



## Call for political policies to address Tasmania's severe shortage of affordable housing

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The peak body for housing and homelessness services, Shelter Tasmania, and the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) are calling for housing affordability to be high on the agenda of parties contesting the State Election.

Tasmania has experienced a massive 200 per cent jump in house prices in Hobart since 2001 and a 50 per cent surge in prices across the state since 2005. This has left Tasmania with very few properties for rent or sale that are affordable to people on low incomes.

Shelter Tasmania and TasCOSS have welcomed the State Liberals' commitment to develop a State Policy for Affordable Housing to encourage the supply of new affordable dwellings.

The two organisations are also urging a revitalisation of the state's public housing system, added stimulus for the development of community housing and an expansion of programs that assist those on low incomes to buy homes.

"TasCOSS welcomes the State Liberals' commitment to negotiate with Canberra to extend the period over which Housing Tasmania's \$202.8 million debt to the Commonwealth has to be repaid," TasCOSS CEO Tony Reidy said today.

"However, we continue to urge that the \$17 million annual debt repayment be spread across the whole of government to permit Housing Tasmania to fix the backlog of maintenance issues that are causing discomfort, ill health and higher power bills for its tenants, and also permit the building of new public housing properties."

Shelter Tasmania has also called for more stimulus for the state's community housing sector.

"The community housing sector is growing rapidly in Tasmania, largely due to the transfer of around 4,000 Housing Tasmania properties to the management of community housing organisations," Shelter Tasmania CEO Pattie Chugg said today.

"The next step is to give community housing organisations the titles of some of those public housing properties, which would enable them to raise the capital to build more community housing stock," Ms Chugg said.

TasCOSS and Shelter Tasmania recommend an expansion of programs that assist those on low incomes to buy a home, possibly through adopting the West Australian Keystart model, which offers a range of ownership packages, including shared equity.

Current programs in Tasmania are the HomeShare program, under which the Director of Housing is a co-purchaser and the resident repays the Director's share, without interest, within 30 years, and the Streets Ahead scheme is for tenants buying their Housing Tasmania properties. Under this scheme, buyers can receive up to \$7000 to help with a deposit, mortgage insurance premiums and legal costs. The HomeShare and Streets Ahead schemes have facilitated the purchase of 1593 properties since 2001.

Shelter Tasmania is also urging ongoing funding for homelessness services in Tasmania.

TasCOSS and Shelter Tasmania look forward to further Labor and Greens policy responses in relation to the housing and homelessness issues they have highlighted.

- According to 2011 census figures 1,579 Tasmanians were homeless, most of them staying in boarding houses and caravans or relying on the hospitality of friends and family.
- Of the 2,677 properties available for private rental throughout the state in a snapshot taken on 13-14 April 2013, fewer than 10 per cent were affordable for Tasmanians on pensions and fewer than 15 per cent were affordable for people working for the minimum wage.
- In 2010-2011, only 13.8% of properties sold or built across Tasmania were affordable to low-income earners.
- As of 30 September 2013 there were 2,229 applicants on the Housing Tasmania waiting list.

**TasCOSS CEO Tony Reidy is available for further comment or interview on 0419 361 915.**

**Shelter Tasmania CEO Pattie Chugg is available for further comment or interview on 0419 536 100.**

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