



STATE GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROCESS 2024-25 SHELTER TAS SUBMISSION



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Shelter Tas is the Tasmanian branch of the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA)



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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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1a: Shelter Tas annual core funding is increased by \$275,000 per year for the next five years, indexed and additional to current funding for core activities and sector workforce development.

Recommendation 1b: Commit to fund Shelter Tas Workforce Development Program (project funding of \$84,000 [ex GST] in 2023-24) to 2028 to be in alignment with our advocacy core budget funding period (2023-28) with appropriate indexation.

Recommendation 1c: Immediately apply the indexation formula of 70% Wage Price Index¹ and 30% Consumer Price Index, plus 0.5% superannuation guarantee, to all community sector organisations, including housing and homelessness and support services.

Recommendation 1d: Ensure that NHHA funding be commensurate with the growing level of need for homelessness and support services and that the NHHA includes adequate indexation and continuing ERO costs.

Recommendation 1e: Ensure that recurrent funding for staffing and support is included as the housing and homelessness sector expands through new capital funding.

Recommendation 1f: Ensure that new external costs are accounted for in new contracts with Specialist Homelessness Services and Community Housing Providers and, where necessary, top-up payments are made to existing contracts.

Recommendation 1g: Ensure that all additional compliance measures for CHPs and SHS, such as those required for child safety procedures and recommendations arising from the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, are costed and appropriate funds are added to new and existing contracts.

Recommendation 1h: Review the best way to ensure the ongoing viability of the housing and homelessness services workforce, including recruitment and retention strategies and also professional development and professional pathways, to support their sustainable delivery of critical services.

Recommendation 2: Commit to reaching 10% of dwellings across Tasmania to be affordable and social housing within the first 10 years of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy.

Recommendation 3a: Implement and fund a two-worker model in all youth services immediately, as part of the response to the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Recommendation 3b: Ensure services are appropriately consulted to ensure best practice and safety for children and young people.

Recommendation 3c: Ensure all homelessness services have all resources needed to comply with the CYSOF Standards and Framework, recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and any other mandated changes to ensure the safety of young people and children.

Recommendation 3d: Develop a rent subsidy model for young people on extremely low incomes living in social housing.

Recommendation 3e: Extend transitional housing options, such as the NYAC and YFCC models, to other regions (at least one-year accommodation with support).

¹ See for example <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/wage-price-index-australia/latest-release>

Recommendation 3f: Maintain a suite of options for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in addition to Youth to Independence (Y2I) services.

Recommendation 3g: Develop a mental health ‘in-reach’ response for all young people in Specialist Homelessness Services to ensure timely assessment, early intervention and appropriate clinical care where needed, with after-hours access for staff to receive support and guidance from qualified mental health professionals.

Recommendation 4a: Monitor the social housing register with a gender lens to ensure that women and children are not waiting excessive times for access to social housing.

Recommendation 4b: Adopt all recommendations from the [Somewhere to Go Report](#).

Recommendation 4c: Evaluate the Tasmanian Housing Strategy’s Action Plans with a gender lens and report on all subgroups listed in the Action Plan with a gender breakdown as well as overall results.

Recommendation 4d: Continue to fund the Family Violence Rapid Rehousing program, expand the number of properties available and extend duration of stay.

Recommendation 4e: Increase the availability of emergency and crisis accommodation to meet the need for women and their children escaping family violence.

Recommendation 4f: Endorse and implement 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](#).

Recommendation 5a: Resolve the long-standing issue of three-month exemptions to the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* for emergency and crisis accommodation. In the current environment of housing shortage we suggest consulting on a 12-month exemption.

Recommendation 5b: Commit adequate funding for broad consultation, including consultation with service users and tenants, to support the review of the Residential Tenancy Act.

Recommendation 5c: Establish a Tasmanian Commissioner for Renters, an independent tenant advocate. The role could be similar to the [NSW Rental Commissioner](#) and Victoria’s [Commissioner for Residential Tenancies](#).

Recommendation 5d: Establish ethical certification and best practice standards for real estate agents.

Recommendation 5e: Commit to fair and consistent protections for people living in private rental, community housing and public housing.

Recommendation 5f: Commit 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.² We suggest following the model, recommended in Victoria, with an independent rental inspector and certification system for rental properties.³

² 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/>

³<https://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/4ae049/contentassets/90eeac3a41ca4c498ca4e1cffe125eb/committee-final-report.pdf>

Recommendation 5g: Audit 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 5h: 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 2024-5 Budget Process.

Recommendation 5i: Fund the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to develop an exit survey for Tasmanian renters and landlords when bond money is claimed and returned. The survey could be modelled on the NSW renter exit survey.

Recommendation 5j: Establish a portable bond scheme for renters who are moving between rental homes.

Recommendation 5k: Make it easier for tenants to have pets, for example by requiring rental providers to have a good reason to refuse a request by a renter to have a pet.⁴

Recommendation 5l: Ensure fair limits to rent increases within a tenancy and between successive fixed-term rental agreements for the same property.⁵

Recommendation 5m: Ongoing funding for the Private Rental Incentives Scheme.

Recommendation 6: 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 7: Convene an expert group of stakeholders, including Community Housing Providers, to implement the listed initiatives and recommend additional ways to expedite social housing planning and delivery.

Recommendation 8: Expand the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) program to all regions of Tasmania.

Recommendation 9: Develop appropriate housing solutions for Tasmanians who are escaping from elder abuse.

Recommendation 10a: Expand the Rapid Rehousing program for people exiting prison to 50 properties and implement a Housing First approach.

