

MEDIA RELEASE



Regional NSW locked out of housing debate - 12,000 new social and affordable homes needed in Richmond and Tweed

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 179 properties listed in NSW North Coast were appropriate for families earning minimum wage, and only 26 for households on income support.

The Far North coast will need 12,000 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 Tweed and Richmond will need 8000 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 4000 below market rentals properties to provide relief for local families surviving on minimum wages or low incomes.

CHIA NSW Chair and CEO of North Coast Community Housing John McKenna said the local community is already experiencing a shortage 6,500 social housing properties, and 3,500 affordable homes.

“Our region in the Northern Rivers has a chronic shortage of social and affordable housing and for the last three years,” said Mr McKenna.

“The Richmond Electorate is the third most expensive private rental market in the country due to the combination of lower incomes and rental vacancies. This increases rental stress and contributes to the region’s growing rates of homelessness.”

Mr McKenna said a lack of transport and specialist support services made it even tougher for people on low incomes to find affordable rentals close to jobs. Coastal regions such as Coffs Harbour, Yamba and Clarence Valley are particularly affected due to major infrastructure projects.

Mr 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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