

## **Regional NSW locked out of housing debate - 6,900 new social and affordable homes needed in New England**

Regional housing providers have called on the NSW government to address chronic housing stress in local communities experiencing among the highest levels of housing stress and homelessness in Australia.

The rental market is facing renewed scrutiny after the Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot revealed yesterday that just 399 properties listed in Northern Inland NSW were appropriate for households earning minimum wage, and only 132 for households on income support.

The New England and North West region will need 6,900 new social and affordable homes by 2036 to stop increasing homelessness and provide relief for local communities struggling with chronic rental stress.

In less than two decades New England will need 5,400 new social housing homes for people in the local community on very low incomes and government support such the aged pension or Newstart.

The region will need another 1,500 below market rentals properties to provide relief for local families surviving on minimum wages or low incomes.

Homes North CEO Maree McKenzie said, “In our region we are suffering from a dramatic undersupply of affordable housing. In areas like Armidale, Tamworth and Narrabri, the homes just aren’t there.

“There are groups that find it particularly unaffordable to rent. For example, young people not only find themselves on lower wages, but are often discriminated against by landlords. People with disabilities and large families also find it hard to locate properties that are appropriate to their needs.

“Our government needs to support providers such as Homes North with grants to develop very targeted housing that the private market has failed to supply.

“It’s a value for money one-off investment that lets us get on with the job of being social landlords and providing a much-needed option in our housing markets.”

CHIA NSW Chair, John McKenna said regional towns and country areas are being ignored in debates around housing and housing affordability – when 1

in 3 new social and affordable homes needed in NSW by 2036 are outside of Sydney.

“It’s clear when you compare population sizes that communities in regional NSW are in just as desperate need – if not more than - for social and affordable housing than they are in Sydney,” Mr McKenna said.

“A combination of lower wages and increasing rents and house price mean that people in regional NSW are doing it tougher than almost anywhere else in Australia, going without many essentials including food just to pay the rent.

“The flow on effect to local economies is huge. Too many politicians are still saying move to country areas because it’s cheaper – but the reality is very different for many people already living in these areas.

“Not only haven’t wages kept up with the private rental market and there’s a chronic shortage of both social and affordable housing close for people who need a home they can afford.

“The government has said regional infrastructure is a priority – housing is absolutely critical infrastructure that must be funded in all areas of NSW, not just in the city.”

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