

# RENTAL AFFORDABILITY SNAPSHOT NATIONAL REPORT 2026 \ SEVENTEENTH EDITION





# RENTAL AFFORDABILITY SNAPSHOT

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National Report 2026

SEVENTEENTH EDITION



Every year, Anglicare Australia surveys rental listings across Australia to see what it is like for people on low incomes to rent a home. We do this by taking a snapshot of the thousands of properties listed for rent on [realestate.com.au](http://realestate.com.au). We test whether each rental listing is affordable and suitable for people on low incomes. The Rental Affordability Snapshot is released every year in April. This is the seventeenth edition. Preferred citation:

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## Introduction

For seventeen years, Anglicare Australia's Rental Affordability Snapshot has tracked Australia's private rental market. Over that time, one pattern has remained constant: Access to affordable housing is often non-existent for people on low incomes.

This year's results show little has changed. Around 49,000 rental listings were surveyed nationwide, similar to last year. While listing numbers remain higher than in some recent years, this has not improved access for low-income households. For many, the rental market continues to offer few, if any, viable options.

The results are stark. A single person on JobSeeker can afford just one property across the entire country. There are no affordable listings for someone receiving Youth Allowance. People on the Disability Support Pension or Age Pension can afford only a tiny fraction of the market—0.03 and 0.2 percent of listings respectively. These are not new findings. For many of these groups, affordability has remained at or near zero for much of the time this data has been collected.

What has changed is who the market works for. Even households in full-time work on the minimum wage now face limited access to affordable housing. Families who once had a broader range of options can now afford a much smaller share of the market. Over time, the gap between incomes and rents has widened.

Taken together, these results point to a rental market where access is closely tied to income, and where those on the lowest incomes are largely excluded. This is not the result of short-term pressure or a single year of constrained supply. It reflects longer-term shifts in how housing is provided and priced. Governments have stepped back from directly providing housing, while policy settings have increasingly relied on the private market. At the same time, tax and investment settings have encouraged demand for housing as an asset, adding pressure to prices and rents.

For many Australians, these findings will not come as a surprise. Limited access to affordable housing has become a persistent feature of the system, particularly for low-income renters. Without changes to the settings that shape the housing market, the results in this Snapshot suggest that the crisis will continue to worsen.

## This year's Snapshot

Every year, Anglicare Australia measures whether Australians on low incomes can afford to rent a home on the private market. Using thousands of rental property listings on realestate.com.au on a weekend in March or April, we are able to survey online rental listings across the country. Using this data, we assess each property for affordability and suitability metrics for thirteen different household types on low incomes.

These households are:

- » single people receiving the Disability Support Pension, Youth Allowance, JobSeeker and the Age Pension, or earning minimum wage;
- » single parents receiving the Parenting Payment, earning the minimum wage, or a combination of these income sources;
- » couples without children on the Age Pension; and
- » couples with children on JobSeeker, Parenting Payment, earning the minimum wage, or a combination of these income sources.

### How we measure affordability

For most people on low incomes, the cost of rent needs to be no more than 30 percent of a household budget for it not to cause financial stress. This is an internationally accepted benchmark based on many years of study into the impacts of cost of living and how this impacts people. Anglicare Australia uses the 30 percent benchmark.

To test whether a listing would be *affordable*, we calculate the maximum weekly affordable rent for each of our household types. This is done using government-published information on rates of payment for JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, the Disability Support Pension, the Age Pension, Parenting Payment, minimum wage rates, applicable Family Tax Benefits, additional supplements and allowances, and the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance. We then compare those figures against properties deemed suitable.

*Suitable* means a listing contains an appropriate number of bedrooms for the number of people or family type within our households. For example, a one-bedroom apartment would not be appropriate for a family with two children, nor would a room in a sharehouse appropriate for a couple on the Age Pension. We acknowledge that one area where we are likely to overestimate the suitability of a property is for people on the Disability Support Pension. While not every person with a disability would need modified housing, there are many that do. Our Snapshot does not measure accessibility or compliance with universal housing standards.

## What we found

This year, the Snapshot surveyed 48,776 rental listings across the country on the weekend of 14-15 March 2026. Table 1 shows how many property listings were affordable and appropriate for our household types, and compares the changes with the 2025 Snapshot. Table 2 breaks down the results by each state and territory.

