



**STATE GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROCESS 2023-2024**  
**SHELTER TAS SUBMISSION**



**Shelter TAS**  
Housing and Homelessness Peak

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Shelter Tas is supported by the Department of Communities Tasmania.



Shelter Tasmania acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout lutruwita/Tasmania and their continuing connection to the land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders past and present.



Shelter Tas welcomes and supports people of diverse genders and sexual orientations.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>SECTION 1: Additional Resources for Shelter Tas</b> .....	6
<b>SECTION 2: Strategic Directions</b>	
1. A 10% target for social housing .....	8
2. A Housing Impact Analysis and Housing in all Policies approach .....	8
3. A Women’s Housing Strategy .....	10
4. Adequate support for existing tenants whose NRAS subsidy is ending .....	10
5. A project to change the NIMBY response to YIMBY – Yes in my backyard.....	11
<b>SECTION 3: Specialised Recommendations</b>	
6. Develop a suite of innovative housing options to meet people’s needs and improve use of space through density and infill projects .....	12
7. Measures to enhance investment in Community Housing .....	13
8. Ongoing, recurrent funding for the Safe Space model.....	13
9. Address the additional cost burden for shelters to maintain a safe environment and legal responsibilities under the Organisational Liability for Child Abuse Legislation .....	14
10. Mental health, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) support .....	14
11. Improve housing outcomes for younger Tasmanians .....	16
12. Family Violence Rapid Rehousing – continued funding .....	17
13. Ongoing funding for the Private Rental Incentives Scheme.....	17
14. Improving housing outcomes for older Tasmanians .....	17
15. Boost the Rapid Rehousing program for people exiting prison, and establish a Rapid Rehousing program for veterans .....	19
16. People on low and zero incomes who are survivors of family and domestic violence .....	19
17. Tasmanians with disability .....	20
18. Improving conditions for tenants in the private rental market .....	21
19. Improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal Tasmanians through Aboriginal-owned and led services.....	22
20. Standards for specialist and supportive accommodation .....	22
21. Shelters to include options for accommodating pets.....	23
22. Better regulation for Short-Stay Accommodation.....	23
23. Explore energy efficiency measures and NBN Connection.....	24
24. Consumer participation.....	24
25. Adequate indexation for community sector organisations, including housing and homelessness services.....	25
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	25



# State Government Budget Process 2023-24 Shelter Tas Submission

## INTRODUCTION

### **Executive Summary**

#### About Shelter Tas and our members

Shelter Tas is the peak body for housing and homelessness services in Tasmania. Each year, Shelter Tas is invited to represent the sector on housing and homelessness issues in the State Government Budget Process. We are pleased to provide this submission to the **2023-24 State Government Budget Process**.

Shelter Tas represents the interests of low to moderate income housing consumers, Community Housing Providers and Specialist Homelessness Services (crisis and emergency shelters) across Tasmania. The membership of Shelter Tas includes all funded homelessness services and all registered Community Housing Providers in Tasmania. The housing and homelessness sector directly employs more than 900 people across Tasmania.<sup>1</sup> The workforce is expanding with the increased number of community housing properties, increased need for Specialist Homelessness Services and increased need for support workers.

Shelter Tas is an active member of national housing and homelessness peaks, including the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA – Shelter Tas is the CHIA representative in Tasmania) and National Shelter.

Shelter Tas' vision is that every person has affordable, appropriate, safe and secure housing, and our mission is to end homelessness in Tasmania. Our submission to the State Government Budget Process draws on our regular meetings and consultations with member organisations across the state.

#### Housing and Homelessness in Tasmania

##### **Context**

Shelter Tas' submission to the *State Government Budget Process 2023-24* highlights the need for major sector reform against a backdrop of a chronic shortage of affordable homes, and systemic and structural challenges in the housing system. House prices and rental costs are growing much faster than people's incomes, with the worst impacts on those who can least afford higher prices.

According to a recent Core Logic report, Tasmania's wages have seen the lowest increase in the country over the last 20 years, and house purchase prices have seen the highest increase over that period.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Shelter Tas research 2020 (unpublished).

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.corelogic.com.au/news/how-much-has-house-price-growth-outstripped-growth-wages?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=20211122\\_propertypulse](https://www.corelogic.com.au/news/how-much-has-house-price-growth-outstripped-growth-wages?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=20211122_propertypulse)



### **Renter households**

For renters, data consistently shows that Hobart remains the least affordable Capital City and 'Rest of Tasmania' remains the least affordable 'rest of the state' region in the country.<sup>3</sup> People needing affordable rentals are facing a crisis of availability and affordability in all regions of Tasmania. Since 2016, the median rental rate in Hobart has grown by 60%, and is now 11% higher than the Melbourne median rent. Average rental household income, however, is 18% lower. Pressures in the private rental market have not reduced since when the 2021 Rental Affordability Index report stated:

Although household incomes in Tasmania are significantly lower than the national average, rents are only marginally lower than mainland averages. The gap between income and rent has been widening over the past four years, with little sign of abating. A comparison of Rental Affordability Index (RAI) scores in Greater Hobart and Greater Sydney over recent years (see Figure 24) shows that while the two cities have shared similar levels of rental affordability in the past, the gap between their RAI scores has widened considerably since 2017.<sup>4</sup>

### **Social housing pressures**

In December 2020 Shelter Tas noted there were 3 594 Tasmanian households with applications on the waiting list for social housing. At the end of 2021 there were 4 506 applications – an increase of almost 1 000 households.<sup>5</sup> This figure remains high, at 4 504 in September 2022.<sup>6</sup> This is only one indicator of need: levels of housing stress and cost of living pressures are also shown in demand for emergency relief services, and the statistics on housing stress and rental affordability.

In Tasmania about 120 000 people are defined as living in poverty, and there are approximately 40 000 renters. Our homelessness services saw over 6 600 people last year, and each day over 46 people per day were turned away, usually because there was not enough space to accommodate them. Since the previous Census, in 2016, the Tasmanian population has grown by 9.3%, while the number of private dwellings has increased by only 7%. There are over 13 000 social housing dwellings, around 6.2% of the total dwellings.

### **Government responses**

Housing, or shelter, forms one of the five basic human needs along with food, water, clothing and sleep. The quality, security and affordability of housing is fundamental to wellbeing and economic participation - an important determinant of physical and mental health. We call for Housing in all Policies across government, and for a Housing Impact Analysis for all major decisions.

In recognition of the need for a sustained and strategic response to Tasmania's housing crisis, the development of the twenty-year *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* is underway, and in recent months, Parliament passed the legislation to establish the new *Homes Tasmania*. The State Government has committed \$1.5 Billion for 10 000 new social and affordable homes over the next ten years.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/SGS-Economics-and-Planning\\_Rental-Affordability-Index-2021.pdf](https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/SGS-Economics-and-Planning_Rental-Affordability-Index-2021.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/SGS-Economics-and-Planning\\_Rental-Affordability-Index-2021.pdf](https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/SGS-Economics-and-Planning_Rental-Affordability-Index-2021.pdf) p.46

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0027/196065/Housing-Dashboard-October-2021-web.pdf](https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0027/196065/Housing-Dashboard-October-2021-web.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/255521/Housing-Dashboard-September-2022.pdf](https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/255521/Housing-Dashboard-September-2022.pdf)



Shelter Tas welcomes the State Government's commitment to take a holistic and comprehensive perspective with the the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy*. In line with this 20-year strategic approach, Shelter Tas recommends that all Tasmanian government policies and decisions need to take account of the housing system, the pressures it faces, and its links to productivity, economic growth, health and wellbeing.

## ***Shelter Tas Budget Recommendations – Overview***

### **Resources for Shelter Tas**

While we welcome recent government initiatives, Shelter Tas continues to call on the State Government to commit to a target for 10% of all dwellings in Tasmania to be affordable social housing as the number one strategic priority for the State. For the 2023-24 Budget we are ***seeking additional funding*** to ensure Shelter Tas can maintain the quality of our work and meet the increasing demands on our core functions. This will be the first time in twelve years that Shelter Tas has requested an increase to our resources, and will supplement our current funding for core activities and sector workforce development.

