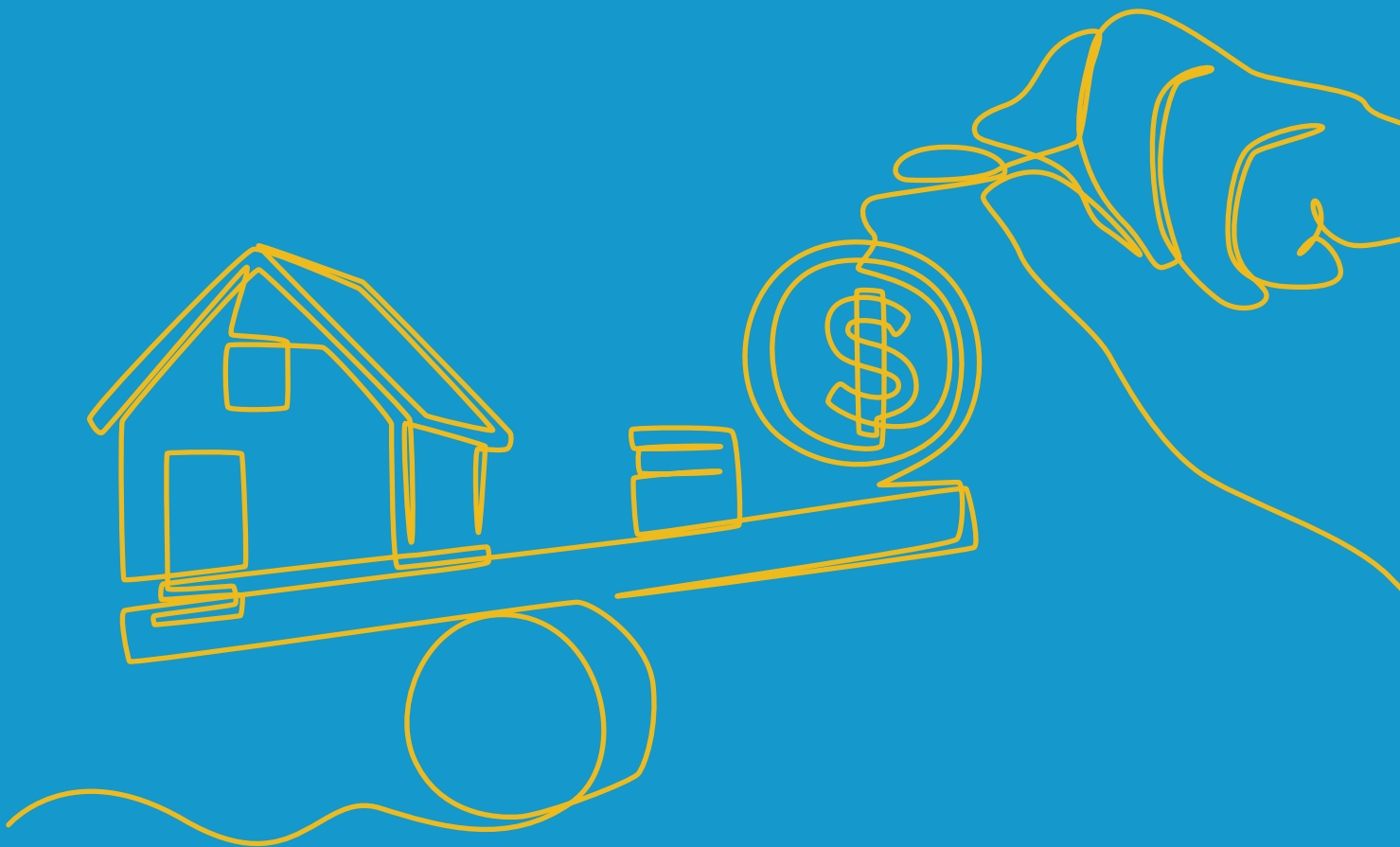


# Rental Affordability Snapshot

Tasmania 2024

Selina Claxton and Mary Bennett



WORKING FOR  
A JUST TASMANIA



SOCIAL  
ACTION &  
RESEARCH  
CENTRE

# Contents

- 3 Anglicare’s experience in housing services and advocacy
- 4 Key findings
  - 6 Availability
  - 7 Affordability
- 10 Regional analysis
  - 10 South
  - 12 North
  - 14 North West
- 16 People on the lowest incomes cannot afford private rentals
- 20 What do people do if they can’t afford private rentals?
- 23 More renters are competing for fewer affordable properties
- 25 A healthy rental market has a vacancy rate of around 3%
- 27 We need to plan for an increasing number of older renters
- 31 Tasmania needs rental legislation that is fit for purpose
- 33 Tasmanians need affordable rental properties near work, school, transport and services
- 35 Recommendations
- 36 FAQ

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# Anglicare's experience in housing services and advocacy

Anglicare Tasmania is a large community service organisation in Tasmania with offices in Hobart, Glenorchy, Launceston, St Helens, Devonport, Burnie, Sorell and Zeehan and a range of programs in rural areas. Anglicare's services include crisis, short-term and long-term accommodation support; mental health services; support services following a motor vehicle accident; aged and home care services; alcohol and other drug services; financial and gambling counselling; and child, youth and family support. In addition, Anglicare's Social Action and Research Centre (SARC) conducts research, policy and advocacy with a focus on issues affecting Tasmanians on low incomes who are disadvantaged or vulnerable.

Anglicare Tasmania is committed to achieving social justice for all Tasmanians. It is our mission to speak out against poverty and injustice and offer decision-makers alternative solutions to help build a more just society. We provide opportunities for people in need to reach their full potential through our services, staff, research and advocacy.

Anglicare delivers a range of housing services including Housing Connect, housing support services, long-term communal or independent housing for people on a low income including some options for age-specific cohorts; four youth to independence services with accommodation and crisis accommodation.

Every year since 2007, SARC has analysed the rental market across Tasmania for the Rental Affordability Snapshot. Our research projects have looked at the housing and accommodation needs of people experiencing mental health conditions, young people, unaccompanied homeless children, families trying to reunite and young people escaping teen domestic violence and abuse.

Recent research projects have explored the day-to-day experiences of Tasmanians living on a low income in the midst of a national cost-of-living crisis and the housing insecurity experiences of older Tasmanians.

# Key findings

Rental affordability overall is unchanged.

Affordability for people relying on income support payments is at an all-time low.

There are more renters competing for the affordable properties available.

Tasmanians on low incomes are being outcompeted and pushed into homelessness.

Older Tasmanian renters are at increasingly experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



**0%** of properties advertised were affordable and suitable for:

The **72,095** Tasmanians receiving Age Pension if they were seeking a place on their own



The **21,225** Tasmanians receiving JobSeeker allowance if they are single

The **4,580** Tasmanians receiving Youth Allowance

The **28,105** Tasmanians receiving Disability Support Pension if relying solely on that payment



The **8,385** Tasmanian families relying on Single Parenting Payment<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Social Services December 2023, *DSS Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics - quarterly data*, <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/dss-payment-demographic-data>



Every year Anglicare Tasmania, in conjunction with Anglicare Australia and other agencies across the country, runs the Rental Affordability Snapshot to test whether it is possible for people on low incomes to afford a home in the private rental market.

The Snapshot looks at all properties listed for rent on realestate.com.au and gumtree.com.au on a weekend at the end of March every year. We then assess whether each property is affordable and appropriate for 14 types of households on low incomes, including young people, single parents, working families, older people and those relying on Centrelink benefits.

For people on a low income, a property is affordable if no more than 30% of income is spent on rent. This is a widely-recognised, internationally accepted standard that leaves sufficient income to cover other reasonable living expenses. For more details on our methodology, please see our FAQ (p. 36).

Our report also presents accounts of Anglicare clients who have been searching for housing in the private rental market. Names and some details have been changed to protect their privacy. Their experiences and stories show how the private rental market in Tasmania works, and doesn't work, for people today.

# Availability

In 2024, there were 1,127 properties advertised for long-term residential lease across Tasmania at the end of March. This is an 8.7% increase on the 1,037 properties we found in 2023.

It is unclear how much of this modest increase is due to an increase in the total number of rental properties in the market and how much is due to tenancy turnover in existing rental properties.

## Number of properties advertised in Tasmania in Snapshot week, 2013-2024

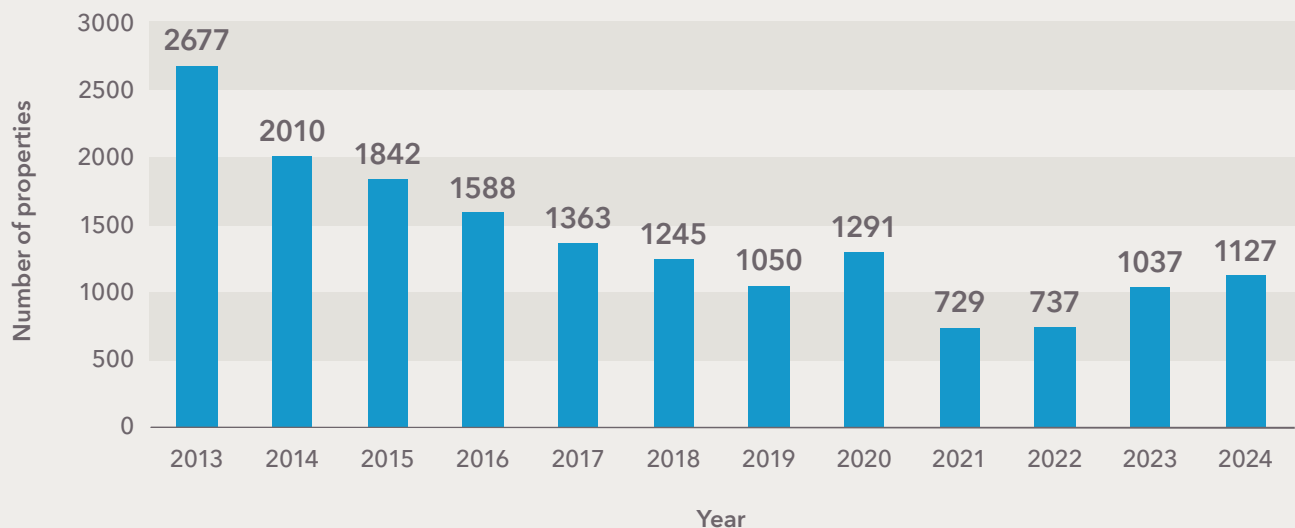


Chart 1: Number of advertised properties

■ Number of properties

The number of properties advertised has rebounded from the pandemic-era nadir in 2021, but is still 57.9% smaller than in 2013, the Rental Affordability Snapshot’s first year of comparable data.