These results show a rental market that is closely aligned to the structure of Australia's income support and wage system. Access to housing increases as income rises, but the increases are uneven and often small. Many households, especially those relying on working-age payments, are being priced out of renting. At the same time, the results point to a market where rents themselves sit at a level that places even moderate incomes under pressure.

At the lowest payment levels, the market is effectively out of reach. People receiving Youth Allowance have no access to affordable rental housing, whether living alone or in a share house. JobSeeker sits slightly higher, but the results show that this difference does not translate into meaningful access. A single person on JobSeeker can afford just one property nationally.

This pattern is not new. For single people on Youth Allowance and JobSeeker, affordability has sat at or near zero for the full period these data have been collected. The current results therefore reflect a long-standing gap between these payments and the rental market, rather than a short-term shift. Over time, this has meant that people relying on these payments have consistently had little or no access to private rental housing.

The transition from working-age payments to pensions shows a clearer, but still limited, increase in access. People receiving the Disability Support Pension or Age Pension can afford more properties than those on JobSeeker, but the numbers remain very low. This shows that while higher payments improve access at the margins, they do not shift people into a position where they can afford to rent.

A more noticeable change occurs when moving from income support to wages. A single person earning the minimum wage can afford more properties than someone on a pension, but still only a tiny share of the market (0.5 percent). The results here reflect both the level of wages and the level of rents: even full-time work at this income does not align with the cost of most rental housing.

The largest increase in access comes when incomes are combined. Households with two incomes, particularly those with two minimum wage earners, can afford a larger share of listings. This marks a shift in how the market is experienced. While access remains limited, it expands enough to provide a broader set of options than is available to single-income households.

However, the longer-term trend for these households shows a clear change over time. In earlier years of the series, a family with two minimum wage incomes could afford around one in four rental listings. The current figure is notably lower. This indicates a substantial reduction in access for working families over time, even where both adults are in full-time employment. The results suggest that the relationship between wages and rents has shifted, reducing the share of the market that is affordable to these households.

Household composition interacts with this pattern in important ways. The presence of children reduces access at nearly every income level. Single parents on Parenting Payment, as well as those combining this payment with wages, can afford only a small share of listings. This indicates that the additional costs associated with children limit the amount of income available for rent, narrowing the range of affordable options.

Changes over the past year reinforce these patterns. For most payment types, the number and proportion of affordable listings has either declined or remained very low. This includes people on JobSeeker, pensioners, and single minimum wage earners. The declines are small in percentage terms, but they occur at levels where access is already minimal. As a result, even small reductions further limit the already narrow set of options available to these groups.

In contrast, dual-income households have seen a modest increase in access over the same period. This suggests that recent changes in the market have not affected all households in the same way. Where affordability has improved, it has tended to do so for households with higher combined incomes.

The reduction in total rental listings provides additional context for these changes. With fewer properties available overall, and affordability declining for most payment types, the results suggest that lower-cost rental options may be becoming harder to find.

Overall, the results show a rental market where both incomes and rents shape access. Lower incomes limit what households can afford, while the level of rents limits how many properties fall within reach. The interaction between these two factors means that access expands only gradually as income rises, and remains limited for most household types.

Table 1. Rental affordability by household type, national results  
(includes Commonwealth Rent Assistance, Family Tax Benefits, and all supplements where eligible)

Household Type	Payment Type	March 2026		March 2025		Change
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage
01. Single	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	-0.0
02. Single	JobSeeker Payment	1	0.0%	3	0.0%	-0.0
03. Single, aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	17	0.0%	28	0.1%	-0.1
04. Single	Age Pension	88	0.2%	165	0.3%	-0.1
05. Single	Minimum Wage	255	0.5%	352	0.7%	-0.2
06. Single One child over 14	JobSeeker	6	0.0%	20	0.1%	-0.1
07. Single One child under 5	Parenting Payment Single	21	0.0%	73	0.1%	-0.1
08. Single Two children, one under 5, one under 10	Parenting Payment Single	26	0.1%	64	0.1%	-0.0
09. Single Two children, one under 5, one under 10	Minimum Wage and Parenting Payment Single	1,271	2.6%	1,352	2.6%	-0.0
10. Couple, no children	Age Pension	351	0.7%	334	0.7%	-0.0
11. Couple Two children, one under 5, one under 10	JobSeeker Payment (both adults)	82	0.2%	157	0.3%	-0.1
12. Couple Two children, one under 5, one under 10	Minimum Wage and Parenting Payment Partnered	1,296	2.7%	1,352	2.6%	+0.1
13. Couple Two children, one under 5, one under 10	Minimum Wage (both adults)	7,227	14.8%	6,538	12.8%	+2.0
Total number of properties		48,776		51,238		