### **Strategic Directions**

#### ***Recommendations to continue successful programs***

Tasmania has seen positive initiatives in recent years, including some that Shelter Tas has long supported, such as the introduction of the Wintringham model in Hobart. We have also seen expanded capacity at women's shelters in the north and south regions, and the introduction of Safe Spaces (low barrier shelters) in the state's south, north and north-west. These have demonstrated their value as an essential part of Tasmania's response to homelessness, and in our submission, we call for secure ongoing funding over the forward estimates for the Safe Space model, for the Wintringham model to be extended to the north and north west regions, and for the extended capacity at women's shelters to become permanent - with appropriate funding for support, and upgrade of the temporary buildings, where needed.

Community Housing Providers (CHPs) are now responsible for managing the majority of social housing tenancies across the state. CHPs are also major developers, responsible for building the increasing number of new social homes across the state. Critically, the expanding community housing sector is a major source of long-term homes for people who find temporary and emergency accommodation in the Specialist Homelessness Services system. Without these exits into secure and affordable homes, people and families can remain in temporary accommodation for too long, with the further downside that other people in need cannot access emergency options. To enable and expedite increased construction of much needed social housing, we are calling for greater efficiencies in the planning system and commitment to inclusionary zoning across Tasmania so that affordable homes are included in all new developments, and all Tasmanians can live in diverse and vibrant communities.

Increased supply of long-term social housing and emergency responses for people in crisis, as part of the *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy* (TAHS), are important and very welcome, and we look forward to the implementation of the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy*. The *Strategy* will provide an important opportunity for better monitoring of the private rental market, and timely evidence-based responses, as rental stress rises up the income ladder and across all regions. We call for improvements to the conditions faced by tenants, and a review and modernisation of the *Residential Tenancy Act* to provide more security for tenants.



## Specialised Recommendations

Strategic initiatives for specialised recommendations are in Section 2 of this Budget Submission. They include (but are not confined to):

### ***A Women's Housing Strategy***

Shelter Tas continues to call for a Women's Housing Strategy as a vital part of the overall *Tasmanian Housing Strategy*. In our 2021 response to the *Consultation on the Tasmanian Women's Strategy (2022-25)*, and in our 2022 submission to the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy Discussion Paper*, Shelter Tas recommended a *Women's Housing Strategy*, focussing on the needs and experiences of women where these are different from more typically male or gender neutral patterns.<sup>7</sup> Housing affordability, family breakdown, family and domestic violence, and ageing are issues with particular impact on the housing security of women and girls, including all people from LGBTIQ+ communities who identify as being part of this cohort.

### ***Managing short stay accommodation***

Not only is Hobart the least affordable capital city for renters in Australia, but it has the highest density of short-stay accommodation.<sup>8</sup> Tasmania needs to monitor and manage the impacts of short stay accommodation such as Airbnb on the long-term private rental market.<sup>9</sup>

In Tasmania we are continuing to see increasing numbers of families and households who are unable to afford their mortgages and rents, as cost of living pressures worsen and interest rates and rental costs rise. Tasmania has a high proportion of people receiving social security payments and Tasmanian workers also earn lower wages than the Australian average. The average weekly ordinary time earnings for an adult working full time are \$201.30 lower in Tasmania than the national average (Tasmania: \$1568.50, Australia: \$1769.80, ABS stats for May 2022).<sup>10</sup>

### ***Contesting NIMBY attitudes and stereotypes***

To ensure an adequate supply of affordable homes for renters on low and moderate incomes Tasmania needs to achieve and maintain the target of 10% of housing stock as affordable and social housing. We know homes need to be delivered in all neighbourhoods, regions and communities across Tasmania. There is a need to reverse misguided community resistance based on outdated 'Not in My Back Yard' (NIMBY) attitudes and stereotypes, to reflect the benefits of diverse communities, and address the need for affordable homes in all parts of the state.

We also need to innovate to identify more ways of increasing the supply of residential properties to ensure all Tasmanians have the homes they need.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Womens-Strategy-Submission-Nov-21\\_FINAL.pdf](https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Womens-Strategy-Submission-Nov-21_FINAL.pdf) ; <https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Tas-Housing-Strategy-Submission-Oct-2022.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/STR-Baseline-Report-June-2022\\_FINAL-combined-files.pdf](https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/STR-Baseline-Report-June-2022_FINAL-combined-files.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/ShelterTasTPP-Submission.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release#state-and-territory>



Our Budget Submission outlines how we can work with our sector to partner with the State Government to assist Tasmanians facing homelessness and housing hardship, and to strengthen the housing and homelessness sector as it adapts to Tasmania's dynamic housing environment and the evolving policy and reform landscape. Our recommendations are designed to deliver both social and financial benefits, by reducing costs in areas such as health and justice and enabling people to establish and sustain economic and social participation. Housing hardship and homelessness are costly and burdensome to the Tasmanian community – as well as to the individuals facing those experiences in everyday life. Housing is the necessary foundation for health, social wellbeing and economic participation, so improving the housing system for those most in need will deliver substantial overall economic benefit to the state.

Noting that housing and homelessness are a shared responsibility of the State and Commonwealth Governments through the *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement* (NHHA), and the recently signed *Housing Accord*, Shelter Tas supports the policies of our national peaks (CHIA and National Shelter) to boost the supply of social and affordable housing across Australia.

Shelter Tas' recommendations for the State Budget 2023-24 are presented in the following Sections:

- Resources for Shelter Tas to continue to deliver its vital role as the peak body for housing and homelessness services (Section 1);
- Strategic directions (Section 2); and
- Specialised recommendations for service improvements and system gaps (Section 3).



## SECTION 1: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SHELTER TAS

The work of Shelter Tas, as the peak body for housing and homelessness, needs to be adequately funded as a priority in the 2023-24 State Budget. We are requesting an additional \$250 000 per year (ex GST and indexed), bringing our total annual funding to \$762 000.

### Context

There has been a significant increase in the work of Shelter Tas in recent years, due to the rising pressure on the housing market and introduction of a range of initiatives and services in response to growing demand. Our core funding has not kept pace with this additional workload. In fact, our funding has not increased for 12 years.

Housing and homelessness are key priority areas for the Tasmanian Government, demonstrated by the expansion of the Community Housing Sector through;

- the Community Housing Growth Program,
- the Housing Connect Reform,
- the commitment to build 10 000 new affordable homes for Tasmanians through a \$1.5 billion-dollar investment, and
- the establishment of *Homes Tasmania* and the development of a twenty-year *Tasmanian Housing Strategy*.

Shelter Tas commends the Tasmania Government for these initiatives. We know that the Minister and his office appreciate our significant expertise and support especially, in relation to the legislation for the new *Homes Tasmania*.

Given the importance of housing for all Tasmanians and for the success of all Government policies such as health, population, education, mental health, tourism, and employment - Shelter Tas, as the specialist peak body, plays a vital role.

Shelter Tas will be even more important as the *Homes Tasmania* Board and organisation are bedded down over coming years. As the sector's peak body, Shelter Tas will be relied on for regular advice and providing linkages to the sector in all regions of Tasmania's close-knit community. As a reputable and trusted organisation, our ability to bring the voice of the sector together to provide advice to the Board will continue to be a critical element of the housing and homelessness system in Tasmania. Shelter Tas will support the Board and *Homes Tasmania* to ensure the intended housing outcomes are delivered across the state.