Recommendation 10b: Establish a Rapid Rehousing program for veterans of up to 16 properties.

Recommendation 11: Improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal Tasmanians through consultation, partnership and pathways to Aboriginal-owned and led housing and homelessness services.

Recommendation 12: Reinstate the role of Safe Space Key Development Coach, to each Safe Space Service, for the full period of the funding agreements (5 years+5 years) to see the level of positive impact for people experiencing homelessness continue.

Indicative cost: \$146k per role, with CPI.

Recommendation 13: Shelter Tas recommends reviewing the minimum standards for Specialist Homelessness Services and Supported Accommodation Facilities used in other jurisdictions in order to develop appropriate standards for Tasmania.

⁴ See, for example, the Victorian approach at <https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/renting/repairs-alterations-safety-and-pets/pets>

⁵ See, for example, the recommendation in the [Victorian Housing Statement](#) p 27

Recommendation 14: 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.

Recommendation 15a: New dwellings that have received funds from government should not be converted into short-stay accommodation.

Recommendation 15b: 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 15c: Include short-stay accommodation in the Planning System to ensure that any displacement of local homes or loss of amenity is well managed.⁶

Recommendation 15d: A review of the regulation of short-stay accommodation, so 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 decisions to balance short-stay visitor accommodation against the needs of local workers and residents for appropriate rental accommodation. Review best practice regulation for short-stay accommodation as developed in other jurisdictions, including fees and time limits.

Recommendation 16a: Shelter Tas recommends reviewing options to improve energy efficiency and enhancing support for people experiencing energy hardship.

Recommendation 16b: 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.

Recommendation 17: Commit sufficient funding to plan for and implement an effective statewide Primary Stakeholder/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.

⁶<https://shelertas.org.au/shelter-tas-submission-to-the-scoping-paper-for-draft-tasmanian-planning-policies/>

INTRODUCTION

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.

Drawing on consultation with our statewide membership, Shelter Tas' **Submission to the State Government Budget Process 2024-25** is a substantial piece of work that identifies opportunities to improve housing outcomes and end homelessness across Tasmania.

Shelter Tas represents the interests of low to moderate income housing consumers and users of Specialist Homelessness Services who are the primary stakeholders for the sector, and our organisational members: 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 1,200 people across Tasmania, an increase of around 400 over the last 4 years.⁷ The workforce is expanding with the increased number of community housing properties, new and expanded emergency and crisis accommodation, increased need for Specialist Homelessness Services and increased need for support and tenancy 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 a member of 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 2024-25 State Budget Process is an important document to inform the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy Action Plan 2023-27*.

Context – Housing and Homelessness in Tasmania

Tasmania faces an ongoing, statewide housing crisis. 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 2022 CoreLogic 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.⁸

Data consistently shows that Hobart remains the least – or joint least – affordable Capital City for renters and the Rest of Tasmania remains the least affordable 'rest of the state' region in the country.⁹ People needing affordable rentals are facing a crisis of availability and affordability in all regions of Tasmania. The Rental Affordability Index (RAI) reports that in Tasmania, rents have increased by over 60% in the last 10 years, far outstripping people's incomes and capacity to pay.¹⁰

⁷ Shelter Tas sector survey 2023 (unpublished).

⁸ 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

⁹ https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/SGS-Economics-and-Planning_Rental-Affordability-Index-2021.pdf

¹⁰ https://sgsep.com.au/assets/main/SGS-Economics-and-Planning_RAI2023-Website.pdf

Pressures in the private rental market have not reduced since the 2021 RAI 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) show 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 2017.¹¹

This year saw the release of ABS homelessness statistics, showing that at the 2021 Census a total of 2,350 people in Tasmania were homeless, up from 1,622 in 2016. That's an additional 728 Tasmanians experiencing homelessness, with the total going up 44.8% in the five years since 2016. Our statewide homelessness services assisted over 7,000 people last year, and AIHW data report that each day over 42 people per day were turned away, usually because there was not enough space to accommodate them. Some Specialist Homelessness Services report that for each person or family they can accommodate, two or more are turned away.

At the same time, funding for Specialist Homelessness Services and housing providers is declining in real terms. Indexation at a level of 2.25% has lagged behind inflation and rising operational costs over several years. The sector is now unsustainable, as services simply do not have the operational funds they need to undertake their essential work effectively and safely. For this reason, our 2024-25 State Budget Submission places sustainable funding for the housing and homelessness sector as our number one budget priority.

The housing crisis is most acute for people on lower incomes, who mainly live in the private rental market. The demand for rental homes, both private and social, is greater than the supply. Since the 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 14,000 social housing dwellings, around 6.2% of the total dwellings in Tasmania. Pressure on the Housing Register remains high, even as new homes are being built. In September 2023 there were 4,634 households on the waiting list for social housing.¹²

There is a nationally recognised need to improve conditions for renters.¹³ Across the state over 40,000 Tasmanian private renter households face the challenges of a fiercely competitive private rental market - rents rising much faster than people's incomes, low vacancy rates, homes of poor standard, insecurity, and the well-grounded fear that asking for even modest repairs can place them at risk of losing their homes.

In recognition of the need for a sustained and strategic response to Tasmania's housing crisis,

¹¹ https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/SGS-Economics-and-Planning_Rental-Affordability-Index-2021.pdf p.46

¹² https://www.homestasmania.com.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0031/272956/Housing-Dashboard-September-2023.pdf

¹³ See Appendix 1 for an overview of national rental sector trends.

the twenty-year *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and *Action Plan 2023-27* have been released. Both State and Commonwealth Governments¹⁴ have made welcome commitments to new supply, including the State Government commitment of \$1.5 Billion for 10,000 new social and affordable homes over the next ten years.