Table 2. Rental affordability by household type, State and Territory results  
(includes Commonwealth Rent Assistance, Family Tax Benefits, and all supplements where eligible)

Household Type	Payment Type	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
01. Single	Youth Allowance	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
02. Single	JobSeeker Payment	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.04%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
03. Single, aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.01%	0.03%
04. Single	Age Pension	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%
05. Single	Minimum Wage	0.1%	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%	0.9%	1.7%	0.5%	0.4%
06. Single One child over 14	JobSeeker	0.0%	0.01%	0.0%	0.01%	0.1%	0.2%	0.01%	0.0%
07. Single One child under 5	Parenting Payment Single	0.0%	0.04%	0.0%	0.02%	0.3%	0.3%	0.01%	0.03%
08. Single Two children, one under 5, one under 10	Parenting Payment Single	0.0%	0.01%	0.0%	0.02%	0.8%	0.5%	0.01%	0.0%
09. Single Two children, one under 5, one under 10	Minimum Wage and Parenting Payment Single	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%	0.9%	7.0%	6.6%	5.3%	0.7%
10. Couple, no children	Age Pension	0.0%	0.6%	1.6%	1.4%	2.8%	2.8%	0.6%	0.2%
11. Couple Two children, one under 5, one under 10	JobSeeker Payment (both adults)	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	2.1%	1.1%	0.1%	0.0%
12. Couple Two children, one under 5, one under 10	Minimum Wage and Parenting Payment Partnered	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%	0.9%	7.0%	6.7%	5.5%	0.7%
13. Couple Two children, one under 5, one under 10	Minimum Wage (both adults)	0.5%	5.5%	5.1%	8.6%	22.3%	30.4%	30.3%	3.5%
Total number of properties		965	15,889	257	10,071	2,397	639	15,247	3,314

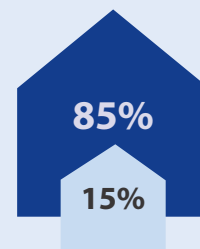
Figure 1. Snapshot of rental affordability for sample households

● Unaffordable ● Affordable



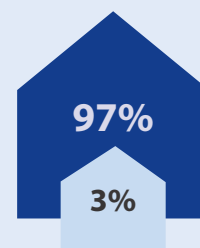
### Family of four on the minimum wage

14.8% of rental listings are affordable for a family of four with two parents on the full-time minimum wage.



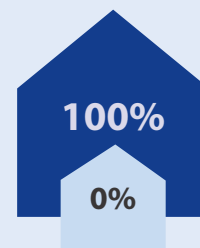
### Single parent on the minimum wage

2.6% of rental listings are affordable for a single parent on the full-time minimum wage.



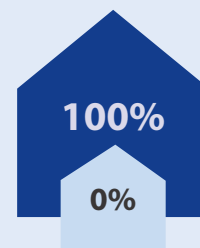
### Single person on the JobSeeker payment

0% of rental listings are affordable for a person looking for work on the JobSeeker payment, a result we've seen year after year.



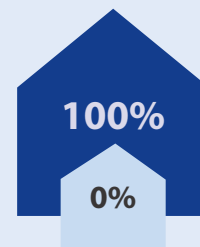
### Retirees on the Age Pension

0.3% of rental listings are affordable for a retiree on the Age Pension, halving over the last year.



### Single person on the Disability Support Pension

0% of rental listings are affordable for a person on the Disability Support Pension, a record low result.





## What this means

A secure and affordable home underpins almost every part of life, including finding and keeping a job, completing education, raising children, and ageing with stability. The results of this year's Snapshot show that for many Australians, this foundation is not in place.