Shelter Tas has a long history of working collaboratively with Government to achieve safe, secure, affordable and appropriate homes and support services for all Tasmanians. We provide, and are recognised as:

- A contact point, liaison and representative for the not-for-profit housing and homelessness sector,
- Having deep specialist knowledge of the Tasmanian housing and homelessness sector and linkages with national bodies (e.g. National Shelter) to advise on innovative and new initiatives interstate and overseas,
- A conduit for information between the sector and government, and the capacity to facilitate consultation and briefings for new government initiatives,
- Being trusted by both the government and the sector, and proven to instil collaboration and codesign principles,



- Nationally recognised for an evidence-based and sector-informed approach to policy development,
- Providing Government with ready access to available information, feedback and available data from the breadth of housing and homelessness stakeholders; and
- Providing expert policy advice and development on housing and homelessness issues such as:
  - Sector-identified service gaps (Wintringham, Safe Spaces, Small Steps, Youth Initiatives)
  - Legislation and law reform (e.g. the *Homes Tasmania Act* and *Residential Tenancy Act*)
  - Planning (e.g. Tasmanian Planning Policies, Planning Directives, Short-Stay Accommodation and Strata Title)
  - Family violence (e.g. Trauma Informed Practice, Trauma Informed design)
  - Youth homelessness (e.g. Co-Chair of Under 16s Youth Homelessness Group, TYHHG)
  - Member of the Housing Connect Reform Steering Group
  - Applying a gendered lens to housing and homelessness issues (e.g. development of a Tasmanian Women's Housing Report and submissions to the Tasmanian Women's Strategy).

### Reason why extra funding is required

The level of engagement Shelter Tas has been able to deliver over recent years is not sustainable within our current funding. Adequate resourcing will enable Shelter Tas to continue to deliver timely, agile and evidence-based advice across the scope of initiatives underway and in the pipeline, including supporting *Homes Tasmania* and its Board through expert advisory committees, supporting the development and delivery of the twenty year *Tasmanian Housing Strategy*, providing advice and supporting the Housing Connect Reform, contributing to the Minister's Housing Reference Group, facilitating and planning Homelessness Week across the state each year, and supporting our members and building sector capacity with regular meetings, eNews and forums.

In addition to the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy*, Shelter Tas contributes work to other government strategic priorities. The proposed additional funding will strengthen our capacity to support:

- Tasmanian Women's Strategy
- Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy – It takes a Tasmanian Village
- Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy
- Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan
- Tasmanian Drug Strategy
- Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Strategic Plan
- Tasmanian Planning System Reform Agenda
- Tasmanian Active Aging Strategy
- Mental Health Strategy – Rethink 2020
- Tasmanian Multicultural Policy – Our Multicultural Island Action Plan.

### Value for money

This proposal represents exceptional value for money. Even with this additional funding, Shelter Tas, the state's peak body for housing and homelessness services, will be receiving **around half** of the funding of comparable specialist peaks.

The annual cost of \$250 000 (ex GST and indexed) of additional funding for Shelter Tas is equivalent to less than 0.16% of the Tasmanian Government's \$1.5 billion 10-year commitment for social and affordable housing.

**Recommendation:** *Shelter Tas funding is increased by \$250 000 per year for the next five years, indexed and additional to current funding for core activities and sector workforce development.*

**A detailed business case can be provided on request.**



## SECTION 2: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

### 1. A 10% target for social housing

The number one strategic recommendation for this year's Budget Submission continues to be further investment in new, well-located supply of social housing, to achieve 10% of all dwellings (up from the current level of approximately 6.2% of dwellings in Tasmania). This is urgently needed to arrest the growing hardship experienced by many Tasmanians - as identified by and through research, data and the evidence of our member organisations - with the hardship amplified by the effects of COVID-19.

Tasmania's deepening shortage of affordable and social housing has serious implications for the people and families affected by insecure housing and homelessness, and for the Tasmanian community as a whole. With persistently high levels of unemployment and underemployment, it will be harder for more and more working Tasmanians to find a home they can afford. Many low income and vulnerable Tasmanians will be left further behind - facing poverty and hardship - and will be at risk of becoming homeless.

Affordable, appropriate and secure housing underpins our economy's ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce. The shortage of affordable rental housing directly undermines our community's health, education and overall wellbeing.<sup>11</sup> Addressing this shortage will deliver a boost for health, employment and community building across the state. Data from Homelessness Australia shows a shortage of affordable social housing in all Tasmanian electorates.<sup>12</sup>

We call on the State Government to set a percentage-based target for affordable social housing, as part of the long term twenty-year *Tasmanian Housing Strategy*. There are excellent models available, such as the Social Housing Acceleration and Renovation Program (SHARP), which shows the benefit of social housing both to employment and in meeting the community's need for affordable rental housing.<sup>13</sup> The *National Plan for Affordable Housing* by the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) sets targets to guide investment and action over the next decade to meet projected need.<sup>14</sup> In addition, there are significant opportunities to find alignment with the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and the proposed *National Housing and Homelessness Plan*.<sup>15</sup>

**Recommendation 1:** Shelter Tas recommends a medium-long term target for Tasmania of 10% of dwellings to be affordable social rental housing, with a yearly aim of delivering at least 1 000 additional affordable homes.

### 2. A Housing Impact Analysis and Housing in All Policies approach

The cost of housing in Tasmania, including both purchase and rental, is rising much faster than people's incomes, leaving more and more households in rental stress and facing the risk of homelessness. In 2022 the Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot found only 714 properties

advertised for rent across Tasmania, similar to 729 advertised properties last year, but in

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<sup>11</sup> Productivity Commission (2016) *Productivity Commission Study Report, Overview Study Report*, Canberra, November 2016 accessed 5/12/16 at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/human-services/identifying-reform/report>

<sup>12</sup> <https://everybodyshome.com.au/heat-maps/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.communityhousing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SHARP-Program.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.communityhousing.com.au/national-plan/>

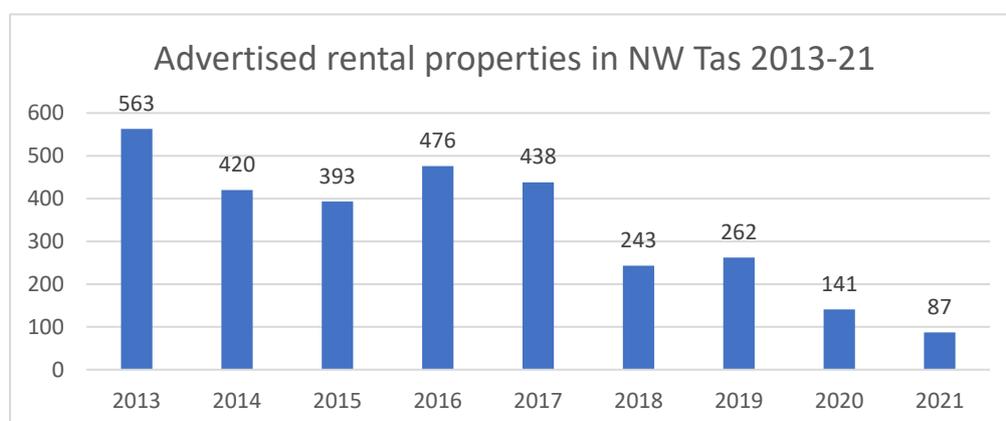
<sup>15</sup> [https://budget.gov.au/2022-23-october/content/factsheets/download/factsheet\\_housing.pdf](https://budget.gov.au/2022-23-october/content/factsheets/download/factsheet_housing.pdf)



dramatic contrast to 2 677 properties in 2013.<sup>16</sup> While there was little change in the number of rental properties advertised, Tasmania’s population increased by 4 079 over the last year, generating more demand pressure on the housing market.<sup>17</sup>

The now entrenched shortage of affordable rentals is affected by many factors, including reduced supply as residential properties are converted to short-stay accommodation in all regions of Tasmania.<sup>18</sup> At the same time Tasmania’s population is increasing, while home ownership rates are declining.<sup>19</sup> This means people are renting for longer before being able to purchase a home, and higher proportions and greater numbers of people will be life-long renters.

