

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 health, safety, wellbeing, and 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. The lucky ones live 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. 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.

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.

SNAPSHOT SOUTH EAST NSW

- 2 to 10 year wait list for a social housing property.
- 8.8% of households in the Southern Highlands are in rental stress (paying more than 30% of income).¹

In March 2018 the Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot (SE NSW) found there were:

- 11 affordable & appropriate rental properties for families on income support.
- There were only three properties that were affordable for a single parent family on income support, all located in Cooma.
- Homes that are affordable for people on welfare or low incomes are largely located in areas which are inaccessible by public transport.
- 14% increase in homelessness in Southern NSW between 2011-16.²
- 1995-2015 median house prices have increased twice as fast as income in Australia.³

¹ ABS 2016

² Homelessness NSW

³ Daley, J., Coates, B., and Wiltshire, T. (2017). Housing affordability: re-imagining the Australian dream, Grattan Institute.

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The lack of appropriate private tenancies means that competition for properties is intense, and the most vulnerable people, including those on income support, will be less likely to obtain appropriate private rental properties.

In addition, many of the affordable properties 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

Community Industry Group is calling for inclusionary zoning - at least 15% affordable housing in new developments, 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 to work with industry to develop Affordable Housing using institutional investment.

Incentivise Investment

Federal Government to redirect Negative Gearing to incentivise Affordable Housing.

Local Government

- Tackle Affordable Housing at a strategic level, including LGA wide Homelessness Audits and the development of an Affordable Housing Strategy for all NSW Councils.
- Encourage more Affordable Housing through floor space ratio and car parking requirement concessions – especially in CBD 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'.