For people on the lowest incomes, the private rental market is simply out of reach. A single person on JobSeeker can afford just one property nationally. There are no affordable listings for a young person on Youth Allowance. These are not one-off results. For single people on these payments, affordability has sat at or near zero for the full period that this data has been collected. This points to a long-standing gap between payment levels and rents, rather than a temporary mismatch.

In practical terms, this shapes how people live. When rent takes up a large share of income, there is little left for other essentials. Survey data shows that many people on JobSeeker spend at least half of their payment on rent.<sup>1</sup> Faced with these trade-offs, people report skipping meals, delaying medical care, or going without heating in order to keep a roof over their head.<sup>2</sup> The results in this Snapshot help explain why, with almost no affordable options available within the private rental market at these income levels.

The findings also show that this pressure does not ease significantly with age. Older Australians on the Age Pension have slightly more access to affordable housing than younger people on working-age payments, but the overall level remains low. Only 0.7 percent of properties are affordable for an older couple, and 0.2 percent for a single person. A large share of these are rooms in share houses rather than self-contained homes.

This sits alongside a growing group of older Australians who are renting into retirement, many of whom rely primarily on the Age Pension and have limited savings to draw on. Research from Swinburne University has highlighted a growing number of older renters who are neither poor enough to qualify for housing assistance, nor wealthy enough to ensure they have secure housing as they age. 77 percent of these older Australians rely on the Age Pension, and 61 percent have no superannuation to fall back on.<sup>3</sup>

While Australia's retirement income system has been built on the assumption of home ownership, our results show that this assumption does not hold for everyone. With only 0.7 percent of properties affordable for an older couple, and 0.2 percent for a single person, the reality for older Australians is they will age facing rental stress. Of the 88 listings considered affordable for a single person on the Age Pension, 71 were rooms in share houses.

For working households, the results point to a different, but related, issue. Even full-time employment at the minimum wage does not provide broad access to the rental market. A single minimum wage worker can afford only a small fraction of listings, and even a family with two full-time minimum wage incomes can access only part of the market. This reflects not only the level of wages, but also the level of rents. The gap between what households earn and what housing costs is evident across the income distribution.

Looking over time, the results show a clear change in how the market works for working families. In earlier years of the Snapshot, a family with two minimum wage incomes could afford around one in four rental listings. That share has fallen substantially. While there has been a small increase in affordability for this group over the past year, it follows a much larger decline over the past decade and does not restore previous levels of access. Just a decade ago, the Rental Affordability Snapshot recorded that 26.2 percent of properties were affordable for this household type.<sup>4</sup> The largest single drop in affordability for this household type came in the 2021 Snapshot, where the number of affordable properties fell by 7.6 percent.<sup>5</sup> It has not recovered since.

Changes in the overall number of listings do not fully explain these patterns. While listings have fallen slightly this year, they remain higher than in several recent years. At the same time, they are still well below the levels recorded earlier in the decade. This points to a market that has both tightened and become more expensive, with fewer low-cost options available.

Taken together, these results show a rental market where both sides of the equation are under strain. For households on income support, payment levels sit well below the cost of renting. For working households, incomes have not kept pace with rising rents. The result is that access to housing remains limited across a wide range of household types, with the most severe impacts concentrated among those on the lowest incomes.

## What can be done

### Tax reform for fairer housing

The results of this year's Snapshot reflect a housing system that has been shaped by policy choices over time. The modern housing crisis has not come from nowhere, it has developed over decades, as governments have stepped back from direct provision and expanded incentives for private investment.

Tax settings are a central part of this. Negative gearing deductions and the Capital Gains Tax (CGT) discount reduce the cost of holding property and increase the returns from price growth. Together, they make housing an attractive investment, particularly for those who already hold assets.

When negative gearing was introduced in its current form, it was intended to support rental supply, including by encouraging landlords to offer lower rents. The introduction of the 50 percent CGT discount in the late 1990s changed how the system works. It increased the reward for capital gains, turning housing into a more attractive vehicle for wealth accumulation. Investors can offset rental losses against their income while waiting to realise gains that are taxed at a discounted rate.

This has shaped the market over time. Rather than rewarding the provision of affordable rental housing, the system rewards capital growth. Investors are able to outbid first home buyers and compete for existing housing stock, while reducing their tax liability in the process. The result is a market where housing is treated as an asset first, and a place to live second.