We know that pressures on the private rental market are extreme in all regions of Tasmania, even those that were traditionally the cheapest to rent are now becoming unaffordable. For example, the graph below (adapted from the Anglicare Rental Snapshot 2013-21) shows an 84% decline in advertised rental properties in North West Tasmania since 2013.<sup>20</sup>



Population, employment, and tourism are some of the policy areas that affect demand for, and use of, Tasmania’s residential accommodation. Health, education, and justice all are impacted when people cannot find or afford the homes they need. All policy areas can have a bearing on housing and a ‘Housing in all Policies’ approach is the best way to recognise and manage these impacts. A Housing in all Policies approach would ensure that Tasmania’s COVID-19 response includes analysis and appropriate planning for Tasmanians who are not currently in safe and secure homes, and in shelters and supportive accommodation environments that are not suitable for ‘hospital at Home’.

**Recommendation 2:** Shelter Tas calls for an integrated and comprehensive Housing in All Policies approach that recognises housing as essential infrastructure, and includes a Housing Impact Analysis for all relevant policies.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/rental-affordability-snapshot/>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/255521/Housing-Dashboard-September-2022.pdf](https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/255521/Housing-Dashboard-September-2022.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/housing/short-stay-accommodation-act>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.corelogic.com.au/reports>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/rental-affordability-snapshot/>



### 3. A Women's Housing Strategy

The *Tasmanian Women's Strategy* commenced in 2018. In 2022, however, Tasmania still lacks a specific housing strategy for women. Shelter Tas recognises housing affordability, family breakdown, family and domestic violence, lower incomes and ageing as particular issues impacting the housing security of women and girls, including all people from LGBTQI+ communities who identify as being part of this cohort.

It is essential to recognise that many women may have a home, but that home is not a safe place to be. This forces women and children into unsafe situations.

Domestic and family violence makes a woman's home the least safe place she can be, and getting to safety often means finding somewhere new to live. But a lack of available social and affordable housing drives many women to return to their perpetrators and the risk of violence, or into homelessness.<sup>21</sup>

Tasmania's worsening housing crisis has disproportionate impacts on women. Data from Tasmania's system of Specialist Homelessness Services shows there were 5 279 unassisted requests from men, and 13 934 unassisted requests from women – more than twice as many. The proposed *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* currently under development will need a specific strategic focus on issues around women and housing availability, cost, safety and security.

**Recommendation 3a:** *A specific housing strategy for women, and dedicated funds within the implementation of the **Tasmanian Women's Strategy**, the **Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy** and **Tasmanian Housing Strategy** to deliver specialised housing that meets the particular needs of women, including specialist family violence shelters.*

**Recommendation 3b:** *Given the demonstrated need, Shelter Tas calls for the extended capacity at Women's Shelters to become permanent - with appropriate funding for support, and upgrade of the temporary buildings (pods) where needed.*

### 4. Adequate support for existing tenants whose NRAS subsidy is ending

When the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) scheme ends, Tasmanian tenants will face a highly competitive and challenging private rental market in which rents have surged in recent years. To achieve or maintain housing stability in this environment, some will need additional assistance and support. Data indicates 300 properties will 'time out' of the 10-year NRAS system between 2021 and 22, over 300 in 2024 and nearly 600 in 2026.<sup>22</sup> In the context of Tasmania's highly competitive and expensive private rental market, a subsidy or other support will be needed to avoid housing hardship and homelessness as the NRAS scheme reaches its end. While some NRAS tenants are eligible for transition to Tasmania's Private Rental Incentive Scheme, others will not be eligible. A safety net for these tenants will be needed.

**Recommendation 4:** *Review the expiring NRAS program and ensure tenant impacts are well managed.*

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<sup>21</sup> [http://everybodyshome.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/EE\\_Women-Housing\\_Domestic-Violence\\_WEB\\_SINGLES.pdf](http://everybodyshome.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/EE_Women-Housing_Domestic-Violence_WEB_SINGLES.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.communityhousing.com.au/post-nras/>



## 5. A project to change the NIMBY response to YIMBY – Yes in my backyard

The NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) response has become a regular feature of community discussions about affordable and social housing initiatives in Tasmania. This response is often based on outdated myths and stereotypes, and attitudes that are not grounded in evidence.

NIMBY attitudes are becoming so prevalent they can delay and even derail proposals for much needed affordable housing. Opposition can come from local residents, planners, politicians and the media. This opposition can undermine political and public support for affordable housing provision and homelessness responses. A multi-tiered approach is needed to challenge and change these misguided assumptions.

Shelter Tas proposes to join in partnership with government and other stakeholders to change the conversation around affordable and social rental housing. The partnership would include Community Housing Providers, TCCI, HIA, Master Builders and other stakeholders working with Shelter Tas and the State Government to target stigma and tell positive stories about the benefits of inclusive neighbourhoods. Tasmanians will all benefit when everyone has a safe, secure, affordable and appropriate home, and to achieve this we need to foster a YIMBY (Yes in My Backyard) attitude across the state.

The *Changing NIMBY to YIMBY* Project would include:

- Consultation to better understand and respond to local community concerns;
- Develop frameworks for practice in building community support;
- Benchmark with other states and territories on their responses to the challenge of NIMBYism;
- Develop a toolkit of resources to engage local communities and support the construction of social housing;
- Prevent and manage situations where opposition is a risk or reality;
- Build the capacity of communities to actively embrace social and cultural diversity; and
- Dispel the myths about inclusive housing, using a communications program led by government to encourage a change in the narrative to one of welcoming the benefits of inclusive, diverse and vibrant neighbourhoods.

**Recommendation 5:** Shelter Tas recommends investment in a 24-month project as a partnership with the State Government, Shelter Tas and the housing and homelessness sector for the **Changing NIMBY to YIMBY** project.

**Cost:** \$300 000 (indicative) over two years - a detailed business case can be provided on request.



## SECTION 3: SPECIALISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Our expert members in the housing and homelessness sector advise us that Tasmania is seeing an increase in both houselessness (people who only need a house) and homelessness (people who require specialised support to help them gain and maintain a safe and stable home). It is important to understand and respond to the different needs of these groups as we strive to achieve safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing for all, and an end to homelessness.

Our targeted consultation with members, including our annual member survey, has identified particularly urgent gaps for certain cohorts and regions. Addressing these needs will complement and add to the value of the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* (to be released in 2023), *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-25*, and *Action Plan 2019-23*. The additional funds needed by these initiatives could be drawn from Housing Debt waiver funds, cost savings, or shared budgets in other areas such as health and justice. The initial cost of increasing the stock of affordable housing and reducing homelessness and housing hardship is an investment that yields economic return in areas such as health, education and social engagement.

Our consultation has also identified positive opportunities for innovative projects and for ways to enhance the private rental conditions experienced by tenants.

### **6. Develop a suite of innovative housing options to meet people's needs and improve use of space through density and infill projects**

In Tasmania's ongoing housing crisis, we need to explore additional ways to address the chronic shortage of affordable rental housing.

The 2019 Report *Towards infill Housing Development* provided to the Department of State Growth notes the "increased demand for well-located, affordable housing within the State's urban centres."<sup>23</sup> The Report also notes:

A lack of affordable housing has the greatest impact on vulnerable groups within society, who are least able to access the private housing market. This includes people on low or fixed incomes and long-term renters. These groups form a high proportion of households across Tasmania. (P 20)

To develop additional innovative housing options in response to Tasmania's ongoing rental crisis, Shelter Tas recommends immediate investment in demonstration projects for new redevelopment and urban renewal projects such as 'shop top' accommodation. To further explore alternatives to traditionally built homes, Shelter Tas recommends establishing and facilitating stakeholder groups to explore housing innovations, and identify innovative community-based solutions to housing need, in line with Housing Connect Reforms. These forums would include the Property Council, UTAS, LGAT, TCCI, HIA and Master Builders, and would include user perspectives, financing options, and planning pathways towards infill, inclusionary zoning and improved density.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>[https://www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/216172/Toward\\_Infill\\_Housing\\_Development.pdf](https://www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/216172/Toward_Infill_Housing_Development.pdf) P3

<sup>24</sup> For a similar program, see [https://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0023/167801/Affordable\\_Housing\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2022\\_a4-190922.pdf](https://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/167801/Affordable_Housing_Action_Plan_2022_a4-190922.pdf)



**Recommendation 6a:** Shelter Tas recommends commissioning a project to re-imagine and revisit new and innovative options to deliver more affordable and well-located housing options, such as 'shop top' accommodation, retrofit offices and infill housing. Project outputs would include regional forums, a report and recommendations for pilot projects and initiatives.

