

Housing still a focus in the State Budget 2023-24, but we need clearer targets

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Shelter Tas is the peak body for housing and homelessness in Tasmania, representing all Tasmania's funded specialist homelessness services and community housing providers.

"Reporting on the housing and homelessness portfolio has changed in today's State Budget, with the establishment of Homes Tasmania. The importance of housing and support for Tasmanians in need has not changed. Tasmania continues to face a housing crisis. To address this crisis, our decisionmakers need to put housing at the heart of every relevant policy, including health and education, population, urban renewal and significant infrastructure projects," said Pattie Chugg, CEO of Shelter Tasmania, the state's peak body for housing and homelessness services.

"Last year's \$1.5 Billion package to build and acquire 10,000 homes by 2032 reflects the Shelter Tas budget ask for 1,000 homes per year. Shelter Tas and our members welcomed this nation-leading investment in social housing, as we know that increasing supply is the best value solution for the Government and the Tasmanian community.

"However, there is every sign that housing stress and homelessness are continuing to increase across Tasmania. With our community facing cost of living pressures, and escalating housing costs, and over 40,000 households managing the stress of high rents in the tight and competitive private rental market. Investment in social and affordable homes is the foundation for building our community's health and resilience," Shelter Tas CEO, Pattie Chugg said.

"The Treasurer rightly notes the importance of housing for a thriving Tasmania. Shelter Tas welcomes the new Affordable Rentals Initiative which will invest \$1.5M to provide rental homes to Tasmanians in need at a reduced rent. This can provide some short term relief to households experiencing housing hardship and rental stress, but as we all know, the most important solution is to increase the supply of social rental homes that remain affordable for people in the long run, and are built to be a permanent community asset for future years," Ms Chugg said.

Shelter Tas welcomes the Gender Budget Snapshot newly included for the 2023-24 State Budget. This initiative includes housing, homelessness and domestic violence as key reporting areas where gender makes an important difference. This aligns with Shelter Tas work towards a gendered analysis to inform a dedicated strategies and programs for women and children within the Tasmanian Housing Strategy to released later this year.

"Since last year's Budget, we have seen the ABS report that levels of homelessness have increased 45% over the last five years, along with higher than expected population growth. Rents continue to outstrip people's incomes, and the demand for tourist accommodation adds competition in many local rental markets. While we welcome the Affordable Rentals Initiative to support renters, we know there are still too many Tasmanians missing out.

“There is still a need to boost the essential supply of affordable and social rental homes, and deliver a Housing First approach. We need to see a housing target to match the State Government’s population target. Shelter Tas advocates for 10% of all dwellings to be social and affordable rentals – we are yet to see this commitment from the State Government.

“Today’s Budget provides \$264 million over four years for capital expenditure on housing projects, including the Community Housing Growth Program. There is \$20 million for a new Wintringham facility in Launceston, providing specialised accommodation and care for Tasmanians who have experienced or at risk of homelessness, \$4 million over six years for Build Up Tassie which helps young Tasmanians into work while building affordable homes. Annie Kenney Young Womens Shelter will be funded to operate an additional three units, and Hobart Women’s Shelter will continue to be funded to operate its 17 crisis accommodation units.

“Conveyancing revenue (Stamp Duty) remains strong at \$350.7 million, although has declined from last year’s record amount. Shelter Tas would like to see stamp duty income dedicated to much needed social housing and homelessness services, to build safe, inclusive thriving communities across the state. Every house and every dollar counts when so many people are missing out,” Ms Chugg said.

“Shelter Tas and our members want to see housing at the centre of Government decision-making, but not just any housing. The priority needs to be affordable housing that meets the needs of Tasmanians who are doing it tough and feeling the impacts of the housing crisis. We need targets that deliver measurable changes to the numbers of Tasmanians living in housing hardship and facing homelessness,” Ms Chugg said.

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

For more information and comment, contact:

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