There is growing public discussion about reforming these settings, with the Federal Government widely believed to be considering changes. Anglicare Australia strongly supports the Government's moves towards reform. However, while some of the options being canvassed would generate budget savings, revenue alone is not a good measure of impact. Changes that leave the underlying incentives in place, such as maintaining generous concessions or applying them only to new investments, are unlikely to shift behaviour in a meaningful way. Similarly, approaches that rely heavily on grandfathering may delay any effect for many years. In both cases, the structure of the market remains largely unchanged.

Evidence on how investors behave is important in considering any reforms. Around 90 percent of investment loans are used to purchase existing homes, rather than to fund new supply.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the benefits of these tax settings are concentrated among higher-income households. Anglicare Australia's own analysis shows that more than half of negative gearing benefits flow to the highest income quintile, and over 80 percent of CGT discount benefits do the same.<sup>7</sup> This indicates that the system is supporting asset accumulation among those already well placed, rather than expanding access to housing.

The argument is often made that reforming these settings would reduce rental supply. However, the private rental market already experiences high turnover. As it stands, 50 percent of properties in the private rental market exit after only five years.<sup>8</sup> In Australia's two largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, around one third of new tenancies were commenced in properties that were new to the rental market, and one quarter of bond refunds were as a result of a property exiting the rental market.<sup>9</sup> This suggests that the rental market is not a fixed pool of properties, but one that is constantly changing.

Taken together, these findings point to a set of policy settings that shape incentives across the system. Reform would change those incentives over time. Phasing out the CGT discount and limiting negative gearing for new investors would reduce the extent to which the tax system favours speculative investment, making the market more affordable over time while allowing a transition period for investors to adjust.

Tax reform alone will not address the gap between incomes and rents identified in this Snapshot. But it would change one of the key drivers shaping how the market operates, and influence how housing is valued and used over time.

## **Raise the rate of working age payments**

The results of this Snapshot show a clear gap between income support payments and the cost of renting. At current rates, these payments do not provide enough to cover basic living costs alongside rent. The payment is so low that even when it was temporarily doubled during the pandemic only barely lifted people out of poverty.<sup>10</sup> Analysis by Anglicare Australia of living costs for people on income support found that it will always leave them in arrears. A JobSeeker recipient under 35 and living in shared accommodation would be left with a \$69 shortfall each week after covering even the most basic of essential costs.<sup>11</sup> These numbers assume a person on JobSeeker could find a room in shared accommodation for a relatively low cost. For most people looking in the private market, they could spend all of their JobSeeker payment on rent and still not afford the average asking rent, even with the help of Commonwealth Rent Assistance.<sup>12</sup>

The evidence on how households respond to this gap is consistent. People report skipping meals, delaying medical care, and going without heating in order to meet housing costs. The findings in this Snapshot help explain why these trade-offs occur, with very few affordable rental options available at these income levels.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance is now the Federal Government's largest form of direct housing support, with expenditure continuing to grow. However, the structure of the allowance also limits its effectiveness. It does not fully reflect differences in rental costs across regions, and increases in rent are not matched by equivalent increases in support. Research has also pointed to weaknesses in how well the payment is targeted, with a significant share of support not reaching those in greatest need. Only one in three people on JobSeeker, and one in ten young people out of work, are even eligible to receive the payment.<sup>13</sup> Half of all people receiving the payment remain in rental stress.<sup>14 15 16</sup>

Alongside changes to Commonwealth Rent Assistance, the base rate of working-age payments needs to be considered. The results in this Snapshot show that for people on JobSeeker and Youth Allowance, the gap between income and rent is so large that there are almost no affordable options in the private market. This reflects the overall level of these payments, not just the design of rent assistance. Increasing working-age payments to at least the Henderson Poverty Line would lift incomes closer to the level needed to meet basic living costs, including housing. This would not resolve the shortage of affordable rentals identified in this report, but it would reduce the depth of the gap and improve households' ability to meet essential costs while seeking work or studying.

Without changes to these settings, the results in this Snapshot suggest that many households will continue to face very limited access to the private rental market.