Shelter Tas and our members welcome this strategic response and new capital investments but are concerned that *the focus on bricks and mortar is not matched by funding for the ongoing staff who provide support and tenancy services*. Successful housing outcomes and crisis responses to people experiencing homelessness depend on skilled professional staff to assist people to build their capacities to establish and maintain tenancies, and obtain appropriate support with challenges in life domains such as mental health concerns, substance use, legal and financial issues. Ending homelessness and keeping all Tasmanians safely and affordably housed will ensure fair and positive social and economic outcomes across the state.

Overview of Shelter Tas Budget Submission

Shelter Tas welcomes the development of the twenty-year *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and the *Action Plan 2023-27*. However, achieving its intended outcomes will depend on adequate investment for ongoing staff and operational work across the housing and homelessness sector as well as the construction of new homes.

Our Submission contains:

- Five key priority areas (Section 1), and
- A suite of additional recommendations to support the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and its *Action Plans* (Section 2).

¹⁴ See Appendix 2

SECTION 1 – Five Key Priorities

Shelter Tas has identified five key priorities for our 2024-25 Budget Submission:

1. **A sustainable housing and homelessness sector**
2. **Increasing the supply of social and affordable rental homes**
3. **Meeting the housing needs of young people**
4. **Meeting the housing needs of women and children in Tasmania**
5. **Rights and protections for renters**

PRIORITY 1: A sustainable housing and homelessness sector

Shelter Tas has identified the sustainability of our sector - including homelessness, housing and support services - as the number one budget priority.

There is an increasing gap between the funding for services and the actual costs of wages and operations, arising from an inadequate level of indexation that has persisted over many years, made worse by current pressures of inflation and wage increases. The underfunding of the essential services provided by the housing and homelessness sector presents a significant risk to organisations and service users. Since these services are fundamental to the success of the State Government's own *Tasmanian Housing Strategy*, sustainable funding is necessary to achieve the strategic outcome of housing all Tasmanians safely and securely, and ending homelessness.

Sustainable core funding for Shelter Tas

Shelter Tas Core Funding - Advocacy

As the peak body for housing and homelessness services, Shelter Tas plays a key role in Tasmania's housing and homelessness system. Our core funding has not only not increased for 13 years. In real terms, it has declined due to inadequate indexation and a significant increase in the work of Shelter Tas, driven by the rising pressure on the housing market and the growth of the housing and homelessness sector. Our sector now employs 1,225 individuals, compared to the 863 that were counted in 2018.

Shelter Tas needs to be adequately funded as a priority in the 2024-25 State Budget. We are proposing an additional \$ 275,000 per year (ex GST, with indexation) to be added to our core funding.

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.

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 a specialist peak body plays a vital role that can be relied on for independent advice and providing linkages to the community sector in all regions of Tasmania.

Shelter Tas, as a reputable and trusted peak organisation, unites the voice of the sector to provide advice and support to the *Homes Tasmania* statutory body.

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
- the establishment of *Homes Tasmania* and the implementation of the twenty-year *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and the *Action Plan 2023-27*.

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.

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, such as the twenty-year *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and *Action Plan 2023-27*.

Recommendation 1a: *Shelter Tas annual core funding is increased by \$275,000 per year for the next five years, ex-GST and with indexation, additional to current funding for core activities and sector workforce development.*

Workforce Development Program: Extension to 2028 (this is in addition to Shelter Tas Core Funding)

Shelter Tas plays a vital role in sector development; however, funding for the workforce development program we deliver is due to end in June 2025. Quality training for housing and homelessness practitioners is more important than ever. Increased demand for services and escalating pressures caused by the shortage of affordable housing have intensified the workload across the sector.

Shelter Tas has been delivering a customised training and professional development program for Tasmania's housing and homelessness workforce since 2015. The housing and homelessness workforce is key to achieving the goals of the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and ensuring every Tasmanian has the home they need. The past five years have seen outstanding results from this project along with sector growth of 41%. In that time, we have provided 19 tailored online sessions and 21 face-to-face training opportunities, with 95% of participants rating the training as good or excellent.¹⁵

Last year's State Budget provided only two years of funding for the housing and homelessness Workforce Development Program, which appears extremely short-sighted given the importance of building and maintaining the sector workforce to deliver the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy*. The 2024-25 State Budget needs to guarantee funding for housing and homelessness sector workforce development through the forward estimates.

Recommendation 1b: *Commit to fund Shelter Tas Workforce Development Program (project funding of \$84,000 [ex GST] in 2023-24) to 2028 to be in alignment with our advocacy core budget funding period (2023-28) with appropriate indexation.*

¹⁵ https://sheltertass.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/WDP-Evaluation-Summary_graphic-FINAL.pdf

Adequate Indexation

The sustainability of Shelter Tas and our members is at risk, with the widening gap between funding levels and increasing operational costs. Sustainability for the homelessness and housing sector requires adequate indexation so that services are not in effect being cut each year.

***Recommendation 1c:** Immediately apply the indexation formula of 70% Wage Price Index¹⁶ and 30% Consumer Price Index, plus 0.5% superannuation guarantee, to all community sector organisations, including housing and homelessness and support services.*

Commonwealth and State Agreements need to deliver sustainable funding

Negotiations between the State and Commonwealth Governments present an opportunity for housing and homelessness funding to be increased to meet the growing level of need.

