

MEDIA RELEASE

27 April 2017

Budget must address rental affordability not just ownership

Leading seniors' advocacy body COTA Australia says the annual Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot released today paints a bleak picture of rental affordability across Australia, highlighting the urgent need for action in the upcoming budget.

Older people are among those most vulnerable to inflation in rental housing and in particular single older people reliant on Newstart, Disability Support Payments or the Age pension.

For single people on Newstart, Anglicare found a mere 0.03% of rental properties affordable nationally, down from 0.1% in Anglicare's 2016 snapshot, illustrating the growing gap between rental costs and social welfare.

A single person on Disability Support Payments fares only slightly better, with less than 0.86% of properties affordable across the country.

Rental affordability is only marginally better for single people on the Age pension – only 1.62% of rental properties in Australia would be suitable; but well down on 2016.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates said that the 2017 Federal Budget 2017 needs to recognise the importance of safe and secure home for the wellbeing of all Australians – not just the importance of property ownership.

“Homelessness is increasing amongst older Australians. We cannot address this crisis without taking rental affordability seriously. The upcoming budget is a great opportunity to tackle the issue head-on.

“We need a comprehensive and coordinated approach to housing affordability across government– not just one-off measures on property ownership which may help some people but not those most in need.

“People are being forced to make choices between paying their rent, buying groceries and accessing crucial medical supplies. The situation is unacceptable in modern Australia.

“The gap between rental costs and income support is growing and it is becoming harder and harder for older people to maintain even a basic standard of living.

“Increasing social and community housing and increasing the overall supply of affordable and appropriate housing are essential parts of the answer.

“COTA and many other advocates have also consistently called for an increase in Commonwealth Rent Assistance and an increase in the Newstart Allowance to make it a feasible income for a person to live on.

“Tens of thousands of jobseekers over the age of 50 face daunting odds against getting back into the job market due to age discrimination and then struggle to make ends meet on the Newstart allowance.

“It is time for both Federal and State governments to address market failure in the private rental market and direct public investment towards delivering homes for those on low incomes.

Anglicare's Rental Affordability Snapshot can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2pjViiP>

Media contact: Ian Yates 0418 835 439, Peter Stahel 0408 584 439