## **The role of government in supply**

Much of the current housing debate focuses on increasing supply. While supply matters, the results of this Snapshot show that the type of supply, and who it is for, is just as important. Australia continues to build a large number of homes each year. Around 145,000 new homes are completed annually, yet affordability for low-income households continues to decline.<sup>17</sup> The results in this Snapshot help explain why. Many households, particularly those on income support or low wages, cannot afford market rents. Increasing the overall number of homes does not change this if those homes enter the market at prices that remain out of reach.

This points to a shift in how housing has been provided over time. In the decades following the Second World War, governments played a direct role in delivering affordable housing at scale. Under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, the Federal Government supported the construction of a large share of new homes, including homes that were rented at prices aligned with people's incomes. In its first year, one in four new homes was built with this support.<sup>18</sup>

Over time, this role has been reduced. Governments have moved away from direct provision and toward reliance on the private market. As this shift has occurred, the share of public and social housing has declined. In 1981, around 4.9 percent of all housing was public or community housing. By 2021, this had fallen to 3.8 percent.<sup>19</sup> As of June 2024, there are fewer than 300,000 public homes in Australia.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, demand has grown. The shortfall of social and affordable housing is now estimated to have reached 640,000 homes. This gap is not the result of a single year or a single policy decision. It reflects a long period in which the growth of housing that is affordable to low-income households has not kept pace with need.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the Federal Government is spending billions more on support for market housing, including through Commonwealth Rent Assistance and tax concessions for investors.<sup>22</sup>

The results of this Snapshot sit within that context. Where social and affordable housing is limited, more households rely on the private rental market. But as the findings show, the private market does not provide affordable options for many of these households. This is particularly the case for people on income support, but it also affects low-wage workers and some families.

The distinction between stabilising the system and expanding access is important. The results in this Snapshot show that large parts of the population have limited access to affordable housing. Addressing this requires not just more homes overall, but more homes that are affordable to the households who need them. This is where the role of government differs from that of the private market. Private development responds to market prices and returns. It does not aim to provide housing at price points that fall well below market rents. Public and community housing, by contrast, can be targeted to households whose incomes do not align with the private market while pushing down costs across the board.

Over time, sustained investment in this form of housing would change how the system operates. It would reduce the number of households relying on a private rental market that is not designed to meet their needs, and increase the supply of homes that are directly linked to people's incomes.

The results of this Snapshot show the limits of relying on the private market alone to meet housing need. Increasing supply remains important, but without a shift in the mix of housing being delivered, the gap between incomes and rents is likely to remain.

## Conclusion

This is the seventeenth edition of Anglicare Australia's Rental Affordability Snapshot. Over that time, the results have shown a consistent pattern. For Australians on the lowest incomes, access to affordable rental housing has remained extremely limited, and in many cases, non-existent.

This year's findings do not break that pattern. For people on Youth Allowance and JobSeeker, there are no affordable options in the private rental market. For those on pensions, and for single people in low-paid work, access remains limited to a very small share of listings. Even households with two full-time minimum wage incomes can afford only a small part of the market. The gap between incomes and rents remains wide, and in many cases has widened over time.

What has changed is the extent of the problem. Groups who once had some access to the rental market are now being pushed out. Working households are increasingly affected, not just those on income support. At the same time, the number of properties that are affordable at the lower end of the market has not kept pace with need. These shifts point to a system that is placing more pressure on a broader range of households.

The results also reinforce that this is not a short-term disruption. The patterns identified in this report have been present for many years. Affordability for people on the lowest incomes has remained at or near zero across the life of the Snapshot. This suggests that the current outcomes reflect how the system is operating, rather than a temporary imbalance that will correct over time.

As winter approaches, these pressures become more acute. For households already facing limited options, higher costs of living and energy place further strain on already tight budgets. For many, meeting the cost of rent means going without other essentials.

The findings in this report point to a clear conclusion. The private rental market is not providing affordable housing for a significant share of the population, particularly those on low incomes. Addressing this gap requires changes to the settings that shape both incomes and housing supply.

The policy options are well understood. Reforming tax settings, strengthening income support, and increasing the supply of social and affordable housing would each affect different parts of the system. Together, they would begin to close the gap between incomes and rents identified in this Snapshot.

The results of this year's Snapshot show that without changes of this kind, access to affordable rental housing is likely to remain limited for many Australians.

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