

MEDIA RELEASE

21 April 2016

Addressing housing stress should be a priority election issue

The shocking figures revealed in Anglicare's annual Rental Affordability Snapshot today demonstrates the need for all political parties to prioritise housing affordability in their election platforms.

The Snapshot shows a dearth of affordable rental housing options for people on low incomes and those reliant on Newstart, Disability Support Payments or the Age pension and is especially dire in our cities and major metropolitan areas.

For those single people on Newstart Allowance, Anglicare found less than 0.1% of rental properties would be affordable nationally and only 0.5% per cent for those on Disability Support Payment.

A single Age pensioner fared only slightly better – only 2.1% of properties throughout Australia were suitable. These figures are worse than those reported last year in Anglicare's 2015 snapshot.

COTA Australia CE Ian Yates said housing affordability for those on low incomes was clearly at crisis point and could no longer be ignored by all levels of government.

"We know housing stress is a huge problem for many older people and we see that reflected in the growing numbers of homeless people over 50," Mr Yates said.

"People are being forced to make choices between paying their rent, buying groceries and getting important medical supplies.

"With rental affordability this low it's impossible for many older people in the rental market to keep themselves healthy, have a roof over their head and have any quality of life.

"This is a terrible predicament which needs to be urgently addressed."

Mr Yates said the upcoming Federal election provided a great opportunity for all parties to show leadership on this issue.

"There is a great deal of work that has already been done around the best policies that can be introduced to alleviate housing stress," Mr Yates said.

"Increasing social and community housing and increasing the overall supply of affordable and appropriate housing is an essential part of the answer.

"An Affordable Housing Growth Fund to deliver ongoing revenue for affordable housing stock also would assist in tackling the issue.

"COTA and many other advocates have also consistently called for an increase in Commonwealth Rent Assistance and an increase in the Newstart Allowance to make it a feasible income for a person to live on.

"This problem needs a holistic, coordinated approach which uses other levers in the planning and development space at state and local levels.

"I encourage all political parties to work with housing experts and advocates to make sure the solutions to housing stress are a key part of their election platforms."

Anglicare's Rental Affordability Snapshot can be found at <http://www.anglicare.asn.au>

Media contact: Ian Yates 0418 835 439, Olivia Greentree 0439 411 774