# Affordability

Affordability for low-income households overall is unchanged since last year. Affordability for households on income support has fallen to the lowest level in the history of the Snapshot (see Chart 2), while affordability for some wage earners has increased slightly.

## Rental properties advertised in Snapshot week, Tasmania 2016-2024

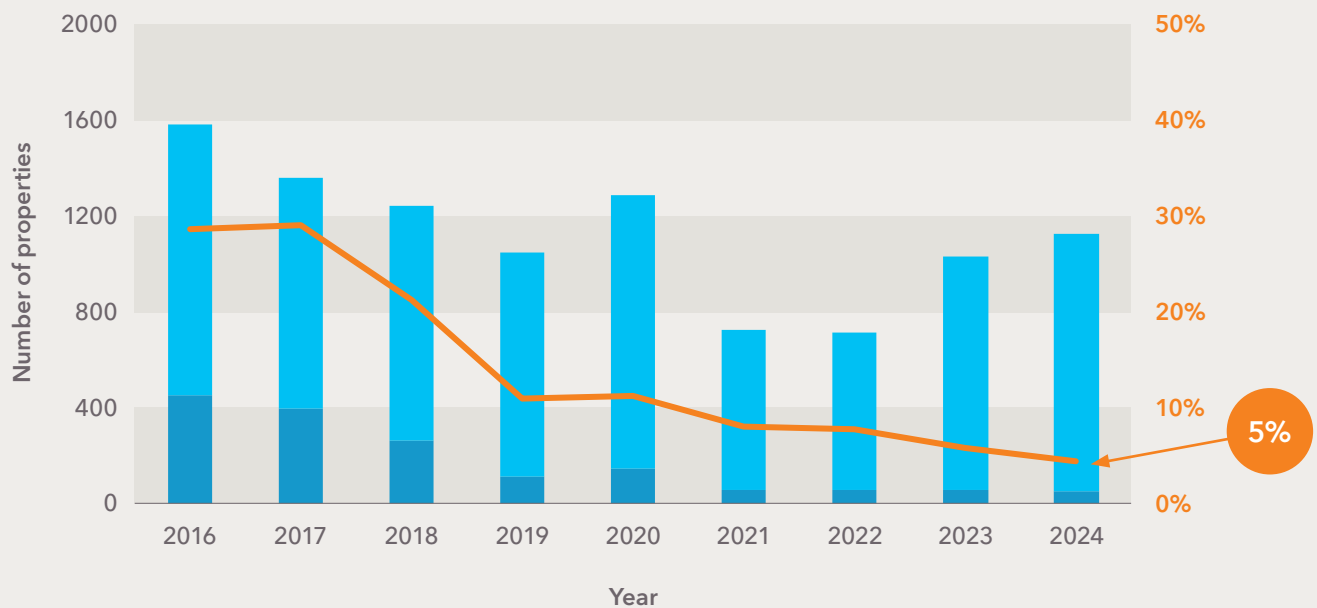


Chart 2: Number and proportion of rental properties that are affordable for households on income support compared to total number advertised

— Affordable percentage  
 ■ Total  
 ■ Affordable

Of our 14 household types, only families with two working parents will find a reasonable number of appropriate and affordable properties advertised. There are 315 properties with three or more bedrooms in their price range of under \$520 a week. These are distributed fairly evenly throughout the state and comprise 28% of properties advertised.

Families with only one wage earner are in a different position. If one parent receives minimum wage and the other receives government benefits, they can afford to pay just \$417 a week, and will find 79 properties, mostly concentrated in the North West region. A working single parent with two young children can only pay \$398 a week in rent without experiencing financial difficulty. There are 52 three-bedroom houses in this price range, of which only a third are located in major population centres.

Families entirely dependent on government income support, due to unemployment, disability, or caring or parenting responsibilities, will find little that does not push them into rental stress. A couple on JobSeeker with two children can pay \$320 a week in rent, which will get them an overcrowded one-bedroom unit in Hobart or Launceston, a cramped two-bedroom unit in Devonport, or an affordable and appropriate three-bedroom house located in Zeehan.

A single person with two children receiving Parenting Payment can pay \$273 a week in rent. In this price range there are only three three-bedroom houses advertised, located in Queenstown, Rosebery and Strahan.

A parent with one child needs a two-bedroom home to avoid overcrowding. If they receive Parenting Payment they can afford \$240 a week rent and if they receive JobSeeker just \$208. Although Snapshot data records one appropriate and affordable property, in Claremont, it is unusually cheap for the area and may be an anomaly.

Single-person households are faced with the decision: to share or not to share? The average price of a sharehouse in this year's Snapshot is \$223; the average price of a studio or one-bedroom unit is \$360. Although a single on minimum wage can afford 60 properties, 5% of those advertised, the vast majority are sharehouses.

Single people receiving Disability Support Pension or the Age Pension can pay \$192 a week rent, which is enough for a low-end sharehouse but will only barely afford a shift-workers' unit in Rosebery. Yet for people on these payments, sharing is often inappropriate due to their disability or their stage in life.

Single people on JobSeeker can pay just \$126 a week in rent before they enter rental stress. In this price range, they are at the very bottom of the sharehouse market. There was just one room advertised in the state on Snapshot weekend that they could afford.

People on Youth Allowance are entirely priced out of the market, being able to afford only \$102 a week.

For couples, if both partners receive the Age or Disability Pension, they can pay \$276 a week. This was enough for 17 studios or units on Snapshot weekend. We are unable to calculate how many sharehouses offered a room this couple could afford because most sharehouses charge a couple at a higher rate than a single.





**Table 1**

Cohort	Household type	Income type	Max weekly rent	Number affordable and appropriate	Percentage affordable and appropriate	Number by region
Young people	Single (18+)	Youth Allowance	\$102	0	0%	South: 0 North: 0 North West: 0
	Single (in a share house)	Youth Allowance	\$102	0	0%	South: 0 North: 0 North West: 0
Single adults	Single	JobSeeker Payment	\$126	1	0%	South: 1 North: 0 North West: 0
	Single (21+)	Disability Support Pension	\$192	2	0%	South: 0 North: 0 North West: 2
	Single	Minimum wage	\$229	60	5%	South: 37 North: 11 North West: 12
Older people	Single	Age Pension	\$192	27	2%	South: 16 North: 4 North West: 7
	Couple (no children)	Age Pension	\$276	17	2%	South: 2 North: 7 North West: 8
Single parents	Single, one child (14+)	JobSeeker Payment	\$208	0	0%	South: 0 North: 0 North West: 0
	Single, one child (<5)	Parenting Payment Single	\$240	2	0%	South: 1 North: 0 North West: 1
	Single, two children (one <5, one <10)	Parenting Payment Single	\$273	3	0%	South: 0 North: 0 North West: 3
	Single, two children (one <5, one <10)	Minimum wage + FTB + partial Parenting Payment <sup>2</sup>	\$398	52	5%	South: 5 North: 2 North West: 38
Couples with children	Couple, two children (one <5, one <10)	JobSeeker Payment (both adults)	\$320	12	1%	South: 1 North: 0 North West: 11
	Couple, two children (one <5, one <10)	Minimum wage + Parenting Payment (partnered) + FTB A and B	\$417	79	7%	South: 10 North: 19 North West: 50
	Couple, two children (one <5, one <10)	Minimum wage + Family Tax Benefit A	\$520	315	28%	South: 120 North: 101 North West: 94

<sup>2</sup> Single parents on minimum wages may also be entitled to Parenting Payment as their annual income is below the threshold for Parenting Payment Single. From 2024, the Rental Affordability Snapshot includes this entitlement in its calculations.

# Regional analysis

## South

### Availability

In 2024 there were 659 properties advertised in the South in Snapshot week. This is similar to last year's 637.