**Recommendation 6b:** Shelter Tas recommends a grant program to fund and showcase well-designed affordable 'shop top' accommodation, and use of vacant office space or other well-located space targeted at low- and moderate-income renters and social housing tenants.

## **7. Measures to enhance investment in Community Housing**

Tasmania's important and national best practice commitment to social housing, including the Community Housing Growth Program, will be enhanced by a focus on efficiency gains in planning, utilities, and procurement processes. Shelter Tas has received feedback from our Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) members that other states are offering better incentives to CHPs to build new properties and support tenants. For example, Victoria contributes 65% of building cost while Tasmania contributes only 40%. Victoria also offers operational subsidies.

Reviewing interstate benchmarks will ensure CHPs are adequately and competitively funded in Tasmania, and will help to secure ongoing stability and growth in our community housing sector. The following areas show the greatest potential to improve efficiency:

- (i) Review funding levels for community housing in other jurisdictions to benchmark Tasmania's funding models and ensure best practice.
- (ii) Enable Local Government and the State Planning System to develop a permitted use pathway for not-for-profit community housing development that allows appropriate variation for social rental properties, such as fewer required parking spaces, as well as maintaining quality standards.
- (iii) Review and streamline the timeframes and flow of tenders and approvals for new builds to maximise efficiency in the current government procurement processes.
- (iv) Work with community housing providers, LGAT, TasWater and TasNetworks to implement a streamlined and cheaper process for affordable housing projects to connect utilities, and achieve approvals from local governments.
- (v) Ensure that inclusionary zoning is a priority in the reforms to Tasmania's planning system, and develop a phased-in model of inclusionary zoning to expedite and encourage diverse housing options in all developments.

**Recommendation 7:** Convene an expert group of stakeholders, including CHPs, to implement the above initiatives and recommend additional ways to expedite social housing planning and delivery.

## **8. Ongoing, recurrent funding for the Safe Space model**

The Safe Space model is now operating in all three regions of Tasmania, supporting people in Hobart, Burnie and Launceston. This program, focussing on rough sleepers, provides a low barrier option for people needing emergency shelter, and has demonstrated successful outcomes, with most clients engaging with health and medical support, and some finding longer term safe and secure housing. Safe Spaces have become a valuable and vital part of Tasmania's system of Specialist Homelessness Services and needs to be supported with ongoing funding through the forward estimates.

**Recommendation 8:** Deliver funding security with recurrent five-year funding (to match other Specialist Homelessness Services) for Safe Space shelters through the forward estimates.



## **9. Address the additional cost burden for shelters to maintain a safe environment for children/young people and implement their legal responsibilities under the Organisational Liability for Child Abuse legislation**

The *Justice Legislation Amendment (Organisational Liability for Child Abuse) Act 2019* (the Act) came into effect on 1 May 2020. The Act increases legislated responsibilities and requirements for organisations providing services to children and young people to ensure the safety of children in their care, and manage the risk of child abuse from any person associated with the organisation and its activities. To manage the increased liabilities stipulated by the Act means additional reporting, record keeping and administration; changes to staffing; recruitment practices and policies; and arguably a change to one worker models to eliminate the potential for unobserved one-one interactions between adults and children (for example, within a youth service funded on the basis of a one-worker model or during transport in a car). This focus on safety and risk management will impose additional costs on Specialist Homelessness Services who assist accompanied and unaccompanied children and young people.

Initial costs will likely include material resources and environmental change, updates to policies and procedures, and changes to recruitment and personnel practices. There will be additional ongoing costs due to higher insurance premiums, and the administrative burden to maintain records, implement best practice and continuous improvement and the like.

The national program of Ten Child Safe Principles is likely to be legislated in Tasmania in the near future, and will provide additional guidance to services to ensure safety of children. This will also require adjustments involving some costs.

**Recommendation 9:** Review the additional cost burden for Specialist Homelessness Services due to current and upcoming 'child safe' legislation and allocate additional funds as appropriate.

## **10. Mental health, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) support**

Shelter Tas members report an urgent and escalating need for appropriate mental health pathways for people in crisis accommodation.<sup>25</sup> More people with higher and more complex needs are presenting at Shelters. Shelter Tas is extremely concerned about the growing risk to clients and workers. The situation reflects both a lack of resources and the lack of integration between mental health and housing/homelessness services. A clear response pathway that delivers appropriate support for clients and workers is needed urgently.

Young people, in particular, deserve access to therapeutic models that are appropriate to their needs. Tasmania still lacks a dedicated child and adolescent in-patient mental health unit, which is clearly needed to deliver care in an appropriate setting to young people who require this clinical response. Young people also need appropriate rehabilitation options that will enable them to address alcohol and other drug challenges, including appropriate residential rehabilitation and aftercare that meet their needs.

The current Mental Health Outreach Support Team (MHOST) provides essential service to people who are hard to reach but can benefit greatly from mental health support. Shelter recommends

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<sup>25</sup> Currently, if a client is in extreme distress, self-harming, or displaying behaviour suggesting acute mental ill-health, because many shelters have a one worker model the only option is to call for police or an ambulance. The expense and disruption of emergency service call-outs could in many cases be avoided if early intervention and support were in place.



expanding this role to all regions of the state and ensuring ongoing funding for this important service, including additional outreach to all Shelters.

We note the successes already achieved by the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) pilot in the south, where people experiencing significant mental health challenges are supported to sustain their tenancies. We encourage the State Government to consider fast-tracking a similar program for the north and northwest. This investment not only benefits tenants, who are able to maintain housing security and receive the mental health care they need, but also saves money through the decreased need for acute care and for additional housing and homelessness services that are needed if a tenancy is not sustained.

We recognise the success of the Rapid Rehousing program that delivers secure homes to people who are exiting in-patient mental health care circumstances. We would like to see this program extended to support people in additional locations, and delivered with a Housing First approach. We also understand from members that there would be benefit in extending the duration of stay, currently limited to 12 months. When people are living with mental health challenges the stress of housing insecurity can worsen their illness. Chronic conditions may not be stabilised within one year, and an expectation to relocate after 12 months may be detrimental to the person's health and recovery. We would like to see a long-term approach to secure homes for people in this program - at least two years, and ideally for as long as the person needs this supportive and stable environment.

**Recommendation 10a:** *Renew and expand the role of the Mental Health Outreach Support Team (MHOST).*

**Recommendation 10b:** *Extend the duration of stay for tenants with mental health issues accessing the Rapid Rehousing program to at least two years, and preferably for as long as needed.*

**Recommendation 10c:** *Use the opportunities in the Housing Connect Reform to deliver better integration between housing and mental health and AOD services, especially for young Tasmanians.*

**Recommendation 10d:** *Expand the HASI program to all regions of Tasmania.*

**Recommendation 10e:** *Expand the PACER program to all regions of Tasmania.*

**Recommendation 10f:** *Explore options for dedicated purpose-built supportive accommodation for people leaving in-patient programs for mental health treatment, using the model of the Rocherlea Rehabilitation and Recovery Service.<sup>26</sup>*

**Recommendation 10g:** *Explore options for dedicated purpose-built supportive accommodation for people leaving in-patient programs for AOD treatment.*

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/mental-health-rocherlea/>



## 11. Improve housing outcomes for younger Tasmanians

Young people are particularly disadvantaged in Tasmania's competitive and expensive rental housing market due to lower incomes, discrimination and lack of rental history. Young people are over-represented in the Specialist Homelessness Service system, and on the waiting list for social housing.

