



## **Snapshot: Anglicare North Coast – North Coast NSW**

### **Introduction**

Anglicare North Coast covers a broad demographic area, stretching from Port Macquarie in the south to Tweed Heads in the north. Within this area, we have several larger regional cities, but also large rural areas, with smaller networks of towns which assist in meeting housing demand. Whilst the larger urban areas are relatively well serviced in terms of infrastructure and services, residents outside of those areas face additional barriers to accessing services, employment and housing. Public transport is not well developed, increasing reliance on cars, with their associated running costs.

As stated in previous years, the North Coast is economically disadvantaged when compared to both the NSW average and the national average. Levels of unemployment remain high, with longer than average disengagement from the workforce and an overall lower median household income. The Aboriginal population of the North Coast is nearly double that of the NSW average and, typically, Aboriginal people face greater discrimination when applying for accommodation.

Anglicare has a number of services which aim to build resilience and support clients to achieve their aims: Community Housing; Partners In Recovery; 3Es To Freedom, Financial Counselling – Problem Gambling, and Emergency Relief.

### **Findings**

This Rental Affordability Snapshot contains two sets of findings. It shows the number of affordable and suitable homes for rent for people on low income on the weekend of 21 March 2020. It then uses the same Snapshot rental property listings to provide an analysis of what would change to affordability for low income households on the NSW North Coast if the current temporary increases to some government income payments, coming into effect at the end of April 2020, were made permanent.

On the Snapshot weekend of 21 March 2020, 955 private rentals were advertised for rent on the North Coast. Private rentals were surveyed from realestate.com.au. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that:

- 19 (2%) individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 205 (21%) individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.



On the Snapshot weekend, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
26	229

*Table 1: Rental Affordability, North Coast, by household type and percentage*

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Jobseeker Payment (both adults)	1	0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	19	2%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Jobseeker Payment	0	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	8	1%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	2	0%
8	Single	Jobseeker Payment	0	0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	205	21%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	9	1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	24	3%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	26	3%
Total No of Properties		955		



## Changes to affordability if the Coronavirus Supplement increases are retained

This Rental Affordability Snapshot was taken just days before the Australian Government announced a temporary, 6 month increase to some government income payments, in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This 'Coronavirus Supplement' of an additional \$550 per fortnight will be paid to all new and existing recipients of the Jobseeker (formerly Newstart), Youth Allowance, and Parenting Payments from 27 April 2020<sup>i</sup>, in addition to their normal payments.

These temporary increases allowed us to pose a hypothesis: what would the change in rental affordability be for households on government incomes, if the increase in payments via the Coronavirus Supplement was made permanent?

*Table 2: Rental Affordability, North Coast, by household type and percentage with Coronavirus Supplement increases calculated as permanent increases to household incomes*

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Jobseeker Payment (both adults)	75	8%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	4	0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	23	2%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	19	2%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Jobseeker Payment	6	1%
6	Single	Age Pension	11	1%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	4	0%
8	Single	Jobseeker Payment	18	2%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	11	1%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	8	1%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	205	21%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	9	1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	24	3%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	108	11%
Total No of Properties		955		



On the Snapshot weekend, if the Coronavirus Supplement incomes were permanent, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
122	229

## Discussion

In the North Coast, as is the case across Australia, renters are on the frontline of coronavirus pandemic. Many are losing their incomes, and some are scared of being forced out of their homes.

Welfare increases have given some people in our region badly needed relief, but the local rental market is still failing people on the lowest incomes. Our Snapshot shows that a person who is out of work can afford less than 2% of rentals on the North Coast – and that's with their payments doubled. Under the old rates, there were no affordable rentals at all (0%) in our region.

Age pensioners and people with disability have been left out altogether. A person on the Age Pension can afford just 1% of rentals, while a person on the Disability Support Pension can afford 0%. Instead of looking after for them in the midst of a health crisis, we are leaving them to the mercy of the market.

The Coronavirus Supplement will mean that couples with children are better able to compete in the rental market. An out-of-work couple with two children will see a 8% increase in affordability. This will help lift children out of poverty across the North Coast. On the other hand single parents on government payments will see very little benefit. They can afford just 4 rentals out of 955 listings (0%).