Number of properties advertised on Snapshot weekend in the South, 2013-2024

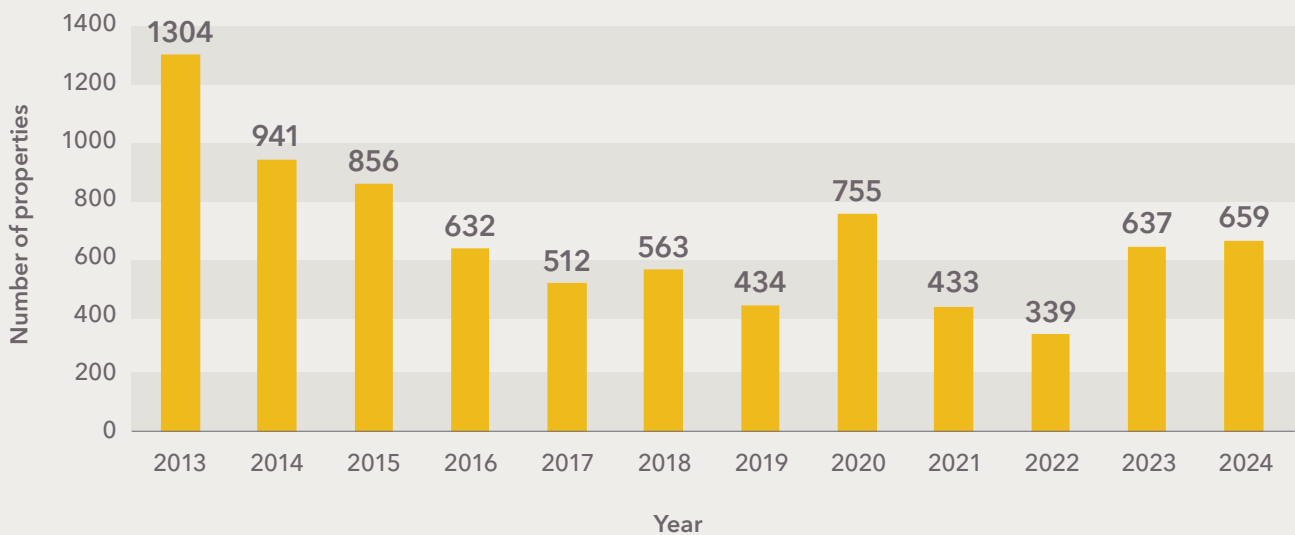


Chart 3: Number of advertised properties in the South

■ Number of properties

# Affordability

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## Singles

There were 60 sharehouse rooms advertised in the South, at an average price of \$223 a week. The cheapest, at \$125 a week, was just within the budget of a person on JobSeeker benefit, but out of reach for a person on Youth Allowance. A person on minimum wage would be able to afford slightly over half of these properties. The cheapest property that was not a sharehouse was a bedsit priced at \$275 a week, which is too expensive even for a person with a fulltime job.

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## Older people

That \$275 bedsit would represent about 50% of income for a single person on the Age or Disability Support Pension, putting them in severe rental stress. The average price of a one-bedroom unit recorded in the Snapshot was just over \$400. On their combined partnered Age Pension, an older couple can only afford to pay \$275 a week – just barely enough for that cheap bedsit.



## Single parent families

There was only one property that was affordable and appropriate for a single parent on Parenting Payment, and none for a single parent receiving JobSeeker. Even a working single parent, who can afford \$398 a week, would be lucky to find any affordable property large enough for their family.

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## Couple families

Three-bedroom properties in the South ranged from \$380 a week in the Central Highlands to \$950 for a Battery Point apartment. The average price was \$556 a week. This is out of budget for all of the household types studied in the Snapshot.

A family with two wage-earners can pay \$520 a week, and there were 120 properties in this price range, or 18% of the total rental market. However, if one parent loses their job and goes on Parenting Payment, their situation will quickly change. Their affordable rent will drop to \$416 a week and they would find only 10 affordable properties, or 2% of the market in the South.



# North

## Availability

In 2024 the Rental Affordability Snapshot recorded 297 properties advertised in the North. Supply of properties in the North appears to be stagnant, with only a very small increase of 7% over last year.

### Number of properties advertised for rent on Snapshot weekend in the North, 2013-2024

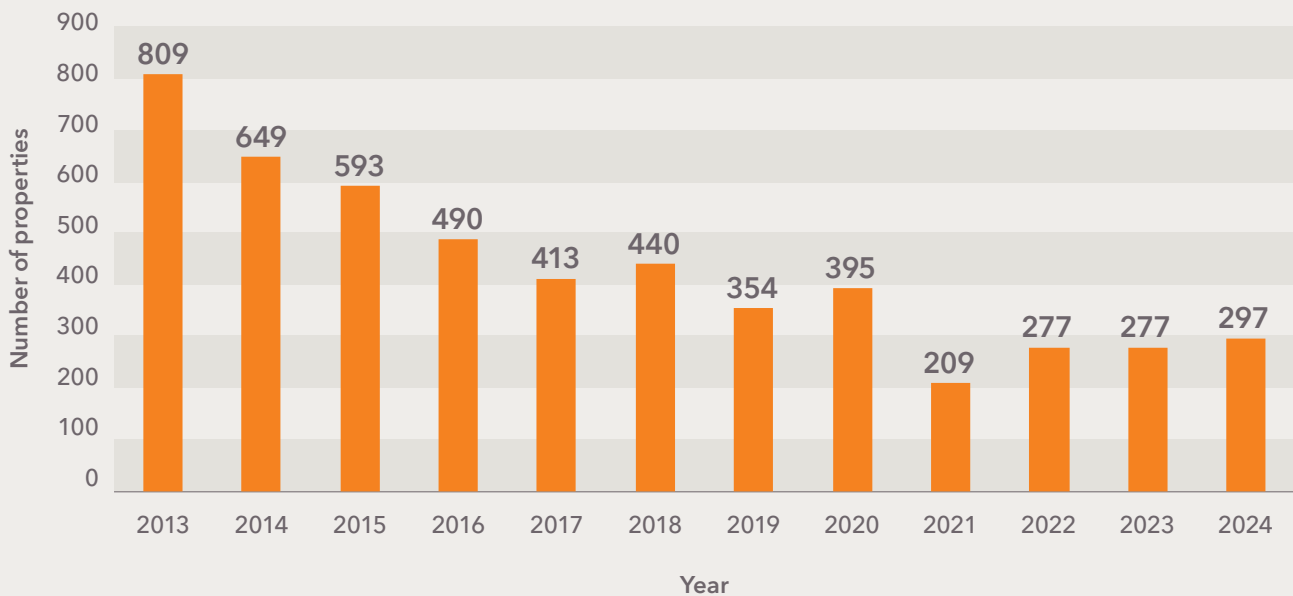


Chart 4: Number of advertised properties in the North

■ Number of properties

# Affordability

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## Singles

A working single who can afford \$229 a week would find a handful of sharehouses, but the North does not have the concentration of sharehouses that can be found in the South. The cheapest unshared property was a studio in George Town for \$220 a week rent. Singles on government benefits such as JobSeeker or Youth Allowance cannot afford any private rentals advertised in the North.

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## Older people

Older people would find seven affordable units or studios suitable for a couple on the Age Pension, or four cheap sharehouses that might accommodate a single. If a person on Age or Disability Support Pension does not want to live in a sharehouse, they will be forced to go into rental stress.



## Single parent families

Houses with three or more bedrooms comprised a little over half the market, but there were just 12 that were affordable for a working single parent on minimum wage.

Single parents receiving benefits could find no affordable properties anywhere in the North. Their only affordable option would be the very cheapest of one-bedroom units at \$260 a week, resulting in overcrowding.

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## Couple families

Families with two children and two adults receiving wages would find plenty of choice, being able to afford 101 properties up to \$520 a week. However, supply may be limited in regional areas such as St Helens or Scottsdale. Families with one wage had much less choice; they would find only 19 affordable properties. Families who are not in fulltime employment would struggle, with no properties in the North affordable for a family reliant on JobSeeker.



# North West

## Availability

There were 171 properties recorded in the Rental Affordability Snapshot in the North West in 2024, an increase of 39% over last year. 17 (10%) of these properties were located on the West Coast, which is classified as remote and not easily commutable on a daily basis from the northern coastal areas where over 95% of the region's population live.<sup>3</sup>

Due to the distribution of population centres in the North West, the number of properties available in any one locality is likely to be small. Given the lack of public transport, this is likely to be problematic for people on low incomes.

### Number of properties advertised for rent on Snapshot weekend in the North West, 2013-2024

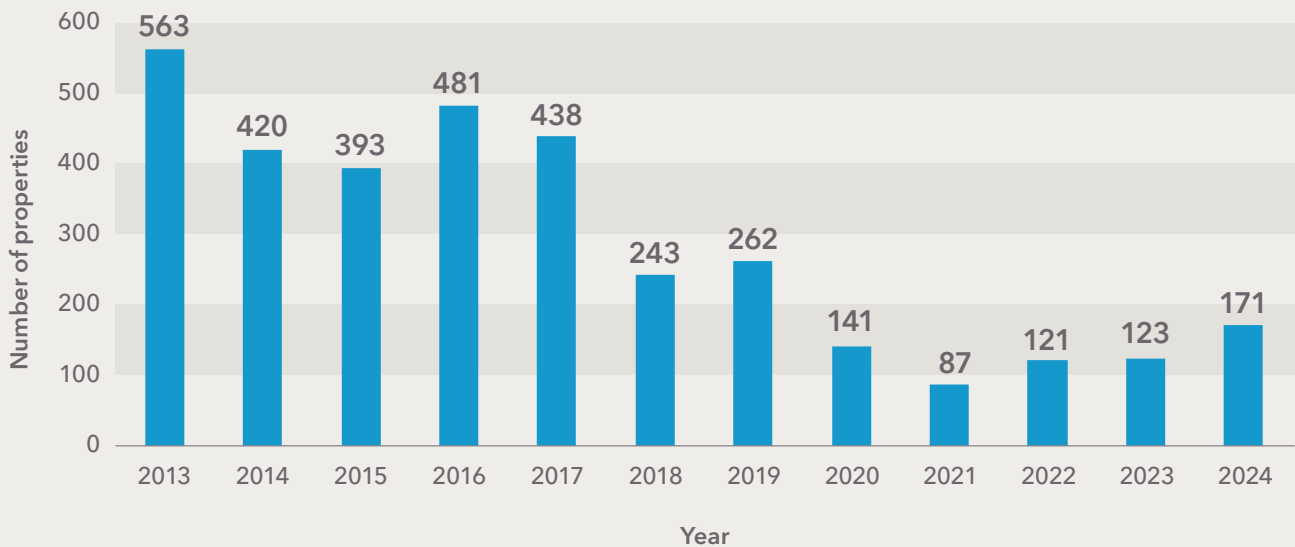


Chart 5: Number of advertised properties in the North West

■ Number of properties

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/latest-release>.