It is imperative to fix the inadequate indexation of homelessness funding in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) and to incorporate the supplementary funding provided to meet the costs of the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) into the main agreement. The current one-year agreement between state and federal governments is due to expire on 30 June 2024, and a new five-year agreement is being negotiated. Based on the calculations for the 2023-24 agreement, the failure to meet the ongoing costs of the ERO would mean a cut of over \$2 million from homelessness services in Tasmania and \$70 million across Australia.

***Recommendation 1d:** Ensure that NHHA funding is commensurate with the growing level of need for homelessness and support services and that the NHHA includes adequate indexation and continuing ERO costs.*

Adequate funding for existing, new and expanded services and workforce

The *Tasmanian Housing Strategy 2023-43* recognises the need for a well-functioning housing system, including support for people in need.

In response to Tasmania's housing crisis, and while we wait for supply to catch up with demand, crisis services are under increased pressure. Although there is clear and welcome capital investment as the housing and homelessness sector grows, investment in the essential staff who support tenants and deliver new and expanded Specialist Homelessness Services is lacking. In other words, there is funding for construction but not for the people to staff the crisis accommodation when it has been built.

Existing and new homelessness, tenancy and support services need sustainable funding to ensure they can safely and dependably provide the essential accommodation and support that people can rely on. However, this is not adequately factored into the state and national strategies and funding models. We call for an update to funding levels for all current and planned services to ensure operational sustainability, noting that for many organisations at least 70% of program funding is for staffing costs.

¹⁶ See for example <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/wage-price-index-australia/latest-release>

Additional expectations have accompanied the expanding size of the housing and homelessness sector. New regulations, laws and compliance obligations are placing cost burdens on housing providers, accommodation and crisis services – including new child safety procedures and obligations, higher insurance costs, and improved building and energy efficiency standards.

Updated funding levels for all current and planned services under the *Strategy* will ensure adequate staffing levels and operational sustainability.

Recommendation 1e: *Ensure that recurrent funding for staffing and support is included as the housing and homelessness sector expands through new capital funding.*

Recommendation 1f: *Ensure that new external costs are accounted for in new contracts with Specialist Homelessness Services and Community Housing Providers and, where necessary, top-up payments are made to existing contracts.*

Recommendation 1g: *Ensure that all additional compliance measures for CHPs and SHS, such as those required for child safety procedures and recommendations arising from Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, are costed and appropriate funds are added to new and existing contracts.*

Planning for a viable housing and homelessness workforce

The ongoing viability of the housing and homelessness workforce has been identified as a key piece of work within the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy Action Plan 2023-27*. Shelter Tas and our members are keen to progress this piece of work in partnership with Homes Tas.

Recommendation 1h: *Review the best way to ensure the ongoing viability of the housing and homelessness services workforce, including recruitment and retention strategies, professional development and pathways to support their sustainable delivery of critical services.*

PRIORITY 2: Increasing the supply of social and affordable rental homes

Our second budget priority is increasing the supply of social and affordable rental homes, to achieve a sustainable housing system that meets the needs of all Tasmanians. 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.¹⁷ Addressing this shortage will deliver a boost for health, employment and community building across the State. Recent data from Homelessness Australia shows a shortage of affordable social housing in all Tasmanian electorates.¹⁸

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 at risk of becoming homeless.

¹⁷ 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>

¹⁸ <https://everybodyshome.com.au/heat-maps/>

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 social and affordable homes (completed liveable dwellings) across the life of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy.

Recommendation 2: *Commit to reaching 10% of dwellings across Tasmania to be affordable and social housing within the first 10 years of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy.*

PRIORITY 3: Meeting the housing needs of young people

As the peak body for housing and homelessness Shelter Tas is highly concerned by increasing levels of youth homelessness, the barriers faced by young people who need appropriate and affordable rental housing, and the safety of young people and children.

Young people are the age cohort most affected by homelessness. In Tasmania in 2021, the ABS Census found that 25% of people experiencing homelessness were aged 12-24, and another 14% aged under 12. That is, 39% of Tasmanians experiencing homelessness on Census night 2021 were aged under 24. Evidence shows that experiencing homelessness early in life increases the risk of homelessness in later life.

Statewide, there is a new and necessary focus on safety and risk management that imposes additional costs on the Specialist Homelessness Services who assist accompanied and unaccompanied children and young people. The safety of children and young people is the main concern of new Child and Youth Safe Organisations and Framework (CYSO), and of the recommendations in the *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings*. The Report made a number of recommendations including appropriate staffing and qualifications in residential settings, which include youth homelessness services.

To ensure safety, there is an urgent need to review the requirement for a two-worker model in all youth homelessness services. It may be impossible to maintain a safe environment for clients, workers and organisations under the current system which only funds services for one worker overnight; it certainly increases the risk to both workers and clients. For the youth sector and for individual organisations providing services to children and young people, there may be additional costs arising from the responsibilities and requirements that ensure the safety of children in their care and managing the risk of child abuse from any person associated with the organisation and its activities.

To manage the increased expectations and liabilities means additional reporting, record keeping and administration, changes to staffing and recruitment practices and policies, and a change to one-worker models to eliminate the potential for unobserved one-one interactions between adults and children (e.g. within a youth service funded on the basis of a one-worker model or during transport in a car).

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.

Young people are also disadvantaged in seeking rental accommodation. As Tasmania's rental market has become more competitive and expensive, young people face additional barriers due to lower incomes, discrimination and lack of rental history.

The lack of availability and affordability in the private rental market, and the scarcity of subsidised social housing, disproportionately affects young people. The high rates of youth unemployment reflect these housing pressures, as it is so hard to get or maintain a job or to sustain study when you don't have a secure and safe place to live.

