ShelterTAS

MEDIA STATEMENT

Key Housing asks for State Budget 2023/24

Wednesday 24 May 2023

Shelter Tas is the peak body for housing and homelessness in Tasmania, representing all Tasmania's funded Specialist Homelessness Services and Community Housing Providers.

"With our community facing cost of living pressures, escalating housing costs, and over 40,000 households managing the stress of high rents in the tight and competitive private rental market, Shelter Tas calls for stronger targets and further investment in social and affordable rental housing in this week's State Budget. Investment in social and affordable housing is the foundation for building our community," Shelter Tas CEO, Pattie Chugg said.

"Our state's nation-leading investment in social housing delivered by Community Housing Providers assists many Tasmanians with the homes they need, but there is more to be done. There is still a need to boost that essential supply, and deliver a Housing First approach.

"This year, we have seen increasing demand for affordable homes, with the waiting list for social housing pass 4,500 applications, and 42 people a day being turned away from homelessness services. There is every sign that housing stress and homelessness are continuing to increase across Tasmania.

"Last year's $1.5 Billion package to build and acquire 10,000 homes by 2032 was very welcome and reflected Shelter Tas' budget ask for 1,000 homes per year.

"This year, we want to see the State Government commit to a clear target of 10% of all dwellings in Tasmania to be social and affordable rental homes, to meet the needs of Tasmania's growing population.

"Census data released this year showed a 45% increase in the number of Tasmanians experiencing homelessness. Shelter Tas hopes to see a target in the State Budget that will halve the number of people experiencing homelessness by the next Census in 2026.

"Our submission to this year's State Budget Process emphasised that in 2023, with accelerating cost of living pressures and an affordable housing crisis, it is vital to ensure investment in social and affordable housing products, as well as targeted strategies for specific population groups that are vulnerable," Ms Chugg said.

The Shelter Tas Budget Submission is available at https://sheltertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Shelter-Tas-Budget-Submision-2023-24_WS.pdf

"Women and women with children are some of the hardest hit by housing hardship, and it is time for a dedicated women's housing strategy to address their specific needs. Shelter Tas has called for this strategy in our Budget Submission, and we are working with our members and Homes Tasmania

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to develop an evidence-based gendered analysis. We hope to see outcomes for women and children in the Budget announcements this week.

"More women than men seek assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services, and family violence is the number one reason that women and their children ask for help. We know that one women's shelter is turning away 8 out of 10 women seeking assistance, which means that women who may be survivors of family violence are forced to couch surf, live in their cars, or make do in hostels or short-term hotel rooms. More women live in poverty, and older women are the fastest growing group of people facing the risk of homelessness and presenting to our member services.

"With 39% of the homelessness population in Tasmania aged under 25, we need targets for stable and secure homes for young people, to provide the essential safe start for them to pursue their education and employment. Young people need a range of options, and more age appropriate homes and support. Recent research has shown that across Tasmania, in 2023, there were no affordable rental homes for a single young person on income support payments, not even a room in a share house was available. In this Budget we hope to see the State Government address the crisis in youth housing.

"Shelter Tas has called for funding in this year's budget to establish purpose-built accommodation in the north and northwest for people aged over 50 facing homelessness. We have seen the great success of the Wintringham model in the South. Nearly one in five people seeking assistance from homelessness services are aged over 55, and older single women are particularly vulnerable due to lower incomes and assets.

"We need to see improvements for tenants in the private rental market, and better regulation of short-stay accommodation. The organisations and workers who deliver services to Tasmanians living with housing hardship and homelessness need to be adequately funded to cover inflation and increasing costs, so we call on this Budget to provide adequate indexation for all community sector organisations to deliver their essential services.

"One obvious and yet untapped source of funds for more housing is the stamp duty (conveyancing duty) that comes from the increasing value in Tasmania's housing market. The additional stamp duty income can be dedicated to much needed social housing and homelessness services, to build safe, inclusive and thriving communities across the state. Every house and every dollar counts when so many people are missing out," Ms Chugg said.

For more information and comment, contact:

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