# Affordability

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## Singles

There were only 12 one-bedroom units on the private rental market in the North West on Snapshot weekend. A person on a government pension can afford to pay no more than \$192 a week, which is not enough for anything except a shift-worker's unit in Rosebery. If that person was willing to live in a sharehouse, they would find seven to choose from at the lower end of the market. However not even the cheapest room (\$140 a week, in Devonport) was affordable for a person receiving the very low rate of Youth Allowance or JobSeeker.

---

## Older people

Affordability in the North West is affected by the inclusion the West Coast, where rentals are significantly cheaper than the rest of the state. For example, a couple on the Age Pension could afford eight of the advertised properties, but five were on the West Coast with reduced access to services compared to larger centres.



## Single parent families

Working single parents are slightly better off in the North West than elsewhere. There are 38 properties in their price range of under \$398 a week, 12 of which are on the West Coast. However, single parents receiving income support will not find affordable homes in the major population centres of Burnie and Devonport, if at all. The Snapshot recorded three homes suitable for a single parent on Parenting Payment with two children, which were in Queenstown, Rosebery and Zeehan. The only property suitable for a parent of one child on Parenting Payment was in Queenstown. And nowhere was affordable and appropriate for a parent of one child on JobSeeker.

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## Couple families

The North West does offer more for some household types that struggle in other areas of the state. Families with only one breadwinner can afford fully 29% of the market, or 50 properties under \$417 a week (11 of which were on the West Coast). Over half the market is appropriate and affordable for families with both parents employed, who will find 94 properties to choose from (12 West Coast).



# People on the lowest incomes cannot afford private rentals

## Ruby

Ruby is 20 and, after completing a Certificate IV at TAFE, gained casual work in her chosen field. She enjoys her job and her employer has indicated that she will be given more hours when they become available. This would be great because the hours she is working at present do not cover her living costs.

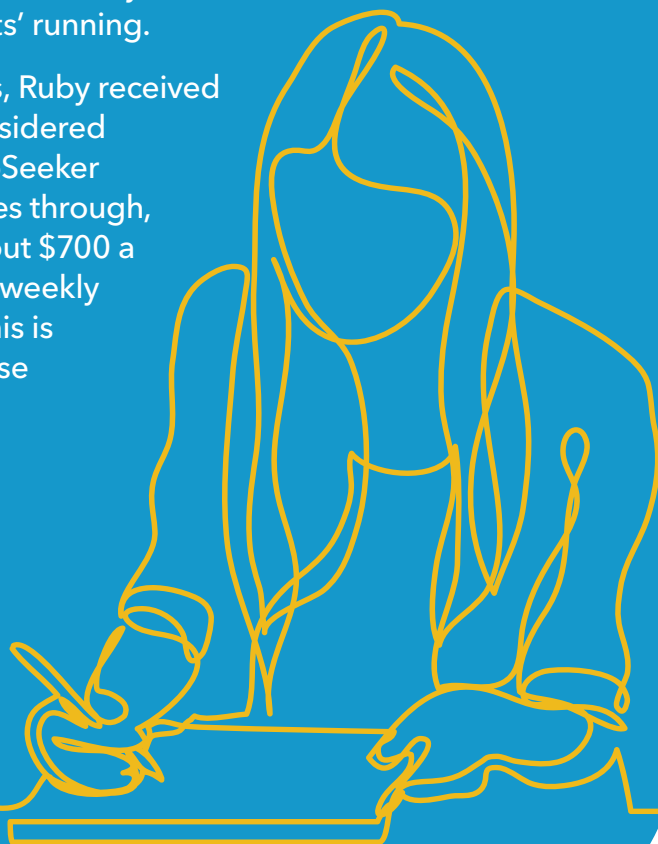
Her workmates don't know it, but Ruby has spent the last few months homeless, couch-surfing in Hobart. She was living with her parents, but she left to escape her father's violent outbursts. She has no other family locally and is relying on the goodwill of friends. But their patience is wearing thin, and Ruby would really like to stay in the same place for more than a couple of nights' running.

While she was living with her parents, Ruby received Youth Allowance. Now that she's considered independent she has applied for JobSeeker Payment. When the paperwork comes through, she is likely to have an income of about \$700 a fortnight and can afford a maximum weekly rent of no more than \$115 a week. This is not enough for a room in a sharehouse anywhere in Tasmania.

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**Affordable and appropriate:**  
0 (sharehouse, Greater Hobart)

**Cheapest appropriate:**  
\$150 (sharehouse room, Rosetta)





**Ruby is just one of the 25,805 Tasmanians receiving JobSeeker or Youth Allowance who would not find a single rental property that they could afford on their own.**

If Ruby pays \$150 per week for the room in Rosetta, she will struggle to pay for other essentials, including transport to work which is on the other side of the river. Homelessness is a serious obstacle to Ruby building a career in the field she has trained for.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot has found for many years that for people on JobSeeker and Youth Allowance, there are no affordable rentals (Chart 6).

### Percentage of rental properties advertised that are affordable for people receiving JobSeeker or Youth Allowance, 2013-2024

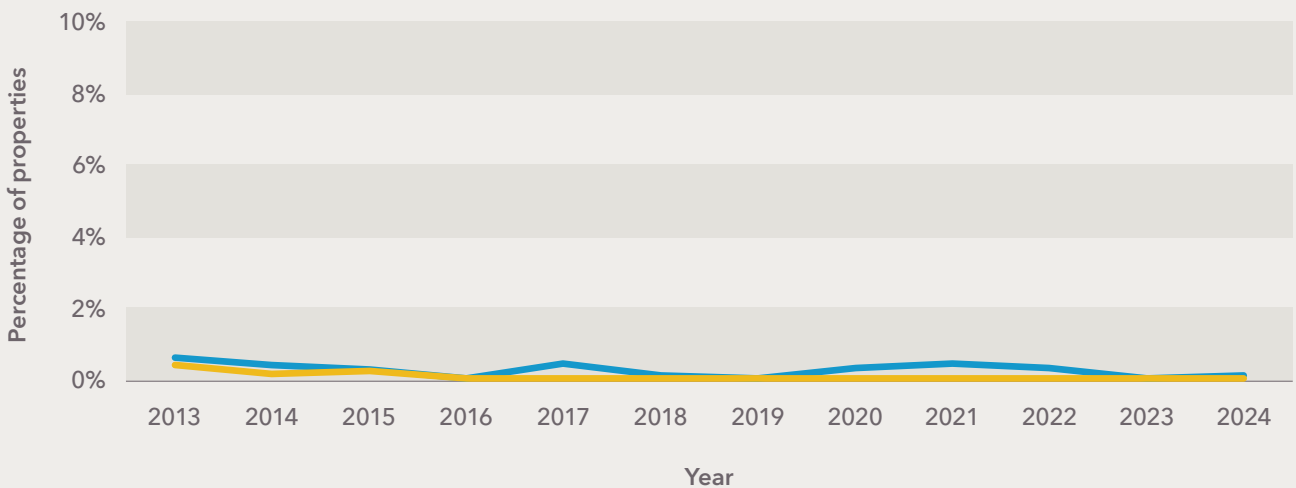


Chart 6: Properties affordable for people receiving JobSeeker or Youth Allowance

— JobSeeker  
— Youth Allowance

# Wendy

Following a divorce, 58-year-old Wendy has found herself living in a caravan parked in the backyard of her sister's house in Devonport. The caravan has no bathroom or toilet, and if she has to get up in the night she takes a torch across the garden into the house to use the bathroom there. She is dreading having to do this in winter when the temperature drops close to freezing, or in heavy rain.

Wendy has an acquired brain injury. Her disability does not prevent her from living independently but it does make the process of finding a rental very challenging. Searching for properties, registering and turning up for inspections and submitting multiple applications a week is an impossible task. Although Wendy values her independence, she is forced to rely on others to do this for her.

Receiving the maximum rate of DSP, Wendy has a fortnightly income of \$1100 and can afford \$192 a week rent. At her stage of life, Wendy does not want to share her home with strangers and she is concerned that others may not be accepting of her disability. However, the only unshared properties in Tasmania she can afford are located on the West Coast.

---

**Affordable and appropriate  
(unshared): 2 (Rosebery)**

**Affordable and appropriate  
(shared): 25 (statewide)**

**Cheapest appropriate:  
\$300 (one-bedroom unit,  
Devonport)**



For Wendy, who is single and fully reliant on the Disability Support Pension, there were only 2 affordable and appropriate rental properties advertised in the whole state. She is also one of a growing number of older Tasmanians experiencing housing insecurity as they approach retirement age.