Young people with mental health concerns are especially vulnerable to negative housing outcomes and the risk of homelessness. Shelter Tas members report an urgent and escalating need for appropriate mental health pathways for young people in crisis accommodation. Currently, when a client is in extreme distress, self-harming, or displaying behaviour suggesting acute mental ill-health, 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 for clients and expert support for workers were in place.

When young people present to Specialist Homelessness Services, workers can assume a trauma background and provide trauma-informed care and support. However, this is not the professional clinical mental health support that some young people will need and deserve. There needs to be an assessment and referral pathway to access an appropriate level of mental health response for all clients of youth Specialist Homelessness Services, especially those who may not have received any previous mental health assessment or care. To ensure safety within services, and provide young clients with appropriate early intervention and support, services need access to support and guidance for staff (including after hours) before a young person's existing or emergent mental health concern escalates to require an emergency response.

Recommendation 3a: *Implement and fund a two-worker model in all youth services immediately, as part of the response to the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.*

Recommendation 3b: *Ensure services are appropriately consulted to ensure best practice and safety for children and young people.*

Recommendation 3c: *Ensure all homelessness services have all resources needed to comply with the CYSOF Standards and Framework, recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and any other mandated changes to ensure the safety of young people and children.*

Recommendation 3d: *Develop a rent subsidy model for young people on extremely low incomes living in social housing.*

Recommendation 3e: *Extend transitional housing options, such as the NYAC and YFCC models, to other regions (at least one year accommodation with support).*

Recommendation 3f: *Maintain a suite of options for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in addition to Youth to Independence (Y2I) services.*

Recommendation 3g: *Develop a mental health 'in-reach' response for all young people in Specialist Homelessness Services to ensure timely assessment, early intervention and appropriate clinical care where needed, with after-hours access for staff to receive support and guidance from qualified mental health professionals.*

PRIORITY 4: Meeting the housing needs of women and children in Tasmania

Tasmania's worsening housing crisis has disproportionate impacts on women, as women have lower incomes and lower levels of financial assets. The higher likelihood of experiencing violence in the home, and higher rates of poor mental health contribute to the higher risk of homelessness and housing insecurity faced by women. Shelter Tas recognises housing affordability, family breakdown, family and domestic violence, lower incomes and ageing as particular concerns impacting the housing security of women and girls, including all people from LGBTIQ+ communities who identify as being part of this cohort.

In 2023, in partnership with Hobart Women's Shelter, we commissioned a new report from Impact Economics and Policy to apply a gendered lens over Tasmania's Housing crisis: *Somewhere to Go: meeting the housing needs of women and children in Tasmania*¹⁹. Along with publicly available information, the report provides a new analysis by incorporating previously unavailable data from Homes Tasmania, the Hobart Women's Shelter and the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) Tasmania to inform this research. The report details the array of housing needs of women and children across Tasmania, the current state of housing supply and models the unmet housing need from women and children.

Through this report, we are able to better understand the drivers of unmet housing need experienced by Tasmanian women. For example, 63% of female applicants on the social housing register need multiple-bedroom accommodation compared to 30% of men.

It is critical that initiatives under the new twenty-year *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* meet the needs of all Tasmanians, including women and children, especially now we know from the [Somewhere to Go Report](#) that:

- Tasmania had over 6 times the national rate of women being turned away from crisis accommodation in 2021-22;
- Only 6% of Tasmanian women with long-term housing needs are having those needs met, compared to 18% of men; and
- 53% of women seeking Specialist Homelessness Services in Tasmania have mental health concerns compared to 33% nationally.²⁰

The [Somewhere to Go Report](#) makes a number of key recommendations, including:

- ensuring that under the Tasmanian Government's commitment to build 10,000 new social and affordable houses by 2032, a sufficient number of three- and four-bedroom units are built or acquired to meet the needs of women and children;
- increased funding for crisis housing services and community mental health; and
- strengthening the Aboriginal-controlled housing sector.

Research from the [Somewhere to Go Report](#) estimates that 933 Tasmanian women are returning to a violent partner or entering homelessness after experiencing family violence each year due to a lack of housing.²¹ 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.

¹⁹ https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Somewhere-to-Go_Housing_FinNov2013.pdf

²⁰ https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Somewhere-to-Go_Housing_FinNov2013.pdf

²¹ https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Somewhere-to-Go_Housing_FinNov2013.pdf

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.²²

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. As the [Somewhere to Go Report](#) details:

From the age of 15 teenage girls are more likely to require support from Specialist Homelessness Services than boys. This is just the start of a gendered pattern of need across the life course, with young women in their 20s and 30s the group most likely to require support from homelessness services and to seek social housing.²³

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 enabling people to stay additional time in their home, to avoid the disruption of further relocations. We recommend continuing to fund Tasmania's Rapid Rehousing Program, and reviewing the duration of stay to ensure people have the stability they need.

Our members who deliver Specialist Homelessness Services are sometimes called upon to house people – mainly women and their children – who have no income at all. Often women 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.²⁴

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 housing²⁵). We note that as 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 the [Blueprint for Reform](#).

Recommendation 4a: *Monitor the social housing register with a gender lens to ensure that women and children are not waiting excessive times for access to social housing.*

Recommendation 4b: *Adopt all recommendations from the [Somewhere to Go Report](#).*

²² http://everybodyshome.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/EE_Women-Housing_Domestic-Violence_WEB_SINGLES.pdf

²³ https://shelbertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Somewhere-to-Go_Housing_FinNov2013.pdf

²⁴ Warrawee is a member of Shelter Tas, and Shelter Tas and Warrawee are both members of WESP in Tasmania.