Homelessness disproportionately affects young people and children (52% of all homelessness services clients).<sup>27</sup> The ABS 2016 Census reported that 38% of homeless Tasmanians are less than 25 years old; nearly half couch surf or are in severely overcrowded housing.<sup>28</sup> Young Tasmanians make up one third of the social housing waiting list.

Providing more affordable rental housing, increasing the housing options for young people, and securing the support needed to help them learn how to live independently are effective measures to avoid and reduce homelessness. To be successful, options for young people need to be developed in consultation with the community sector. Ongoing operating funds need to be guaranteed. We note the effectiveness of the Northern Youth Accommodation Coalition (NYAC) model, and call for similar options to be developed in the south of the state.

Young people who depend on Youth Allowance as their sole source of income, and other people on extremely low incomes (for example, single people who are receiving JobSeeker Allowance), present significant challenges for social housing providers. This is due to the unviability of the income-based rent model for these cohorts. Most on this income stream are ineligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance, which even further impacts Community Housing Providers in their ability to run a self-sustaining business given the costs associated with construction, maintenance and a supportive housing model of service. It is increasingly difficult to cross-subsidise these tenants, due to the allocation models that require a focus on priority allocations, i.e. generally tenants with more complex needs. Should government continue to require a focus on housing youth in particular, an additional supplement for Community Housing Providers is needed in order to bridge the gap between service delivery and rental for this group.

While young people are in youth emergency accommodation shelters, they are currently supported by a one worker model overnight. Shelter Tas recommends a review of the one worker funding model in youth shelters, with consideration given to double staffing, especially overnight.

Shelter Tas welcomes the additional support for young people through Youth to Independence (Y2I) facilities, share houses and cluster homes and a therapeutic residential model of care. In addition, we welcome the alignment of Tasmania's *Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework* and the *Under 16 Homelessness: Children and young people under 16 who are alone and at risk of or experiencing homelessness: a Policy Framework for Tasmania* and recommend the following:

**Recommendation 11a:** *Develop a rent subsidy model for CHPS who are housing young people on extremely low incomes living in social housing.*

**Recommendation 11b:** *Extend transitional housing options such as the NYAC and YFCC models to other regions (up to one-year accommodation, with support).*

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<sup>27</sup> See Shelter Tas Fact Sheet *Housing in Tasmania* <https://www.shelbertas.org.au/>

<sup>28</sup> [https://shelbertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ST\\_FACT-SHEET\\_Homelessness-v5\\_Oct2019.pdf](https://shelbertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ST_FACT-SHEET_Homelessness-v5_Oct2019.pdf)



**Recommendation 11c:** Maintain a suite of options for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in addition to Youth to Independence (Y2I) services.

**Recommendation 11d:** Review existing youth accommodation options to maximise utilisation of all potential bed spaces (noting that this work has already commenced in services such as Annie Kenney and Trinity Hill) including funding to support additional clients.

**Recommendation 11e:** Review the 'one worker model' in youth emergency accommodation. This work could be undertaken in scope of current Communities Tas operations, and Shelter Tas would be happy to assist with consultations.

**Recommendation 11f:** Continue the work of the Under 16s Homelessness Working Group to ensure all Tasmanian children experiencing and at risk of homelessness have the care and accommodation they need, as the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of immediate and long-term initiatives take place.<sup>29</sup>

## **12. Family Violence Rapid Rehousing – continued funding**

Rapid rehousing for people escaping family violence is a vital resource to keep women and their children safe. It is important to provide housing security for people so that they can stabilise their lives. A Housing First approach is the best way to deliver this. Where appropriate, this may require additional time in their home, to avoid the disruption of further relocations. We recommend continuing to fund this program and reviewing the duration of stay to ensure people have the stability they need.

**Recommendation 12a:** Continue to fund the Family Violence Rapid Rehousing program, expand the number of properties available and extend duration of stay.

**Recommendation 12b:** Increase the availability of emergency and crisis accommodation for women and their children escaping family violence to meet the need.

## **13. Ongoing funding for the Private Rental Incentives Scheme**

**Recommendation 13:** Continue to fund the Private Rental Incentives Scheme, subject to positive evaluation of tenant outcomes and value for money.

## **14. Improving housing outcomes for older Tasmanians**

Nearly one in five people seeking assistance from Tasmania's homelessness services are aged over 55. In the 2016 Census older people experiencing homelessness were growing both as an absolute number and as a proportion of Tasmanians experiencing homelessness.<sup>30</sup> Older single women are particularly vulnerable, due to having lower levels of income and assets.<sup>31</sup> Shelter Tas welcomes the establishment of the Wirksworth facility in the south. This is based on the Wintringham model, which can draw on the aged care funding stream to support residents. Shelter Tas encourages the

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<sup>29</sup> U16s Working Group Implementation Plan, March 2022.

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.shelbertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-03-20-ST\\_FACT-SHEET\\_Homelessness-2016-Census.pdf](http://www.shelbertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-03-20-ST_FACT-SHEET_Homelessness-2016-Census.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, *The Time of Our Lives Report* <https://www.lmcf.org.au/images/2016-Time-of-Our-Lives-Report-LMCF.pdf>



State Government to deliver similar accommodation for older men and women in the greatest need in the north and northwest regions.

COTA and Shelter Tas recognise that there is a growing group of older Tasmanians reaching retirement years without owning their own home, and therefore facing increased housing insecurity and hardship. Shelter Tas and COTA propose a research project into how best to meet the needs of this cohort. For instance, a variation to the Homeshare model, or other shared equity models, could be designed for older clients. Current models available in Tasmania can exclude older people due to criteria such as bank loan eligibility and higher – though still modest – assets.

There is no dedicated housing response for those who have experienced elder abuse and do not have a safe home, as this group is not included in the family violence response. Some estimates have suggested that 3-5% of the population – 3 000 to 4 500 Tasmanians – experience elder abuse each year. There is an urgent need to develop appropriate housing solutions to address this gap. Not all of these cases would require housing assistance, but an approximate number of 5%-10% would amount to 150-450 places statewide. A response could be modelled on the Rapid Rehousing program for survivors of family violence, noting that the homes would need to be appropriate - most likely two-bedroom dwellings that would suit a single person, with age-friendly characteristics such as accessible design for a person with low or changing mobility.

**Recommendation 14a:** *Develop appropriate housing solutions for Tasmanians who are escaping from elder abuse.*

**Recommendation 14b:** *As the Tasmanian population ages it is essential to look to future needs. Shelter and COTA jointly recommend two projects to support ageing in place for tenants and home owners:*

- *Shelter and COTA Project to recommend incentives for landlords to support older Tasmanians to remain in their homes, with strategies such as modifying properties and to encourage long term leases (5-10 years).*

*Project officer (auspiced by Shelter and/or COTA), three regional stakeholder forums, report and recommendations, ongoing community of practice.*

**Indicative cost:** \$50 000

- *Shelter Tas and COTA Project to recommend best practice options on shared equity models for older Tasmanians to remain in their own homes and/or age in place.*

*Project officer (auspiced by Shelter and/or COTA), three regional stakeholder forums, report and recommendations, ongoing community of practice, financial/economic consultant.*

**Indicative cost:** \$70 000.

**Recommendation 14c:** *Shelter Tas recommends the commitment of capital and recurrent funding in the 2023-24 Budget for a Wintringham model for older people who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness for the north and north west regions.*



### **15. Boost the Rapid Rehousing program for people exiting prison, and establish a Rapid Rehousing program for veterans**

Tasmania's Rapid Rehousing for people exiting prison has approximately 12 properties. The need is significantly greater, with over 700 people exiting prison each year. The Beyond the Wire program has established a strong track record in supporting people so that they can stabilise their lives, reconnect with family and reduce rates of reoffending. Boosting the program to include a Housing First approach, with 50 medium- to long-term properties, is a much-needed expansion.

At present Tasmania does not have a dedicated rapid rehousing program for Veterans. This is urgently needed, with an initial allocation of 16 properties.

