responses to provide them with the stable accommodation and support necessary to enable reunification. **Shelter Tas supports the research-based proposals of Anglicare on ways to support these vulnerable cohorts.**³⁴

8. Equal Remuneration and Adequate Indexation for the Community Sector

Shelter Tas has been informed by Communities Tasmania that the ninth and final tranche of the Equal Remuneration Order(ERO) will go through in December 2020. This will impact the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial year. The full year effect of the December 2020 increase needs to be factored into the 2021-22 funding.

Shelter Tas requests the State Government confirms it will provide adequate funding beyond the forward estimates to meet its obligations as stipulated by the ERO; that the State Government confirm that ERO will be incorporated into base funding for all relevant organizations; and that future indexation will be linked to CPI and annual wage increases.

³³ https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/humanservicesstats/human_services_dashboard accessed November 2018.

³⁴ <https://www.socialactionresearchcentre.org.au/research/in-limbo-exploring-income-and-housing-barriers-for-reunifying-tasmanian-families/>; <https://www.socialactionresearchcentre.org.au/research/who-cares/>



Shelter TAS
Housing and Homelessness Peak

OUR VISION is for affordable,
appropriate, safe and secure housing
for all and an end to homelessness.

GPO Box 848 Hobart Tasmania 7001 | www.sheltertass.org.au
E: info@sheltertass.org.au | P: 03 6224 5488 | M: 0419 536 100