



20.08.2021

Dear Councillors

An Open Letter on Short Stay accommodation and the crisis in Hobart's Private Rental Market

Shelter Tas is the peak body for housing and homelessness services in Tasmania. Shelter Tas members include all the Specialist Homelessness Shelters and Community Housing Providers who manage over 7000 tenancies across the state. We represent the interests of our members, and low to moderate income housing consumers. We consult widely and systematically with our members.

As is well-known, Tasmania is experiencing a chronic and critical shortage of affordable rental housing. Shelter Tas supports the City of Hobart tackling this important issue, and welcomes the report *Short Stay Accommodation – Potential Planning Scheme Amendments* that was tabled at the City Planning Committee Meeting on 17 August 2021. This comprehensive report's recommendations make a lot of sense in this tight housing market. It is time to pause and reassess, to improve regulation and data capture, and plan for our future housing needs. With over 8,000 Tasmanians in housing stress and more than 1,600 people experiencing homelessness, every house counts.

Shelter Tas urges the full council to accept the recommendations of the Report. This will reinforce the Council's extensive work in response to Hobart's homelessness and affordable housing crisis including the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Commitment, the Greater Hobart Homelessness Alliance, and the Housing with Dignity Group. Importantly, the City of Hobart will show leadership to other LGAs around the state and nationally.

For some time, Shelter Tas has called on all levels of government to take urgent action to address the local need for housing, and in particular rental homes. For example, in our most recent Submission to the State Budget Process, Shelter Tas called for

a review of the regulation of short stay accommodation, to ensure that the permit system delivers sufficient funds to ensure appropriate monitoring and compliance with permits and exemptions and that local decisionmakers are empowered to make place-based decisions to balance short stay visitor accommodation with the needs of local workers and residents for appropriate rental accommodation.

https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Shelter-Tas-2021-22-Budget-Submission_final.pdf

Shelter Tas supports the development of planning mechanisms to help curb growth of short stay accommodation where it is displacing much needed longer term rentals. The latest CBOS report

includes 971 listings for Airbnb in Hobart, and 4281 statewide.

<https://cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/housing/short-and-medium-term-visitor-accommodation>

People who rent their homes experience particular hardship as the private rental market across Tasmania and particularly in Hobart is increasingly tight, competitive and constrained. The annual Rental Affordability Index, produced by National Shelter and SGS Economics provides additional evidence of the rental crisis in Hobart. The RAI shows that Hobart has been in the top two capitals for unaffordable rentals since 2015 and has been Australia's least affordable capital city since 2018. The Rental Affordability Index uses the standard measure that compares income to rental cost.

The Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot found only 729 properties advertised for rent across Tasmania in 2021, in contrast to 2677 properties in 2013. In the Southern region, which includes Hobart, there were 433 properties advertised as available to rent in 2021, compared with 1304 in 2013.

This crisis of affordable rental housing and has flow on effects to Hobart's increasing number of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness. We cannot continue business as usual. The statewide waiting list for social housing has past 4 000 with a significant proportion of applicants in the Hobart LGA.

We recognise that short stay visitor accommodation is not the only driver of our current shortage of rental properties, but it is a key factor that needs to be carefully managed. Good policies to relieve the housing crisis need to operate on multiple levels including a limit to new properties becoming short stay visitor accommodation.

Shelter Tas calls for a pause to new registrations of short stay accommodation to enable a review and reset of the regulatory and planning framework governing short stay accommodation. The current permissive regulations were established in a very different housing environment, and urgently need to be updated in light of Tasmania's ongoing housing crisis.

Once again Shelter Tas and our members congratulate the Council on its ongoing work to address the homelessness and housing crisis, and we urge you to adopt the recommendations of the Report.

With Regards



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