**Recommendation 15a:** *Expand the Rapid Rehousing for people exiting prison to 50 properties and implement a Housing First approach.*

**Recommendation 15b:** *Establish a Rapid Rehousing program of 16 properties for veterans.*

### **16. People on low and zero incomes who are victims/survivors of family and domestic violence**

Our members who deliver Specialist Homelessness Services are sometimes called upon to house people who have no income at all. Often people with zero income are victims/survivors of family violence who are on temporary visas. Shelter Tas calls on the State Government to adopt and promote the recommendations of the *Blueprint for reform - removing barriers to safety for victims/survivors of domestic and family violence who are on temporary visas*.

These recommendations have been endorsed by national organisations and organisations in every state, including Warrawee Women's Shelter, Engender Equality and Women's Essential Services Providers (WESP) in Tasmania.<sup>32</sup>

While some *Blueprint* recommendations are outside the State Government's remit, others - such as enabling eligibility to access social and public housing and SHS services - could be implemented in Tasmania (South Australia already allows women on temporary visas to access social and public housing<sup>33</sup>). We note that because services rely on income-based rents a funding supplement may be needed to manage the financial impact on the shelter. For the full list of recommendations for victims/survivors of domestic and family violence who are on temporary visas, please see: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2019/10/29/blueprint-reform-removing-barriers-safety-victims-survivors-domestic-and-family-violence>

Shelter Tas is pleased to acknowledge that the COVID-19 domestic and family violence initiatives were made available to people on temporary visas with zero income.

**Recommendation 16:** *Shelter Tas recommends the State Government endorses and implements, where appropriate, all the recommendations from the 'Blueprint for Reform - removing barriers to safety for victims/survivors of domestic and family violence who are on temporary visas'.*

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<sup>32</sup> Warrawee is a member of Shelter Tas, and Shelter Tas and Warrawee are both members of WESP in Tasmania.

<sup>33</sup> <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2019/10/29/blueprint-reform-removing-barriers-safety-victims-survivors-domestic-and-family-violence> p 7.



## 17. Tasmanians with disability

The Disability Accommodation Multiplier Program (D-vAMP) aims to address systemic barriers to unlock the potential of underutilised public, community and private assets by **enabling innovative models** which have a multiplying effect on addressing the priority housing waitlist. The Disability Accommodation Multiplier Program (D-vAMP) will improve housing options for people with disability while also unlocking the potential to better utilise existing social, community and sector or Director-owned housing and land. A taskforce comprising government, housing and disability sector representatives, with a funded resource to support the Taskforce coordination and deliverables will be set up to identify underutilised disability housing and to facilitate and accelerate transition from inappropriate housing to target housing developments that already planned or underway.

People with disability have been accessing a greater proportion of public and community housing resources since the transition from institutional settings in 2000. Many of the people who moved from institutional settings are living in larger tenancies (5-6+ bedroom) in older style housing situated on large blocks.

Whilst an emerging SDA market has seen people with very complex and high physical needs (only 6 per cent of people living with disability in the NDIS) attract funding for specialised housing, most adult people with disability live in public or community housing or with their ageing parents. An increasing number are living in private rentals retained and subsidised by disability service organisations who cannot provide supports without a safe place to do so. This is an unsustainable arrangement.

The fundamental shift to how disability supports are funded and regulated has seen a significant change in the demand and utilisation of public, community and private housing assets. A large proportion of properties are not fully utilised and are no longer fit for purpose, despite being well located and on large blocks. Most properties have gardens which are paid to be maintained but very few are used.

Some public, community and private housing assets remain empty while disability providers market their disability services. For example, across 26 community housing properties with Possability residents there are currently 10 vacant bedrooms, reflecting a bedroom utilisation of 83%. That means there is the potential for nine properties to be reutilised if the residents are given the choice of moving into more appropriate smaller properties. This suggests that across the disability services sector hundreds of properties have the potential to be reutilised.

NDIS participants are increasingly seeking smaller more independent options like units and apartments which can and should be co-located with members of the broader community. However, transition between existing models to more appropriate community housing models do not occur due to existing residents not triggering high risk status. Even those on the waiting list do not have their needs met because there is insufficient supply – partly due to the lack of suitable and appropriate land. Furthermore, it is difficult for the State Government to quantify the supply and demand profile of the changing group as this information is held by multiple disability service providers.



**Proposal:**

The outputs of the program would be to:

- Map supply and demand for housing for people with a disability across public, community and private assets to identify inefficient and unsuitable housing.
- Establish and maintain a government, housing and disability sector taskforce to facilitate and accelerate transition between inappropriate housing to target housing developments already planned or underway (MULTIPLIER 1: inappropriate stock currently underutilised is exchanged for more appropriate stock, immediately releasing current stock for other groups on the priority waitlist).
- Build capability with the disability sector, government housing organisation, community housing organisations, advocacy groups and people with a disability sector to encourage development of options that meet the needs of and are preferred by people with disability (MULTIPLIER 2: greater and more suitable options for people with disability in community housing developments lead to addressing people with disability numbers on priority waitlist).
- Identify and demonstrate innovation projects to redeploy existing property to either higher utilisation or higher density options (MULTIPLIER 3: Density and utilisation of property is increased through infill and innovative models).

*The resource needed is a coordination role to support this work.*

**Indicative cost:** \$150 000/annum for two years.

**Recommendation 17:** Commit funding for the Disability Accommodation Multiplier Program (D-vAMP).

### **18. Improving conditions for tenants in the private rental market**

Renting in the private rental market is no longer just a short-term option. More people are renting for longer times. More than 40% of Tasmanian renters spend over 10 years in the rental market.<sup>34</sup> The recent Choice report *Disrupted: the consumer experience of renting in Australia* reveals the lack of consumer protections. Despite paying thousands of dollars each year, tenants face unsatisfactory conditions and are often too afraid to complain. In this context it is crucial to maintain a well-functioning system that protects both tenants and landlords, and enables people who rent their homes to lead healthy, safe and productive lives.

Shelter Tas calls for a refresh and reset for the regulation of the private rental market. As more people are renting for longer, renting is no longer a transitional tenure. Tasmania has an opportunity to refresh the regulatory and cultural framework for private rental to ensure it is better adapted to the contemporary environment. This would include 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.

Shelter Tas is ideally placed to consult key stakeholders and deliver a report with recommendations to help modernise the Residential Tenancy Act and improve the tenancy security of all Tasmanians in

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<sup>34</sup> Choice, NATO and National Shelter - *Disrupted: the consumer experience of renting in Australia* 2018  
<https://www.choice.com.au/money/property/renting/articles/choice-rental-rights-report-dec-2018>



private rental housing. This would assist Tasmania to align with best national practice on matters such as exemptions from the RTA, pets, digital rights, energy efficiency and emerging disruptive technologies such as apps for tenants and landlords.

**Recommendation 18a:** *Consultation to support the continuing improvement of the Residential Tenancy Act.*

**Cost:** \$30,000 (indicative) for Shelter Tas to undertake statewide consultation and deliver the Report.

**Recommendation 18b:** *Additional resources for the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to ensure effective monitoring and enforcement of the Residential Tenancy Act, and to enable the Commissioner to undertake proactive inspections to ensure compliance with the minimum standards.<sup>35</sup>*

**Recommendation 18c:** *An audit of the funds held by the Residential Deposit Authority to ensure transparency about the holdings and uses of bond money, and the introduction of an annual report showing how these funds are allocated to the benefit of tenants.*

**Recommendation 18d:** *Adequate funding for the Tenants' Union of Tasmania in the Forward Estimates to ensure a sustainable model for legal representation of tenants across the state, as per the TUT submission to the 2022-23 Budget Process.*

**Recommendation 18e:** *Fund the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to implement an exit survey for renters and landlords on reclaiming bond money. The survey could be modelled on the NSW 'renter exit survey'.*

## **19. Improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal Tasmanians through Aboriginal-owned and led services**

Self-determination to engage with housing, health and wealth creation is essential for the acquisition of skills, ecological sustainability and building technologies that are likely to greatly impact the future wellbeing for Aboriginal Tasmanians and the wider community.<sup>36</sup>

**Recommendation 19:** *Developing pathways towards Aboriginal-owned and led-services, and self-determination across the housing and homelessness sector.*

## **20. Standards for specialist and supportive accommodation**

Some properties in the SHS and Supported Accommodation sector are new and purpose built; others are older buildings, with some repurposed from other dwellings or legacy uses. Many services are not covered by the Residential Tenancy Act Minimum Standards. There is an opportunity to work towards appropriate standards, including trauma-informed practice, for both the built environments and for staffing levels, noting that these could apply immediately to new builds and could be introduced incrementally for existing legacy properties.<sup>37</sup> We note that the costs of compliance need to be included in any new funded construction.