**For the 28,105 Tasmanians receiving the Disability Support Pension and 72,095 receiving the Age Pension, rental affordability remains at an all-time low in the history of the Snapshot.**

### Percentage of rental properties affordable for pensioners, 2016-2024

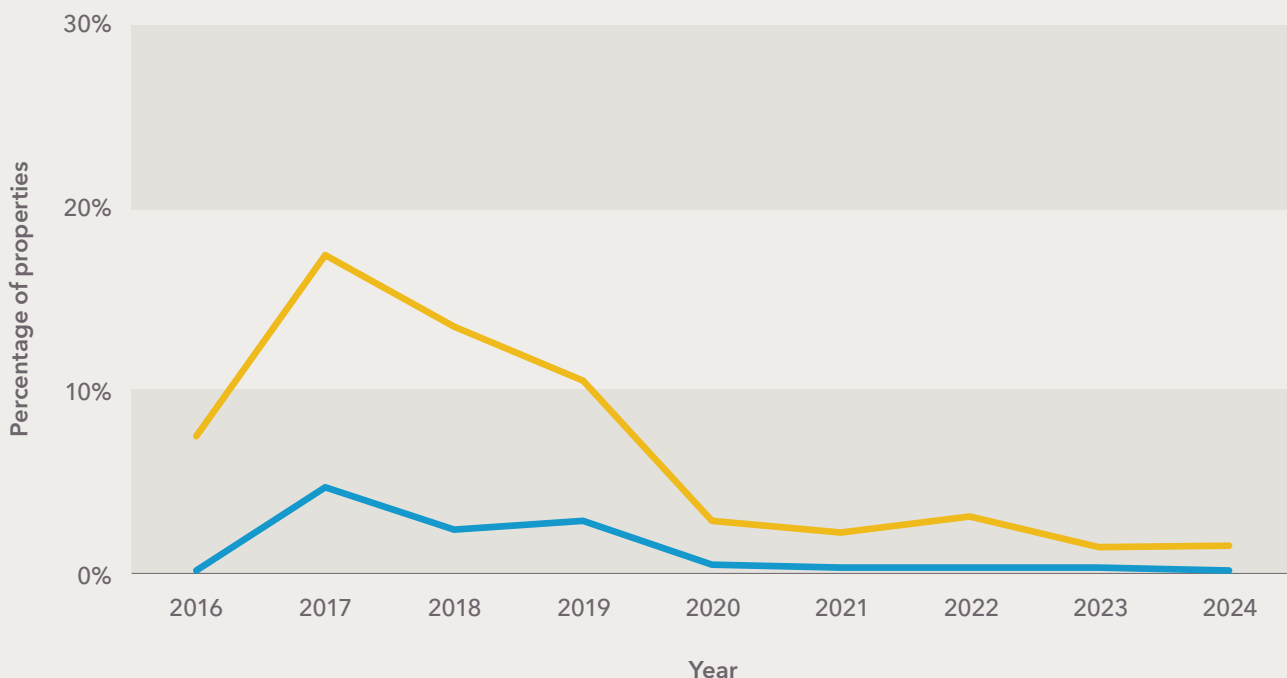


Chart 7: Properties affordable for people receiving a pension

- Single, age or disability support pension (excl sharehouses)
- Couple



# What do people do if they can't afford private rentals?

Chart 8 shows the number of households renting in 2016 and 2021, with the blue bars showing households on very low incomes (in lowest quartile by household income) and the yellow bars showing all other renting households.

### Number of Tasmanian households renting

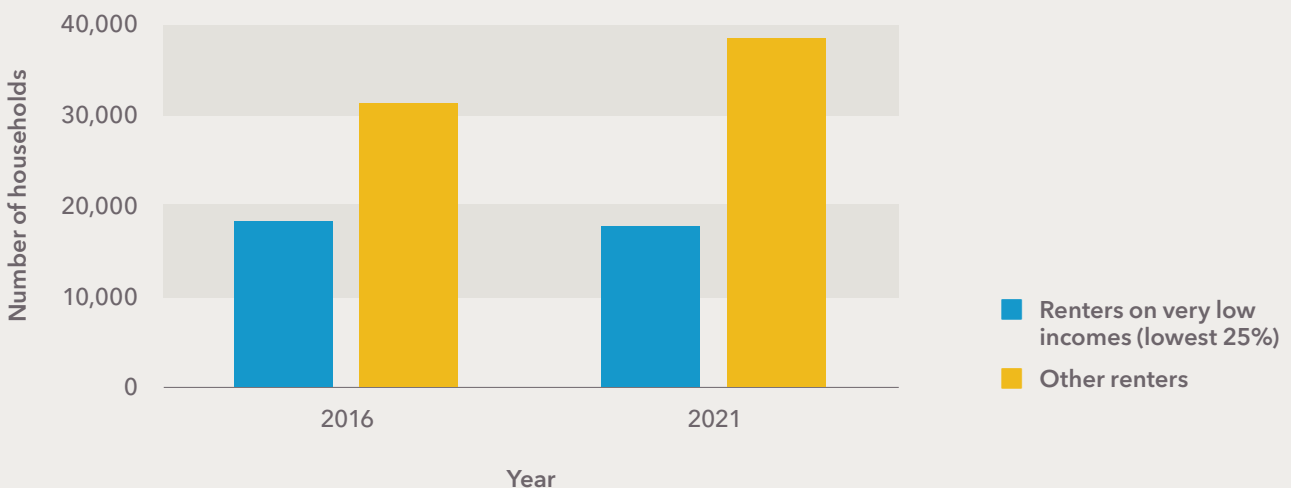


Chart 8: Tasmanian households renting

Between 2016 and 2021, the number of households in the lowest income quartile that are renting actually declined by 538 (3%) from 18,190 to 17,652<sup>4</sup>.

Over the same period, the population in this quartile increased, so why are fewer low-income households renting?

Evidence suggests that the lack of affordable rentals is resulting in:

- **More people living in each dwelling**

Between 2016 and 2021, the average household size in Tasmania increased by 1.3% from 2.31 to 2.34 persons per household. This goes against the national trend for the same period that saw average household size decrease by 1.2%.<sup>5</sup>

- **People entering homelessness**

People who are unable to find an affordable rental can either enter rental stress or homelessness. As the cost of living and rents have risen faster than income support<sup>6</sup>, people in the lowest quartile have increasingly entered homelessness.

**With the exception of Colin, the Anglicare clients featured in this snapshot are all experiencing homelessness.** The ABS categorises people as homeless if they are:



living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (rough sleepers)

**Wendy**



staying temporarily with other households (couch surfing)

**Ruby  
Brooke and Maddy**



living in severely crowded dwellings

**Josh and Bec's family**



living in boarding houses, supported accommodation and other temporary lodgings<sup>7</sup>

**Ayo's family**

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, *2021 Census of Population and Housing* [TableBuilder], <https://www.abs.gov.au/>

5 Ibid.

6 Wood, D, Chan, I & Coates, B 2023, *Inflation and inequality: How high inflation is affecting different Australian households*, <https://grattan.edu.au/news/how-high-inflation-is-affecting-different-australian-households/>

7 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023, *Estimating homelessness*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/2021>

As the cost of living has increased sharply in recent years, options for people on lower incomes have become more limited. Anglicare’s Financial Counselling Service is increasingly seeing people whose primary cause of financial difficulty is simply inadequate income.

In November 2023, SARC released *Survival Mode*, which reported on new research exploring the daily challenge of living on a low income in Tasmania and how these experiences impact on people’s mental health and wellbeing. This research provides a detailed account of what this challenge looks like:



**Rent is a significant cost item in Erin’s budget - she’s paying \$400 per week for a one-bedroom home in inner Hobart, leaving her \$60 a week for bills and medication and \$90 a week for food<sup>8</sup>**



8 King, A 2023, *Survival mode: The daily challenge of living on a low income in Tasmania*, Anglicare Tasmania

# More renters are competing for fewer affordable properties

## Brooke and Maddy

Brooke and Maddy want to set up a sharehouse together, but they've spent nearly a year couch-surfing despite Brooke's good employment, rental history and references. It's frustrating and they're starting to run out of places to go. Brooke is willing to commute to work, but Maddy needs to live close to a hospital in case she has a medical emergency.

The two friends met when they were on the same sports team ten years ago, where Maddy was the rising star of the local group. She went on to represent Tasmania in interstate competitions, but a promising sporting career came to an end when she was diagnosed with a serious medical condition. Meanwhile Brooke went to TAFE and works a fulltime job in the tourism industry. They are both now 22 years old.

Between Brooke's job and Maddy's DSP, they have a combined income of \$2862 a fortnight and can afford \$455 a week rent. This ought to put them in an excellent position to find a property, but tight supply on the North West Coast means they keep on just missing out. Under these conditions, even the best applicants can struggle.

---

Affordable and appropriate: 20 (two-bedroom unit, NW towns)



On the face of it, Brooke and Maddy should not have any trouble finding a rental property. They are flexible about where they live, their income is sufficient, Brooke is in fulltime employment and has a good rental history. Anglicare is seeing an increasing number of Tasmanians in Brooke and Maddy's position who cannot secure a rental property.

To understand why this is happening, we need to go beyond how many properties are advertised and look at how many people are applying for them.

Chart 8 (p. 20) shows that between 2016 and 2021, the number of households living in rented accommodation rose by 6,468 (12%) from 55,065 to 61,533.<sup>9</sup> This increase was entirely due to an increase in the number of households in the rental market with incomes above the lowest quartile. Research by AHURI details how this has occurred Australia-wide along with an increase in median rents.<sup>10</sup>

From 2011 to 2021, there was a significant decrease in home ownership among people aged under 40.<sup>11</sup> A decrease in the number of people buying homes translates into an increase in the number of people renting. Some of these people will be lifelong renters while others have had to delay buying a home because it takes longer to save a deposit. Many renters on higher incomes will be seeking the most affordable properties in order to maximise their savings.

**The bottom line is that there are more people competing for the rental properties available, especially the affordable properties.**

With many applicants to choose from, landlords will tend to select a tenant from the applicants on the highest incomes because they are least likely to experience financial hardship. Even though there are 20 properties advertised that are affordable and appropriate for Brooke and Maddy, there are many other applicants for affordable properties who are likely to outcompete them.

