

Anglicare North Coast releases Rental Affordability Snapshot: Time to raise the rate for good

Anglicare North Coast is calling for an increase to welfare payments for good. The call is made alongside the launch of the 2020 Rental Affordability Snapshot.

The Snapshot surveyed almost a thousand rental listings across the North Coast and found that there is still a chronic shortage of affordable rentals – even after recent welfare increases.

The Snapshot shows that:

- 18 rentals (2%) are affordable for a person on the new Jobseeker payment (formerly Newstart), which has been doubled for six months in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Without the increase, no rentals (0%) would be affordable for jobseekers in the North Coast
- Pensioners and people with disability have been left behind with no increase to their payments
- Just 1% of rentals (11 in total) are affordable for a person on the Age Pension
- 0% of rentals (4 in total) are affordable for a person on the Disability Support Pension

Anglicare North Coast's Interim Chief Executive Officer Leon Ankersmit said the increase should be open to everyone on government payments – and that it should be permanent.

"Welfare increases have given some people badly needed relief," Dr Ankersmit said.

"But the market is still failing people on the lowest incomes. Our Snapshot shows that a person who is out of work can afford less than 2% of rentals – and that's with their payments doubled. Under the old rates, no rentals at all (0%) would be affordable across the North Coast.

"Age pensioners and people with disability have been left out altogether. They are at the very bottom of the market, and can afford less than 1% of rentals. Instead of looking after for them in the midst of a health crisis, we are leaving them to the mercy of the market.

"We must raise the rate of these payments for good. If they are halved in six months – and if pensioners and people with disability are left out – renters across our region will be pushed even deeper into poverty and homelessness."

Dr Ankersmit said that more must be done to help people on the lowest incomes.

"We're asking people to stay at home – so we must invest in homes for people who need them most. Nobody should be squeezed out of the market during a health emergency.

"That's why we must invest in affordable housing. Our shortfall is massive. We need 5,900 new affordable rentals just to meet the shortfall on the Mid North Coast.

"Investing in housing would be the most powerful way to tackle the rental crisis – and boost our regional economy.

"We're calling on the Federal and State governments to work together and end this shortfall – and ensure everyone has a place to call home," Dr Ankersmit said.

For media inquiries, contact 6643 4844