

ISSUES PAPER

THE RIGHT TO A HOME



Homelessness and the lack of affordable housing is regularly reported by our members as the most significant issue impacting vulnerable communities in the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW. Housing and homelessness impacts the health, safety, wellbeing of vulnerable people, and limits access to education and employment.

Much of the homelessness is hidden, with a large proportion of people 'couch surfing' or living temporarily with friends and relatives. There are very limited places available in specialist homelessness services.

For service providers, securing a safe, stable and affordable place for their clients to live is fundamental before issues such as mental illness, domestic or family violence, substance abuse, or unemployment can be addressed.

Rental affordability in the region is a major issue, and there are minimal properties available which would be affordable to those members of our community who earn the least income – Commonwealth benefit recipients and minimum wage earners.

LOCAL SNAPSHOT

- **10 year wait** list for a 2 bedroom social housing property.
- **323 per 100,000** homelessness ratio.
- **More than 32%** of households in the Wollongong LGA are in rental stress and **more than 38%** in the Shoalhaven. These figures include the **more than 87%** of very low income households in rental stress.
- By 2024 the annual Housing Deficit will rise by **14,000** in the Illawarra.
- Median house prices have increased by **25%** while median salaries have only increased by 5% = 5 x faster than earnings.

In April 2016 there were:

- **0** affordable & appropriate rental properties for persons on income support.
- **0** affordable & appropriate rental properties for single person with/without children on minimum wage.
- **22** affordable & appropriate rental properties for couple with children.

ISSUES PAPER - THE RIGHT TO A HOME



The region is in desperate need of more social housing, affordable private rental properties and properties which are affordable for purchase by people on low incomes.

The few affordable properties that are available have major issues of transport accessibility, being located in outlying areas which are difficult to access by public transport.

A large number of young people are homeless. Young people who experience homelessness are at greater risk of violence or becoming involved in anti-social behaviour or criminal activity.

In addition to the problem of homelessness in the region, many community members are experiencing housing stress with over 30% of their household income being directed to rent or loan repayments, leaving insufficient funds for essentials such as food or health care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusionary Zoning

Illawarra Forum is calling for inclusionary zoning - at least 15% affordable housing in new development, to be introduced across NSW.

Social Housing

Innovative finance solutions to develop more social housing:

- Public Housing to be classed as public infrastructure to open up investment options (i.e. Waratah Bonds)
- Government work with industry to develop Affordable Housing using institutional investment.

Incentivise Investment

Federal Government redirect Negative Gearing to incentivise Affordable Housing.

Local Government

Encourage more Affordable Housing through floor space ratio and car parking requirement concessions – especially in CBD developments.

Simplify Development Application processes for not-for-profit organisations to encourage social and affordable housing developments.

Tenancy Protections

Remove the 'no-grounds' termination provisions in NSW tenancy legislation to protect tenants rights, and provide long-term rental housing security.

Affordable Housing should be accessible to public transport and community infrastructure.

Encourage smart & sustainable design for Affordable Housing.

New developments incorporate Universal Design Principles to support government policies such as 'Ageing in Place' and 'Accessible housing'.