**This has an economy-wide impact as people are unable to move to take up work in sectors with jobs available such as hospitality, aged and home care services, community services, retail, and agriculture.**

<sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, 2021 *Census of Population and Housing* [TableBuilder], <https://www.abs.gov.au/>

<sup>10</sup> Reynolds, M, Parkinson, S, De Vries, J & Hulse, K 2024, *Affordable private rental supply and demand: short-term disruption (2016-2021) and longer-term structural change (1996-2021)*, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/416>

<sup>11</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2023, *Home ownership and housing tenure*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/home-ownership-and-housing-tenure>



# A healthy rental market has a vacancy rate of around 3%

The number one recommendation of the 2023 Rental Affordability Snapshot was that the state government:

**Articulate a transparent framework with targets that guide government investment and actions to maintain a stable and healthy housing market and ensure that all Tasmanians have access to affordable and appropriate housing**

In November 2023, the Tasmanian Government released the 20-year [Tasmanian Housing Strategy](#) with the first supporting Action Plan 2023-2027. Anglicare Tasmania applauds the Strategy and its goal of ending homelessness in Tasmania by delivering a well-functioning housing system that provides safe, appropriate and affordable housing for all Tasmanians.

Importantly, the Tasmanian Housing Strategy articulates an appropriate metric and target for the private rental market:



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**A sustainable vacancy rate of around 3 per cent in the private rental market will help to stabilise rents and ultimately reduce pressure on household budgets.<sup>12</sup>**



Between 2022 and 2023, the number of Tasmanian households accommodated in social and community housing increased by 308 (2.7%) to 14, 416 and new dwellings are under construction.<sup>13</sup> However, at the same time the number of renting households is likely to keep increasing for some time to come. The vacancy rate provides a close to real time indication of whether private rental supply and demand are in balance.

<sup>12</sup> Tasmanian Government 2023, *Tasmanian Housing Strategy: Delivering more homes for a growing Tasmania and ending homelessness*, <https://tashousingstrategy.homestasmania.com.au/>

<sup>13</sup> Productivity Commission 2024, *Report on government services*, part G, <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services>

## Rental vacancy rates, year to February 2024

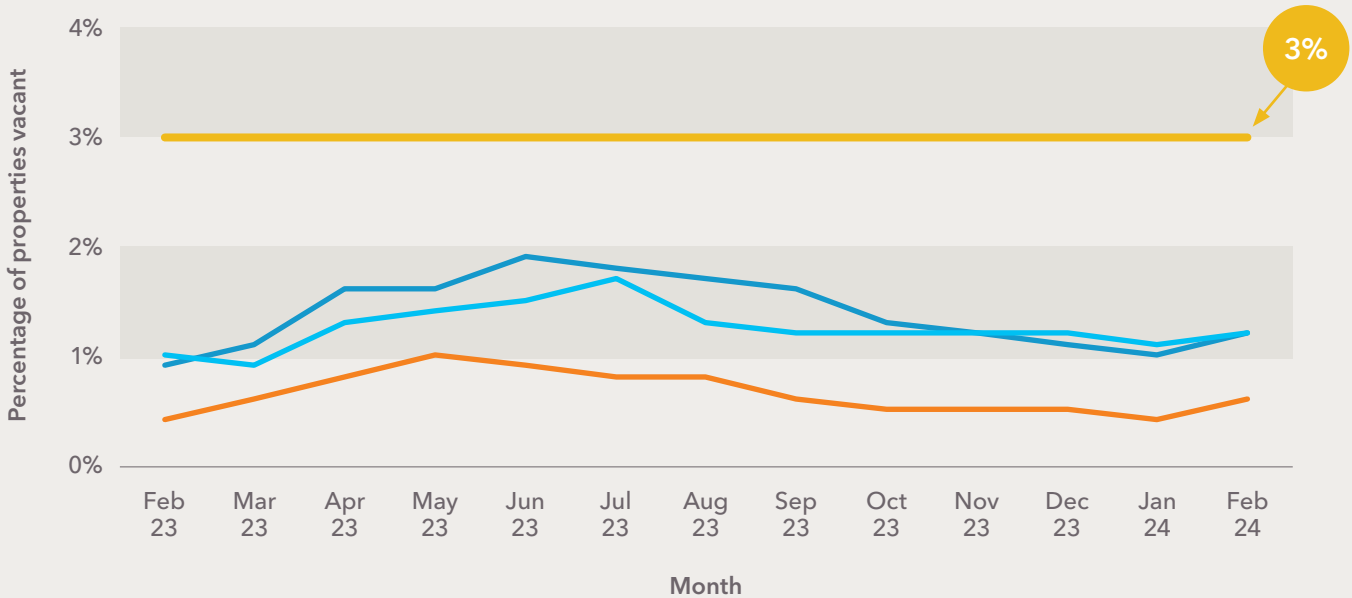


Chart 9: Vacancy rates

- Hobart
- Burnie
- Launceston
- Target

Vacancy rates across the state improved slightly in the 12 months to February 2024 but remain at a level indicating a significant undersupply of properties relative to tenant demand, which is severe in the North West of the state.<sup>14</sup>

If the target vacancy rate of 3% is to be reached, housing commencements need to address the current shortfall as well as future need based on population projections.

<sup>14</sup> SQM Research, *Residential vacancy rates*, [https://sqmresearch.com.au/graph\\_vacancy.php?region=tas%3A%3AHobart&type=c&t=1](https://sqmresearch.com.au/graph_vacancy.php?region=tas%3A%3AHobart&type=c&t=1)

# We need to plan for an increasing number of older renters

## Colin

Colin is a single man in his 70s who lives next door to his landlord in a small town on the North West Coast. His landlord does not allow him to have guests at certain times of day and Colin feels overly monitored. He would like to move to a different property with greater privacy that feels more like a home of his own.

The problem is that private rental properties are only advertised online and real estate agents only accept online applications. Like many older people, Colin never learnt how to use email or the internet. He's bought a smartphone and his son taught him how to text, but websites, online application forms and uploading documents are too complicated for him. He doesn't know anyone with time to help him with every step of the process, so Colin feels as if he's stuck where he is indefinitely.

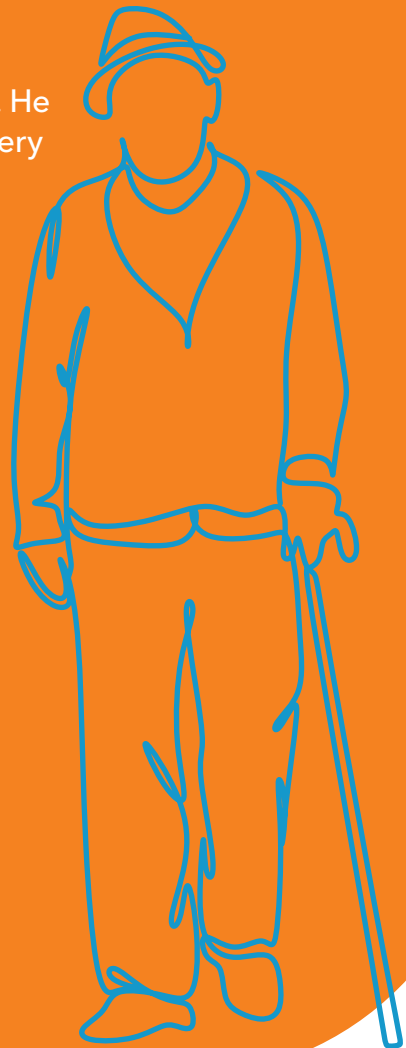
Colin receives Age Pension and has a fortnightly income of \$1100. He can afford \$192 weekly rent. After his experiences with his landlord, Colin is looking forward to living alone and is reluctant to consider a sharehouse. However, in most parts of Tasmania a one-bedroom unit costs at least \$250, and more likely over \$300.

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**Affordable and appropriate  
(unshared):** 2 (Rosebery)

**Affordable and appropriate  
(shared):** 25 (statewide)

**Cheapest appropriate:** \$290  
(ground floor unit, Burnie)

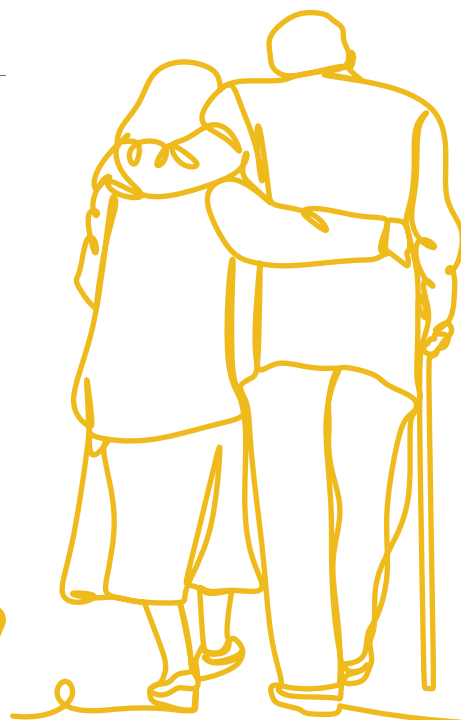


Anglicare Tasmania’s housing support workers report that an increasing number of older Tasmanians who are at risk of homelessness are seeking help.

In the latest national Rental Affordability Index, SGS Economics and Planning provides the following assessment of rental affordability in Tasmania:



**For pensioner couples and other low-income households, there are very few options for even Acceptable rents, and no suburbs for which these household types would find Affordable rents ... in the entire state. The Acceptable rents are only available in central Tasmania, which is far from services and therefore likely to be an undesirable option for pension households.<sup>15</sup>**



Combining home ownership data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and population projections, between 2023 and 2030 the number of renters aged over 55 years is likely to increase by over 6,100 (17%) from 35,800 to almost 43,000 (Chart 10).<sup>16</sup> This is partly because Tasmania’s population is ageing but also because fewer people will own their own home by retirement age.