The increases will make a minor difference to people on Youth Allowance, but they also show how brutal rental market is for young people. Even with rates more than doubled, a person on Youth Allowance looking for a sharehouse can afford less than 1% of rentals. Under the old rates, none of the listings we surveyed would have been affordable.

In looking at these results, it's important to remember that asylum seekers, international students and temporary migrants do not have any access to income support – including Jobseeker, Jobkeeper, or Medicare. Some will be turning to Anglicare North Coast or other services in our region to make the rent. Some might be pushed into homelessness. This is a huge concern and one we urge the Federal Government to take seriously.

Finally, Anglicare North Coast expects major disruptions to the local rental market. There are stories of many properties flooding back into the rental market as the AirBnB market collapses. It's important to remember that many of these properties were never within reach for renters on low incomes. Their return to the long-term rental market will not necessarily offer relief for the households we survey. Time will tell whether they drive a downward shift on rents.



## Policy Implications

### *Raising the rate of payments, for good*

In spite of welfare increases, the results of this Snapshot make it clear that the private rental market is still failing people on the lowest incomes. If rates are halved in six months – and if those who are most vulnerable are left out – people will be pushed even deeper into poverty and homelessness.

The payment increases for people out of work must become permanent. They must be extended to people with disabilities, age pensioners, and everybody who needs them. This will help people keep a roof over the heads and buy essential supplies – and in a time of crisis, it will stop them from having to make unfair choices.

### *More affordable rental homes for the North Coast*

The shortfall of affordable homes across the North Coast is massive. The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute has shown we that [we need 5,900 social and affordable rentals](#) on the Mid North Coast just to make up for that shortfall.<sup>ii</sup>

At a time when we're asking people to stay at home, we must invest in homes for people who need them most. Ending our affordable housing shortfall would be the most powerful way to tackle the rental crisis – and boost our regional economy. The Federal and State governments must work together end this shortfall.

### *A better deal for renters*

In the wake of this historic downturn, we've heard stories from people who are losing their jobs and seeing their hours cut back. Incomes are drying up. People are at serious risk of losing their homes.

State and territory leaders have said there will be a 'moratorium' on evictions – but in NSW, renters are still being evicted. We're already seeing stories from the frontline of people being evicted with nowhere to go. Tenants are also being evicted from public housing – in the midst of a health crisis. Governments should be leading private landlords by example, instead of making a mockery of the eviction moratorium.

The National Cabinet has now agreed to rent relief for commercial tenants and a Code of Conduct, helping them avoid a debt trap. Residential renters trying to keep a roof over their heads deserve the same respect. Mounting debts for renters would be a recipe for disaster. In the midst of this crisis, we need a real moratorium on evictions and debt relief for renters.

### *Help for people sleeping rough*

People who are homeless or sleeping rough are much more likely to test positive for COVID-19. This is a major concern for Anglicare North Coast.

[Byron Shire has the highest number](#) of people who sleep rough per capita in NSW outside of Sydney. The number of rough-sleepers rose by 18% from the last count. These people desperately need emergency accommodation, now more than ever.

Getting people off the street is critical to protecting them from the virus. Victoria and WA are using empty hotel rooms and AirBnBs to protect people were sleeping rough. We hope the Federal and State governments will follow their lead, and tackle homelessness in our region and across NSW during this pandemic.



## Conclusion

The decisions of government to walk away from social and public housing, to freeze income support payments, and to leave renters to the mercy of the private market have been hurting people on low incomes for years. Households across our region are now feeling the impact of these decisions.

Renters have found themselves on the frontlines of the economic crisis wrought by the coronavirus, as well as the summer bushfires. They are much more likely to be in low-paid or insecure work, and many of now face an impossible situation: Not only losing income, but at risk of losing their homes.

Payment increases will help some households, but the private rental market is still failing those on the lowest incomes. Age pensioners and people with disability are particularly vulnerable in the midst of this downturn.

It is clear that we must invest in affordable housing. The shortfall of affordable rentals in our region must be tackled. The events of the past six months – and the sobering results of this Snapshot – show that this is truly urgent.

Nobody should be squeezed out of the market during a health emergency. It's time to make sure that everyone has a place to call home.

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<sup>i</sup> The full list of government income payments temporarily increased via the Coronavirus Supplement is found here - <https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-support#cor>

<sup>ii</sup> Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (2018) [Social housing as infrastructure: an investment pathway](#). See Appendix 4.