²⁵ <https://iarc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Blueprint-for-reform-2022-v071222.pdf> p 7.

Recommendation 4c: Evaluate the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy's Action Plans* with a gender lens and report on all subgroups listed in the Action Plan with a gender breakdown as well as overall results.

Recommendation 4d: Continue to fund the Family Violence Rapid Rehousing program, and expand the number of properties available and extend duration of stay.

Recommendation 4e: Increase the availability of emergency and crisis accommodation to meet the need for women and their children escaping family violence.

Recommendation 4f: Endorse and implement 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*.

PRIORITY 5: Rights and Protections for Renters

Renters' rights and protections have become a prominent national issue, as well as a matter of concern in Tasmania. Over 40,000 Tasmanian renter households face the challenges of a fiercely competitive private rental market, rents rising much faster than people's incomes, low vacancy rates, homes of poor standard, insecurity, and the well-grounded fear that asking for even modest repairs can place them at risk of losing their homes. The national Rental Affordability Index reports that rents in Tasmania have increased by over 60% in the last 10 years, far outstripping people's incomes and capacity to pay.²⁶ Renting is no longer a short-term tenure. Many Tasmanians will be life-long renters. It is timely 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 impact of short -stay accommodation.

The National Association of Renters Organisations' nine principles for strengthening renters' rights, released this year, is a valuable framework to adopt in Tasmania that could improve our system.²⁷

Sector-wide consultation is needed to modernise the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* (the RTA) and improve the tenancy security of all Tasmanians in private rental housing. This would assist Tasmania to align with best national practice on matters such as exemptions from the RTA, pets, privacy, digital rights, energy efficiency and emerging disruptive technologies such as apps for tenants and landlords.

Currently, Specialist Homelessness Services who provide emergency accommodation are exempted from RTA requirements for 3 months. This timeframe is no longer appropriate, due to the difficulties of finding appropriate and affordable rental homes for people to leave shelters. This issue of people needing to stay longer in shelters has become more and more pressing throughout Tasmania's housing crisis. We recommend consulting with the housing and homelessness sector on a 12-month exemption from the RTA for the SHS sector, alongside improving rights and protections for all Tasmanian tenants.

Shelter Tas supports the direction in the [Tasmanian Housing Strategy Action Plan 2023-27](#), especially 3.2.1 Strengthen renters' rights, which includes a review of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*.

²⁶ https://sgsep.com.au/assets/main/SGS-Economics-and-Planning_RAI2023-Website.pdf

²⁷ <https://tenantsqld.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2023-national-nine-principles-for-strengthening-renters-rights.pdf>

Shelter Tas has consistently called for an update for the regulation of the private rental market in Tasmania and we welcome this commitment, at the same time urging swifter action on a number of matters. These include ensuring compliance with the existing minimum standards in the RTA through expanding the capacity of the existing Residential Tenancy Commissioner, and creating a new role of Tasmanian Commissioner for Renters to take up advocacy and systems change responsibilities.

Shelter Tas has the following recommendations for priority action:

Recommendation 5a: *Resolve the long-standing issue of three-month exemptions to the Residential Tenancy Act 1997 for emergency and crisis accommodation. In the current environment of housing shortage, we suggest consulting on a 12-month exemption, alongside protections as listed below (recommendations 5b to 5m).*

Recommendation 5b: *Commit adequate funding for broad consultation, including consultation with service users and tenants, to support the review of the Residential Tenancy Act.*

Recommendation 5c: *Establish a Tasmanian Commissioner for Renters, an independent tenant advocate. The role could be similar to the [NSW Rental Commissioner](#) and Victoria's [Commissioner for Residential Tenancies](#).*

Recommendation 5d: *Establish ethical certification and best practice standards for real estate agents.*

Recommendation 5e: *Commit to fair and consistent protections for people living in private rental, community housing and public housing.*

Recommendation 5f: *Commit 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.²⁸ We suggest following the model, recommended in Victoria, with an independent rental inspector and certification system for rental properties.²⁹*

Recommendation 5g: *Audit 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 5h: *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 2024-5 Budget Process.*

Recommendation 5i: *Fund the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to develop an exit survey for Tasmanian renters and landlords when bond money is claimed and returned. The survey could be modelled on the NSW renter exit survey.*

Recommendation 5j: *Establish a portable bond scheme for renters who are moving between rental homes.*

²⁸ 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/>

²⁹<https://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/4ae049/contentassets/90eeac3a41ca4c498ca4e1cffe125eb/committee-final-report.pdf>

Recommendation 5k: Make it easier for tenants to have pets, for example by requiring rental providers to have a good reason to refuse a request by a renter to have a pet.³⁰

Recommendation 5l: Ensure fair limits to rent increases within a tenancy and between successive fixed term rental agreements for the same property.³¹

Recommendation 5m: Ongoing funding for the Private Rental Incentives Scheme.

³⁰ See, for example, the Victorian approach at <https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/renting/repairs-alterations-safety-and-pets/pets>

³¹ See, for example the recommendation in the [Victorian Housing Statement](#) p 27

SECTION 2 – Additional Recommendations

Our expert members in the housing and homelessness sector advise us that Tasmania is experiencing 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 the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and additional funds needed for 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 also identifies 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 creative 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.”³² 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, such as the new Bethlehem House in Hobart for men, and Hopkins St, Moonah for women. 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.³³

Recommendation 6: *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*

³²https://www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/216172/Toward_Infill_Housing_Development.pdf

³³ 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

top' accommodation, retrofit offices and infill housing. Project outputs would include regional forums, a report and recommendations for pilot projects and initiatives.