<sup>15</sup> SGS Economics and Planning 2023, *Rental Affordability Index*, <https://sgsep.com.au/publications/insights/rental-affordability-index-2023>

<sup>16</sup> Data assumptions sourced from: AIHW, *Home ownership and housing tenure* <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/home-ownership-and-housing-tenure>. Population projections source: .id SAFi National to State tops-down forecast, 5.1.0, published May 2023. Prepared by .id (informed decisions) <https://forecast.id.com.au/australia/population-age-structure?WebID=150>

Whether they are receiving a pension or living off superannuation, older people have lower median incomes than the rest of the population and are on relatively fixed incomes.<sup>17</sup> This means that they are particularly vulnerable to volatility in the private rental market.

Moving house for older people is difficult and healthy ageing often requires that they have the option of 'staying put'. At this stage of life, people should have the choice of living in their own home if they wish. This is not an affordable option for single people living on the age pension renting in the private market.

### Tasmanians aged 55 years and over renting, projected

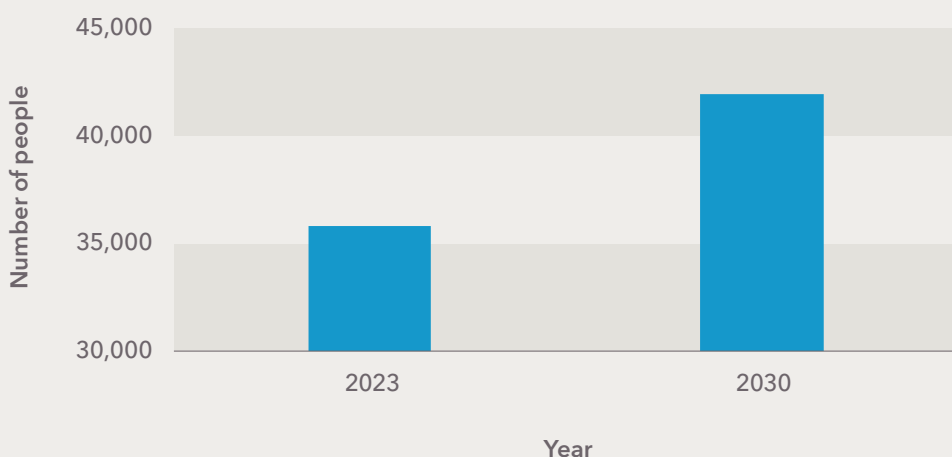


Chart 10: Older Tasmanians renting

Addressing the housing needs of older Tasmanians, particularly renters, is a matter of urgency. In addition to increasing the supply of affordable housing, this includes:

- assisting older people to overcome any digital barriers to accessing the rental property market
- ensuring that family and other support providers can access affordable housing nearby (see Josh and Bec's story)
- expanding tenant support services, including legal support
- updating rental legislation to protect older renters and prevent unnecessary moves
- creating age-friendly communities by ensuring that adequate health, community support, and transport services are co-located with affordable housing

<sup>17</sup> Agarwal, N, Gao, R & Garner, M 2023, *Renters, rent inflation and rental stress*, <https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/bulletin/2023/mar/renters-rent-inflation-and-renter-stress.html>

## Josh, Bec and their kids

Josh and Bec are a couple in their 30s with three school-aged children. Last year they moved to Tasmania from interstate to be near Bec's parents, who are elderly and unwell. They are living with Bec's parents temporarily while they looked for a rental, but it's turning out to be longer than they expected.

The small house is cramped with four adults and three boisterous children and everyone is short tempered. There are impacts on the children's development, the grandparents' health, and Josh and Bec's relationship. In fact, overcrowding is so detrimental to people's health and wellbeing that the Australian Bureau of Statistics considers it a form of homelessness. In the 2021 Census Tasmania recorded 2,100 people living in crowded or severely crowded dwellings, making up nearly half of those considered homeless.<sup>18</sup>

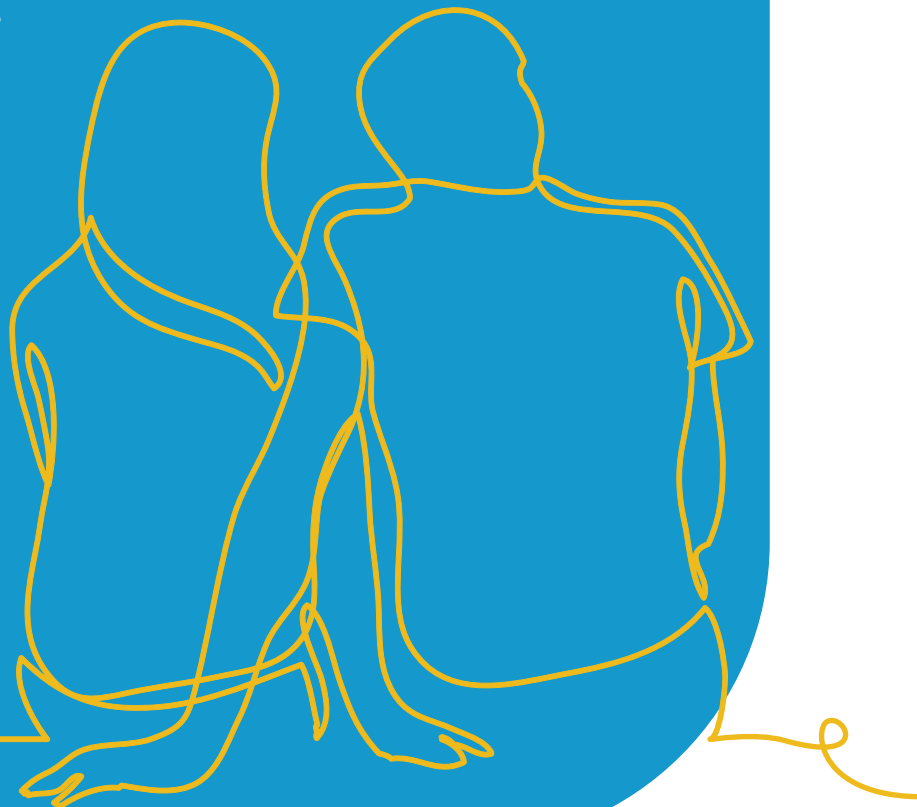
Josh receives DSP and does some casual work, and Bec receives Carer's Allowance and Family Tax Benefit. Together they have a combined income of \$1919 a fortnight and can afford \$320 a week rent. There are no four-bedroom houses available in their price range in Tasmania. If two of the kids share a room, the closest affordable property to Bec's parents is nearly an hour away.

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**Affordable and appropriate:**  
0 (3 bedrooms, Devonport region)

**Affordable:** 11 West Coast,  
1 Burnie (3 bedrooms)

**Cheapest appropriate:** \$350  
(3 bedrooms, 20 minutes from Bec's parents)



18 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, *2021 Census of Population and Housing* [TableBuilder], <https://www.abs.gov.au/>

# Tasmania needs rental legislation that is fit for purpose

The Tasmanian Housing Strategy commits to prioritising the needs of long-term and life-long renters, including through modernisation of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*.

The primary purpose of housing - whether it is rented or owned - is to provide a home for the resident. Tenants need reasonable rental conditions that respect their rights and privacy, and enable them to enjoy their residence as their home. Colin's situation provides just one example of how current regulation is not providing this. Soon-to-be released research by Anglicare Tasmania identifies the need for an independent intermediary between landlords (or their agents) and tenants to support better outcomes for renters.

Anglicare's Survival Mode research found that lack of housing security in private rentals was preventing people from providing a stable home environment for their families:



**Before we moved into our home, we had moved 13 times, I think. The girls were 12 and 10 when we bought the house. And we had moved 13 times in their lifetime. [...] And it costs money every time you have to move. To disconnect everything and re-connect everything. And move the stuff. [...] And pay bonds. You haven't got one bond back and you have got to produce another one. It was a nightmare! It was an absolute nightmare...**

Cathy, participant, *Survival Mode*<sup>19</sup>



<sup>19</sup> King, A 2023, *Survival mode: The daily challenge of living on a low income in Tasmania*, Anglicare Tasmania

For older people, moving has adverse impacts on health and wellbeing and housing security becomes vitally important:

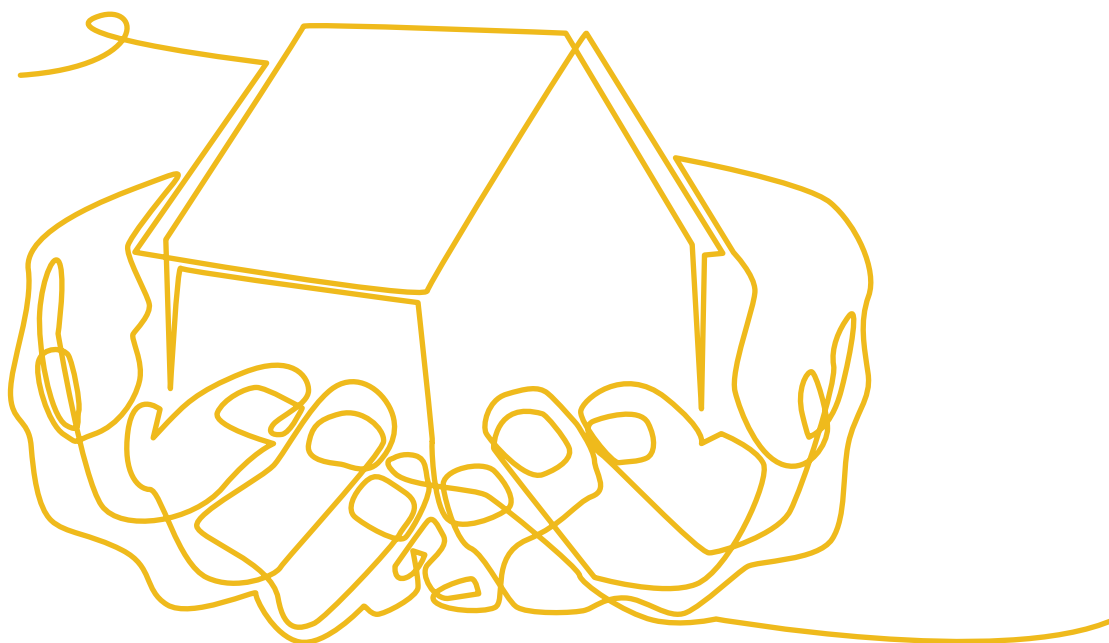


**It is very important. It is security. Especially as it has become much, much worse. To be moving around in your 70s at the whim of someone else is terrifying. I find all those stories terrifying. And I really feel for the people who are in that position.**

