



MEDIA RELEASE

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People on low incomes hit hard by skyrocketing regional rents

This year [Anti-Poverty Week](#) (17-23 October) coincides with regional communities across Australia feeling the pain of COVID impacts as borders are kept closed to tourists and seasonal workers, and levels of unemployment remain high along with rising housing stress. Those in NSW and Victoria will also start to feel further pain as COVID Disaster payments end and they need to switch to inadequate income support payments if they don't resume their previous jobs.

Anti-Poverty Week Executive Director Toni Wren says the combination of social security payments below the poverty line and an increase in the cost of renting is driving higher levels of poverty in rural and regional areas.

"Many regional electorates have high levels of people needing income support payments like JobSeeker," said Ms Wren. "At the same time there is a lack of social housing and an influx of people moving from the cities to regional towns, sending rents skyrocketing."

In regional Australia rents have grown at more than double the rate of city properties in the year to June 2021 at an average of **11.3 per cent – and over 30% in some areas**, compared to rent increases of 5% in capital cities. This is the highest annual growth in rents since CoreLogic's rental index began in 2005.

At the same time Commonwealth Rent Assistance remains inadequate at just

\$70/week for single people and \$74/week for a single parent family with two children. The gap between Rent Assistance and the actual cost of rents can be well over \$200.

An increase in Rent Assistance is long overdue – there hasn't been a real increase in 21 years.

“As rents rise and Commonwealth Rent Assistance remains inadequate, many more people on income support payments in regional and rural areas have less money to cover food, bills and medication,” said Ms Wren.

“It's not right that in a wealthy country like Australia* 2.65 million adults and children struggle to survive on income payments that are well below the poverty line and are at risk of homelessness.

“The solution is clear – all that it would take to end poverty and ease the suffering of people who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table – is for the Federal Government to act.”

This Anti-Poverty Week (17-23 October) we are calling on our governments to unlock poverty for millions of Australians by raising income support payments above the poverty line to at least \$67/day, increasing rent assistance by 50% and investing in social housing in a [petition](#) to Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, together with Everybody's Home and Raise the Rate for Good campaigns

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Note: The Credit Suisse annual Global Wealth Report 2021 says Australia now has the highest median wealth per adult of any country (\$US238,070), followed by Belgium, Hong Kong SAR and New Zealand. Yet we know wealth here is concentrated at the top with the ACOSS/UNSW report **Inequality in Australia 2020 finding the highest 20% (with \$3.3 million) had 6 times the average wealth of the middle 20% (with \$565,000) and **90 times that of the lowest 20%** (\$36,000). ** Note regional area rent increases sourced from SQM research, July 2021.*

Regional Income Support and Rent Increases mapped against Federal Electorates

Queensland

Income Support in Queensland: Regional coastal electorates have been especially hard hit by the pandemic with an average of 25,000 adults and children in each of these electorates relying on inadequate social security payments like JobSeeker and over 15,000 households reliant on inadequate Commonwealth Rent Assistance at June 2021.

According to [SQM](#) research, the weekly asking **rent** for 'all houses' in Queensland coastal areas increased by more than 20% in the 12 months to July 2021. This includes the [Sunshine Coast](#) where rents increased by 26.7%; the [Gold Coast](#) where rents increased by 32.6% (within Moncrieff) has over 23,000 adults and children and over 17,000 CRA households); and [North Queensland](#) where rents increased by 20.3% (within the seat of Leichardt). This electorate had nearly 31,000 adults and children receiving working age payments and over 14,000 households relying on CRA in June 2021.

NSW

Income support: In NSW, the electorates of Cowper and Page cover the NSW North coast regions, and each have around 25,000 adults and children relying on inadequate social security payments like JobSeeker in June 2021. They also have high numbers of households relying on Commonwealth Rent Assistance (nearly 20,000 in Cowper and nearly 16,000 in Page). According to [SQM](#) research, the weekly asking **rent** for 'all houses' in the NSW South Coast, Central Tablelands and North Coast increased by 20% or more in the 12 months to July 2021. [NSW Central Tablelands](#): 21.7% increase; [NSW South Coast](#): 24.4% increase; [NSW North Coast](#): 19.9% increase (includes Cowper and Page electorates.)

Victoria

Income support in Victoria: 648,000 adults and children struggle to survive on income payments that are below the poverty line, that's nearly 1 in 10 people living in Victoria - including 230,00 children (nearly 1 in 5) who are growing up in the poorest families. Many are at risk of homelessness due to a shortage of affordable housing. According to [SQM](#) research, the weekly asking **rent** for 'all houses' in [North East Victoria](#) by 13.3% and in [Vic Gippsland](#) by 9.2% in the 12 months to July 2021. Both areas are within the Federal seat of Gippsland. This electorate had 10,700 households relying on CRA and 19,400 adults and children working age payments in June 21.

South Australia

Income Support in South Australia: The electorate of Grey has been hard hit by the pandemic with more than 25,000 adults and children relying on inadequate social security payments like JobSeeker and over 10,000 households reliant on inadequate Commonwealth Rent Assistance at June 2021. According

to [SQM](#) research, the weekly asking **rent** for 'all houses' increased by 15.8% in [South Australia Yorke and Lower North SA](#) (represented by the electorate of Grey.)

Tasmania

Income Support in the Tasmanian electorates of Bass and Braddon each have around 15,000 adults and children relying on inadequate social security payments like JobSeeker in June 2021. They also have high numbers of households relying on Commonwealth Rent Assistance which hasn't had a real increase in 21 years (around 8,700 in each). According to [SQM](#) research, the weekly asking **rent** for 'all houses' increased by 16.3% on the [Tasmania West Coast](#) (represented by the Braddon electorate) in the 12 months to July 2021.

Western Australia

Income Support - The West Australian the electorate of Durack have been hard hit by the pandemic with more than 27,000 adults and children relying on inadequate social security payments like JobSeeker and over 6,600 households reliant on inadequate Commonwealth Rent Assistance at June 2021. According to [SQM](#) research, the weekly asking **rent** for 'all houses' increased in some WA regions by more than 20% in the 12 months to July 2021. In [Northern WA](#), rents increased by 26.7% (within the Durack electorate) and in [WA Goldfields region](#) by 21.5% (within O'Connor electorate).

Northern Territory

Income support - more than 44,000 adults and children struggle to survive on income payments that are well below the poverty line, that's nearly 1 in 6 people living in NT - including over 15,600 children (nearly 1 in 3) who are growing up in the poorest families. Many are at risk of homelessness due to a shortage of affordable housing. (June 2021 data). Nearly 33,000 live in Lingiari, the electorate which covers most of regional NT. There were nearly 8,500 households in the **Northern Territory** receiving inadequate Commonwealth Rent Assistance in June 2021.