7. Measures to enhance investment in Community Housing

Tasmania's important and national best practice commitment to social housing, including state and commonwealth-funded initiatives, will be enhanced by ensuring that Tasmanian funding models are commensurate with those of other jurisdictions. Shelter Tas has received feedback from our Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) members that other states are offering better incentives to Community Housing Providers to build new properties and support tenants. For example, Victoria contributes 65% building cost while Tasmania contributes only 40%. Victoria also offers operational subsidies.

Reviewing interstate benchmarks will ensure Community Housing Providers are adequately and competitively funded in Tasmania, helping 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 levels 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 Community Housing Providers, to implement the above initiatives and recommend additional ways to expedite social housing planning and delivery.*

8. Mental health and alcohol and other drug (AOD) support

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.³⁴ 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.

We note the successes already achieved by the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) pilot in the south, where people experiencing significant mental health concerns are

³⁴ Currently, as many shelters have a 'one worker model' if a client is in extreme distress, self-harming, or displaying behaviour suggesting acute mental ill-health, the only option is to call for police or an ambulance. The expense, distress and disruption of emergency service call-outs could in many cases be avoided if early intervention and support were in place, with appropriate referral pathways to timely responses.

supported to sustain their tenancies. HASI is a program that provides both short- and long-term accommodation options for people who are not in the NDIS. We encourage the State Government to prioritise HASI or a similar response becoming a statewide initiative, expanding to the north and northwest. This would include people who are transitioning from acute care into the community. 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.

Recommendation 8: *Expand the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) program to all regions of Tasmania.*

9. Improving housing outcomes for older Tasmanians

Housing insecurity increased between the 2016 and 2021 Census and affects older people across the housing system. Older households were much more likely to be paying 50% or more of gross household income in rent than younger households (40% compared to 24.3%).³⁵ Nearly one in five people seeking assistance from Tasmania’s homelessness services are aged over 55. In the 2021 Census older people experiencing homelessness were growing both as an absolute number and as a proportion of Tasmanians experiencing homelessness. Older single women are particularly vulnerable, due to having lower levels of income and assets.³⁶ Shelter Tas notes the success of the Wirksworth facility in the south, based on the Wintringham model, which can draw on the aged care funding stream to support residents. Shelter Tas encourages the State Government to deliver similar accommodation for older men and women in the greatest need in the north and northwest regions.

There is no dedicated housing response for those people 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 – 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 9: *Develop appropriate housing solutions for Tasmanians who are escaping from elder abuse.*

10. Boost the Rapid Rehousing program for people exiting prison, and establish a Rapid Rehousing program for veterans

Tasmania’s Rapid Rehousing program 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 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.

³⁵ [ageing in a housing crisis - full report.pdf \(oldertenants.org.au\)](https://www.olderpeople.org.au/ageing-in-a-housing-crisis-full-report.pdf)

³⁶ See, for example, *The Time of Our Lives Report* <https://www.lmcf.org.au/images/2016-Time-of-Our-Lives-Report-LMCF.pdf>

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 10a: *Expand the Rapid Rehousing for people exiting prison to 50 properties and implement a Housing First approach.*

Recommendation 10b: *Establish a Rapid Rehousing program for veterans of up to 16 properties.*

11. Improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal Tasmanians through Aboriginal-owned and led services

Aboriginal Tasmanians face significant disadvantage and entrenched inequality. Shelter Tas welcomes the Tasmanian Government's commitment to the *Tasmanian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan* and the commitment in the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy Action Plan 2023-27* to develop and implement culturally respectful and community-led housing solutions.

Recommendation 11: *Improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal Tasmanians through consultation, partnership and pathways to Aboriginal-owned and led housing and homelessness services.*

12. Ongoing, recurrent funding for Key Development Coaches within 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 provides a low-barrier option for people needing emergency shelter focussing on rough sleepers, 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.

In the funding agreement for Safe Spaces statewide for 2022-2023, \$146,000 was allocated for the role of Key Development Coach. This is a new role identified in the Housing Connect 2.0 reform process as being instrumental in assisting people transition out of homelessness. It is a role that targets the most complex and most vulnerable people, and has demonstrated success in each of the three regional Safe Spaces.

In the new 5-year funding agreement for Safe Space, however, this role has only been funded for six (6) months. This means currently that this important role in helping move people from sleeping rough to having a place to call home will end in December 2023.

Recommendation 12: *Reinstate the role of Safe Space Key Development Coach, to each Safe Space Service, for the full period of the funding agreements (5 years+5 years) to see the level of positive impact for people experiencing homelessness continue. Indicative cost is \$146k per role, with CPI.*

13. Standards for Specialist Homelessness Services

Some properties in the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) and Supported Accommodation Facilities (SAF) 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.³⁷ The costs of compliance need to be included in any new funded construction.

Recommendation 13: *Shelter Tas recommends reviewing the minimum standards for Specialist Homelessness Services and Supported Accommodation Facilities used in other jurisdictions in order to develop appropriate standards for Tasmania.*

14. 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, which places people at higher risk, imposes additional stress and worry, and prevents people finding assistance. Pets can help people manage the effects of trauma, and need to be included in trauma-informed responses. Shelter Tas welcomes the inclusion of pet accommodation at the new Bethlehem House redevelopment.

Recommendation 14: *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.*

15. Better regulation for Short-Stay Accommodation

Not only is Hobart the least affordable capital city for renters in Australia, it also has the highest density of short-stay accommodation.³⁸ Tasmania needs to monitor and manage the impacts on the long-term residential private rental market of Short-Stay Accommodation such as Airbnb.³⁹

Local Government oversight of the permit system needs to be sufficiently funded to ensure appropriate monitoring and compliance with permits and exemptions, and that local decision makers 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.