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<sup>35</sup>We note that this is an increasingly pressing issue, and the lack of enforcement of standards has significant negative impacts on tenants - see for example: <https://www.theadvocate.com.au/story/7080102/few-fines-for-landlords-man-left-homeless-as-repairs-refused/>

<sup>36</sup><https://shelter.org.au/aboriginal-housing-and-health-report/>

<sup>37</sup><https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/handle/10453/141416>



**Recommendation 20:** Shelter Tas recommends reviewing the minimum standards for Specialist Homelessness Services and Supportive Accommodation Facilities used in other jurisdictions in order to develop appropriate standards for Tasmania.

### **21. Shelters to include options for accommodating pets**

For many people, pets form an essential part of family and play a vital role in people's health and wellbeing. This is particularly true for children. It is well known that threats from perpetrators to harm family pets are a barrier to families leaving violent and abusive situations. The lack of an option to care for a pet is also a barrier to people seeking emergency accommodation - placing people at higher risk, imposing additional stress and worry, and preventing people finding assistance. Pets can help people manage the effects of trauma, and need to be included in trauma-informed responses.

**Recommendation 21:** Shelter Tas recommends that pet friendly options should be developed and funded for all shelters, and pet accommodation be included in any new purpose-built shelters.

### **22. Better regulation for Short-Stay Accommodation**

Information about the impacts of the short-stay accommodation industry is key to managing it successfully. Shelter Tas is producing a series of independent reports that monitor the impacts of short-stay accommodation, and will make these available to inform the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and its implementation plans. The Baseline Report is available at [https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/STR-Baseline-Report-June-2022\\_FINAL-combined-files.pdf](https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/STR-Baseline-Report-June-2022_FINAL-combined-files.pdf)

Wherever governments are supporting new supply, there is a need to manage the risk of these new properties being diverted to short-stay accommodation, rather than being retained as homes for Tasmanians. One possible option is that in situations where any financial contribution is or has been provided by the State Government, a covenant or caveat is placed on the title to the effect that it is not to be used for short-stay accommodation until 30 years have passed, or unless the subsidy is repaid. This would ensure that subsidies intended for local residents remain used for that purpose. The Baseline Report (see above) clearly shows there is a need to manage the flow of properties from long-term to visitor rentals, especially for any properties that receive grants or other financial support from the State Government. Shelter Tas recommends:

**Recommendation 22a:** New dwellings that have received funds from Government should not be converted into short-stay accommodation.

**Recommendation 22b:** Local Councils should be empowered to limit the use of entire homes for short-stay accommodation where there is a shortfall of homes for local people.

**Recommendation 22c:** Short-stay accommodation should be included in the Planning System to ensure that any displacement of local homes or loss of amenity can be managed<sup>38</sup>.

**Recommendation 22d:** 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 decision-makers are empowered to make place-based

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<sup>38</sup><https://shelertas.org.au/shelter-tas-submission-to-the-scoping-paper-for-draft-tasmanian-planning-policies/>



decisions to balance short-stay visitor accommodation against the needs of local workers and residents for appropriate rental accommodation.

### **23. Explore energy efficiency measures and NBN Connection**

After paying for rental and housing costs, energy bills are the hardest household cost for people to manage. The latest PowerHousing Australia *Australian Affordable Housing Report* points out that “Australian social housing stock is often old, less efficient and costly to run with impacts on economic and social wellbeing for those that can afford it least.”<sup>39</sup> Tasmania has an opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of new and existing homes, to also contribute to the achievement of net carbon zero by 2050.

There is also an opportunity to consider the costs and needs of people living in newly constructed homes, such as digital inclusion. For example, NBN connection could be included in new housing stock as is the case for electrical connection and water. This could make a substantial improvement to digital inclusion in Tasmania, with particular education benefits for families with school aged children.<sup>40</sup>

**Recommendation 23a:** *Shelter Tas recommends reviewing options to improve energy efficiency and enhancing support for people experiencing energy hardship.*

**Recommendation 23b:** *Shelter Tas recommends reviewing options to ensure all new builds include infrastructure for connection to NBN, with government grants for social housing to include the necessary funding.*

### **24. Consumer participation**

Consumer participation is a vital element of all service delivery and of the development of the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and Housing Connect Reform that are currently underway. The incorporation of lived experience and expert voices in the Housing Connect Reform and Tasmania’s ongoing housing and homelessness service system will result in better quality and more appropriate policies, programs and practices being designed and implemented. Ultimately, consumer participation by service users and people who have experience across the housing and homelessness system leads to better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness and housing crisis.

While many housing and homelessness services already have systems in place to incorporate consumer participation and voice, the situation across all organisations in the state is not uniform. There is a clear opportunity to develop best practice state-wide, drawing on the work undertaken previously by Shelter Tas in developing consumer engagement guides.<sup>41</sup> Shelter Tas is well placed to assist all services to develop and implement a consumer participation program, and to establish and host an advisory group to ensure this work is well-aligned with, and able to contribute to the implementation of the *Strategy* and the Housing Connect Reforms.

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.powerhousingaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/PHA-eScan-2021-FINAL.pdf> see p 4, 63.

<sup>40</sup> See for example, the WA digital inclusion project, and recent announcement in the Federal Budget, as well as recent work by TasCOSS on digital inclusion in Tasmania.

<sup>41</sup> <https://shelertas.org.au/training/guides/>



**Recommendation 24:** *Commit sufficient funding to plan for and implement an effective statewide Consumer Participation program for the Housing and Homelessness Sector.*

**Cost:** *A business plan can be provided on request. Indicative cost would be approximately \$300 000 over two years.*

## **25. Adequate indexation for the community sector organisations, including housing and homelessness services**

Shelter Tas has partnered with TasCOSS and other peak bodies to commission work to inform the appropriate level of indexation for community service organisations (CSOs). The work will look at the actual costs incurred by CSOs — costs not properly captured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or the Wage Price Index (WPI) — to determine a cost index specific for CSOs. The index will provide a formula for determining the appropriate indexation level for funding agreements in the future.

New regulations, laws and compliance obligations, and increasingly expensive insurance are placing cost burdens on service providers across the housing and homelessness sector. This includes new child safety procedures and obligations, higher insurance costs, and improved energy efficiency standards. These new costs should be accounted for in new contracts, and top up payments made where necessary to existing contracts.

**Recommendation 25a:** *On completion of the work by the Coalition of Peaks, Shelter Tas calls on the Tasmanian Government to endorse and apply the evidence-based formula to all contracts with housing and homelessness services, and other Community Service Organisations.*

**Recommendation 25b:** *Shelter Tas recommends that all additional compliance measures for CHPs and SHSs are costed, and appropriate funds are added to new and existing contracts.*

## **CONCLUSION**

This submission to the 2023-24 State Budget Process from Shelter Tas presents strategic proposals to enhance the delivery of safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing for all Tasmanians who are homeless, at risk, or in housing hardship. We recommend systemic strategic initiatives that will ensure Tasmanians in all regions, regardless of their income, can access the housing they need to stay safe and well.

**Our proposals will ensure Tasmanian’s experiencing homelessness and housing stress can access the help they need. Keeping Tasmanians safely and affordably housed ensures they can participate effectively and equitably in economic and social life.**

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