Julie, 70, *Survival Mode*<sup>20</sup>



In Tasmania, it is still possible to evict tenants without cause at the end of a fixed-term lease and this needs to change. It is one of the most important legislative changes needed if, as the Tasmanian Housing Strategy states, renting is genuinely 'promoted alongside home ownership as a fundamental and equally valid housing choice'.<sup>21</sup>



20 King, A 2023, *Survival mode: The daily challenge of living on a low income in Tasmania*, Anglicare Tasmania

21 Tasmanian Government 2023, *Tasmanian Housing Strategy: Delivering more homes for a growing Tasmania and ending homelessness*, p.29, <https://tashousingstrategy.homest Tasmania .com.au/>



# Tasmanians need affordable rental properties near work, school, transport and services

## Ayo, Isaak, Edie and Gabriel

Ayo is 35 and, since migrating to Australia three years ago, she has been living in Hobart with her partner and young children. However, after their relationship broke down, her partner moved out of their rental property and Ayo could not cover the rent alone. Currently she and her children - 10-year-old Isaak, 6-year-old Edie and 4-year-old Gabriel - live in a shelter. Their furniture is in storage, costing her over \$100 a month.

Ayo does not have a drivers' licence and speaks little English. She is anxious to stay near the community supports she has established with multicultural organisations, her children's school and her family doctor. The kids have been through a lot as a result of the family breakup and homelessness. Staying in the same school with their friends could make all the difference to their resilience, wellbeing and education. At the age of ten, Isaak is already having to take on the job of interpreting for his mother when she interacts with services, an added responsibility that other kids his age don't have.

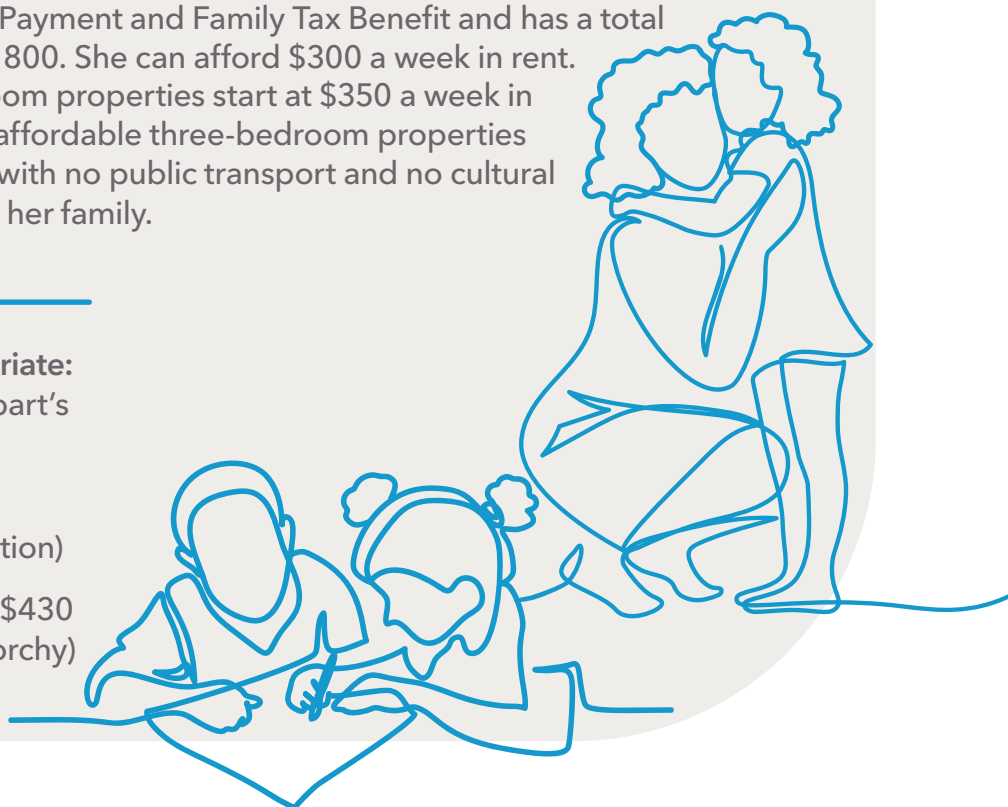
Ayo receives Parenting Payment and Family Tax Benefit and has a total fortnightly income of \$1800. She can afford \$300 a week in rent. In Tasmania, four-bedroom properties start at \$350 a week in Wynyard, and the only affordable three-bedroom properties are on the West Coast, with no public transport and no cultural community for Ayo and her family.

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**Affordable and appropriate:**  
0 (three bedrooms, Hobart's Northern suburbs)

**Affordable:** 9 (three bedrooms, remote location)

**Cheapest appropriate:** \$430 (three bedrooms, Glenorchy)



We want Tasmanians to have the opportunity to reach their potential and experience fullness of life. For people on low incomes, living with a disability or chronic medical condition, seeking employment, studying or growing older, this is only possible if affordable housing is co-located with employment, transport, schools and health and community services.

Communities with enough affordable housing co-located with services are vital if we are to provide fair opportunities to all Tasmanians and prevent intergenerational disadvantage. This is going to become increasingly important as Tasmania's population ages.



# Recommendations

## State Government

Anglicare Tasmania recommends that the State Government:

1. Review and reform the Residential Tenancy Act to ensure
  - a tenants are not evicted into homelessness
  - b prospective tenants are not discriminated against on the basis of age, parenthood, unemployment or pet ownership
  - c tenants have improved security of tenure.
2. Develops a strategy informed by population projections and rental housing demand to support healthy ageing in place for all Tasmanians.
3. Continues to invest in affordable social housing, support services and supported accommodation to meet housing needs that cannot be met by the private rental market.
4. Review policy settings to ensure that they are likely to increase or have a neutral impact on the supply of affordable rental housing.

## Federal Government

Anglicare Tasmania recommends that the Federal Government:

1. Raise the rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance to reflect current rental prices, particularly for single people.
2. Raise the rate of Centrelink benefits, especially JobSeeker Payment.
3. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing.
4. Review policy settings, including negative gearing and other taxation and investment incentives, to ensure they increase or have a neutral impact on the supply of affordable housing.

# FAQ

## **What sort of properties are counted?**

RAS counts houses, units, flats, bedsits and rooms in sharehouse that are advertised for long-term rental (at least 6 months). It does not count boarding houses, caravan parks, holiday accommodation, retirement villages, student accommodation run by UTAS or other educational institutions, or backpacker/fruitpicker accommodation. Sharehouses must offer private individual rooms, not just a bed in a shared room. Accommodation that asks for farm work, childcare etc instead of or in addition to monetary rent is not counted.

## **Where are properties advertised?**

We get our properties from two sources: realestate.com.au and gumtree.com.au. Care is taken to ensure properties are not counted twice due to being advertised on both platforms. There may be other properties advertised on platforms which we do not cover, such as Facebook Marketplace and Flatmates.com.au.

## **What does 'affordable' mean?**

For people on lower incomes, a property is affordable if no more than 30% of income is spent on rent. This is a widely-recognised, internationally accepted standard that leaves sufficient income left over for a reasonable standard of living.

## **What does 'appropriate' mean?**

An appropriate property is one that has enough bedrooms for the whole household (one bedroom for a single or couple, two bedrooms for a single or couple with one child, 3 bedrooms if there are two children). In addition, it is not considered appropriate for a person on DSP to live in a sharehouse, in recognition of the fact that some disabled people have special needs that cannot be easily accommodated in a sharehouse. We realise that this is not the case for all disabled people and that many would choose or prefer this style of living. (To see what is available when sharehouses are counted in, please refer to the 'Single on Age Pension' cohort, as the two have the same income.)

## **Why are sharehouses counted separately for people on Youth Allowance?**

People on Youth Allowance receive a different amount of Commonwealth Rent Assistance depending on whether they live in a sharehouse.

## **Aren't sharehouses just for students? Can anyone live in a sharehouse?**

In response to Tasmania's tight rental market, sharehouses have become increasingly common (8% of all listings in 2024, a drop from 12% in 2023). It is true, however, that many sharehouses are designed and set up for students. Others ask for specific genders, ethnicities or religions. We have omitted sharehouses that will accept 'male/female only', as this means the property is not truly 'available' for half the population, but we include those that say 'male/female preferred' as they might still consider applications from both genders.

## **Do prices include power, water, internet etc?**

This varies from one advertisement to another. Unfortunately, in most cases it is not possible to determine the base rent exclusive of utilities.