



## Policy Brief Housing and homelessness

### WHAT THE ISSUE IS

Housing affordability is a key factor in both causing and perpetuating homelessness. Stable, affordable accommodation is essential if people are to contribute to the community. There is currently a serious shortage of crisis and long-term affordable accommodation available in the ACT.

Data from Everybody's Home, a national campaign developed by a coalition of housing, homelessness and welfare organisations calling on governments to fix the broken housing system, reveals that the ACT has a shortfall of around 3,000 social housing dwellings and almost 1,600 people in the ACT are homeless<sup>1</sup>. The Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot 2020 found that out of 1,201 private rental listings in the ACT, none were affordable for a person on Disability Support Pension, JobSeeker, Youth Allowance or Parenting Payment Single without the coronavirus supplement.<sup>2</sup>

Housing affordability is disproportionately impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people experiencing domestic and family violence and people with mental illness. One in 10 young people in the ACT had couch surfed and 2.6% had lived without a fixed address, a refuge or transitional accommodation for some time according to a Mission Australia survey<sup>3</sup>.

### WHAT GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

Families ACT is calling on the ACT Government to:

- Maintain funding for the Supportive Tenancy Service (STS), a service that provides an early intervention and prevention service to support community members who are experiencing housing stress to maintain their tenancies and to prevent them becoming homeless.
- Establish and fund a specialist youth homelessness support service for children aged between 8 and 15 in the ACT, unless they are with a parent receiving homelessness support as well as out-of-home care leavers who are between 16-18 years old.
- Re-establish and fund an advocacy voice for tenants in the ACT.
- Address the accommodation needs of vulnerable groups in the community. Provide safe and affordable housing options for women and families escaping domestic and family violence.
- Introduce legislation requiring all future housing developments in the ACT to include a minimum of 20% affordable and social housing component.

### ABOUT FAMILIES ACT

Families ACT is a territory peak, not-for-profit, organisation which aims to represent the interests of children, young people and families and the continuum of services which support them, in the ACT and surrounding region. We take a broad view of what constitutes a family and strive to improve the wellbeing of all families in the ACT and surrounding region.

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<sup>1</sup> Everybody's Home: Homelessness and social housing needs. Look up your electorate. ACT total homeless. Available at: <https://everybodyshome.com.au/heat-maps/> (accessed November 2020)

<sup>2</sup> Anglicare: Rental Affordability Snapshot, Special Update August 2020. Available at: <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/special-release-rental-affordability-update.pdf?sfvrsn=4> (accessed November 2020)

<sup>3</sup> Hall, S., Fildes, J., Liyanarachchi, D., Hicking, V., Plummer, J. and E. Tiller (2020) Staying home: A Youth Survey report on young people's experience of homelessness. Mission Australia: Sydney, NSW. Available at: <file:///Users/Communications/Downloads/Youth%20homelessness%20report.pdf>