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 most recent update of *Monitoring the Impact of Short-Term Rentals on Tasmanian Housing Markets* is at https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/STR-Progress-Report-2_Aug-2023.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

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

³⁸ https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/STR-Baseline-Report-June-2022_FINAL-combined-files.pdf

³⁹ <https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/ShelterTasTPP-Submission.pdf>

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.

Recommendation 15a: *New dwellings that have received funds from government should not be converted into short-stay accommodation.*

Recommendation 15b: *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 15c: *Include short-stay accommodation in the Planning System to ensure that any displacement of local homes or loss of amenity is well managed.⁴⁰*

Recommendation 15d: *A review of the regulation of short-stay accommodation, so 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 decisions to balance short-stay visitor accommodation against the needs of local workers and residents for appropriate rental accommodation. Review best practice regulation for short-stay accommodation as developed in other jurisdictions, including fees and time limits.*

16. 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.”⁴¹ 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 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.⁴²

Recommendation 16a: *Shelter Tas recommends reviewing options to improve energy efficiency and enhancing support for people experiencing energy hardship.*

Recommendation 16b: *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.*

17. 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. Consumers and service users are the primary stakeholders for all the work of the housing and homelessness sector. The incorporation of lived experience and expert voices in the implementation of the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* and *Action Plans* and Tasmania’s ongoing housing and homelessness

⁴⁰ <https://shelertas.org.au/shelter-tas-submission-to-the-scoping-paper-for-draft-tasmanian-planning-policies/>

⁴¹ <http://www.powerhousingaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/PHA-eScan-2021-FINAL.pdf> see p 4, 63.

⁴² See, for example, the WA digital inclusion project, and the recent announcement in the Federal Budget.

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 statewide, drawing on the work undertaken previously by Shelter Tas in developing consumer engagement guides.⁴³ 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.

Recommendation 17: *Commit sufficient funding to plan for and implement an effective statewide Primary Stakeholder/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.*

CONCLUSION

This submission to the 2024-25 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.

Our proposals will ensure Tasmanians 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, enjoy their rights as citizens and make positive contributions in their communities.

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⁴³ <https://sheltertass.org.au/training/guides/>

APPENDIX 1: National Rental Context

The National Association of Renters Organisations (NARO) explains the national rental sector trends:

As home ownership has become less and less affordable, a growing number of people are renting, with over 8 million Australians now making homes in the rental sector. Around two in five of these households include dependent children, and a growing number of people are long-term renters who will rent through their entire life, including into retirement. Renting is not a temporary step: it is a way of life for many people whose ability to have a decent home is determined by the conditions in the rental sector.

However, the current state of the rental market is characterised by instability, insecurity, and a lack of adequate protections for renters. Market rents are unaffordable with many renters struggling to secure a new rental property in the fiercely competitive private rental market. Most renters continue to face significant insecurity, making it very difficult to assert their rights such as requesting repairs. Many rental homes provided are of a poor standard. In addition, the often-substantial increases to rent being experienced by many across the country is placing a tremendous burden on individuals and families. Too many renting households are spending too much of their income on rent, leaving very little for other necessary ever-increasing expenses.

NARO has also developed nine principles for strengthening renters' rights.⁴⁴

1. Stability – ending all no-cause terminations
2. Affordability – stabilise rent prices
3. Liveability – minimum standards for all rental homes, including energy efficiency
4. Compliance and accountability – accessible and robust frameworks to ensure laws are effective
5. Management and Security of Tenants' Money – Rental Bonds – independent rental authorities to hold, safeguard and manage tenants' money and provide prompt return and a source for resourcing services that benefit renters
6. Protection of private information and discrimination – transparency and protections in relation to collection and unlawful use of information
7. Access to advice and advocacy for all renters
8. Universality of protections for all people renting their home
9. Using data to inform policy

⁴⁴<https://tenantsqld.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2023-national-nine-principles-for-strengthening-renters-rights.pdf>

APPENDIX 2: Summary of Commonwealth Housing Initiatives

The Commonwealth Government introduced the consultation on the National Housing and Homelessness Plan⁴⁵ by outlining an “ambitious reform agenda”:

- a 15% increase to the maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance to assist low-income renters
- the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund, the single biggest investment in social and affordable housing by a Federal Government in more than a decade, which will support the delivery of 30,000 social and affordable homes in its first 5 years
- a National Housing Accord, setting out a shared ambition to build one million new, well-located homes over 5 years from 2024
- an additional \$350 million over 5 years from 2024-25 to support funding of 10,000 affordable homes under the Accord
- providing tax incentives to support build-to-rent developments to reduce barriers to new supply in the private rental market
- increasing Housing Australia's (previously National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation) liability cap by an additional \$2 billion. This will allow Housing Australia to provide more loans to Community Housing Providers for social and affordable housing, supporting around an additional 7,000 dwellings
- widening the remit of the National Housing Infrastructure Facility, making up to \$575 million available to invest immediately in social and affordable rental homes
- expanding eligibility for the Home Guarantee Scheme to help more people buy a home sooner
- offering states and territories an additional \$67.5 million to address homelessness as part of a one-year extension to the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement
- a \$2 billion Social Housing Accelerator payment to State and Territory Governments, which will create thousands of homes for Australians on social housing waiting lists.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The National Housing and Homelessness Plan is not yet available. For our submission to the National Plan, see www.shelertas.org.au

⁴⁶ <https://www.dss.gov.au/housing-support-programs-services-housing/developing-the-national-housing-and-homelessness-plan>