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MEDIA RELEASE

Governments must step in with real action for NSW renters

Figures showing that rental affordability has plummeted again across many areas of NSW highlights the need for urgent investment in social housing and planning reforms to address increasing homelessness and housing unaffordability, housing and homelessness peaks said today.

Anglicare's Rental Affordability Snapshot released today shows that less than 1% of properties advertised for rent in Sydney and the Illawarra last month were affordable for a person earning a minimum wage.

The number of affordable properties for people on supported incomes halved in this year's snapshot, with just 30 of the 14,447 properties advertised appropriate for households on income support payments.

The NSW Federation of Housing Associations and Homelessness NSW joined Anglicare's call for a five-year NSW social housing plan, with clear numerical targets to address the crisis.

They reiterated calls in an open letter to the NSW Government last November for the government to move beyond its focus on housing supply and develop policies that encourage investment in social and affordable housing.

"One third of NSW households rent and housing affordability is hitting them the hardest, particularly those surviving on low wages or government support," Ms Hayhurst said.

"What's really concerning is that there is still no co-ordinated state-wide strategy that recognises housing as vital infrastructure that must be planned for and co-ordinated.

"Today's report from Anglicare shows how important it is that debate about housing affordability moves beyond home ownership. It's an issue that must be addressed in the upcoming Federal and NSW budgets."

Homelessness NSW CEO Katherine McKernan said rising rents were forcing many low income families into poverty and homelessness, with waiting lists of more than 10 years for public housing across Sydney and the Illawarra.

"Just last week IPART highlighted the massive funding gap in our social housing system in NSW that needs to be bridged. At the same time, demand for specialist homelessness services has jumped from 54,000 to 69,000 in just two years.

"Anglicare's rental snapshot shows how dire the situation is for families on income support, older renters trying to get by on a pension, and people struggling on a minimum wage. These groups are clearly priced out of the private rental market and with the lack of social housing we will continue to see increases in homelessness."

Homelessness NSW and the Federation are calling for:

- Planning reforms that create incentives for investment in affordable housing models, including affordable housing targets for all new developments and government owned land;
- Expansion of the NSW Social and Affordable Housing Fund; and
- Support for a Bond Aggregator to attract institutional investment on affordable housing.

Read the full open letter at:

<http://www.communityhousing.org.au/mediareleases/NSWFHA%20Open%20letter%20to%20the%20NSW%20Premier%20and%20Planning%20Minister%20FINAL.pdf>

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