



Snapshot: Anglicare Central Queensland

Introduction

Central Queensland's diverse communities range from major population centres to isolated outback towns, each with their own unique set of housing affordability challenges. The region's economy revolves around industries such as mining, gas and associated fields, tourism, agriculture and beef production. Health and social services, retail and education are also major employers.

Anglicare Central Queensland (CQ) services a 570,000 square kilometre region extending from the Capricorn Coast right across the state to the Northern Territory border. The agency's services cover foster care and child protection, community services including youth, disability and mental health programs, and a housing portfolio of more than 550 properties. These properties range from short-term crisis accommodation for people who are homeless or otherwise in urgent need of a safe place to stay, to long term family homes leased through the National Rental Affordability Scheme. AnglicareCQ manages housing in Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast, Gladstone and surrounding communities including Tannum Sands and Calliope, the Central Highlands communities of Emerald and Blackwater, and Barcaldine, Longreach and Winton in the state's west.

Findings

On the weekend of 24 March 2018, 1,101 private rentals were advertised for rent through online sources¹ in the Central Queensland communities surveyed: Rockhampton, Gladstone, Longreach, Barcaldine, Capricorn Coast, Central Highlands and Emerald. The prices of these rentals were compared to what would be affordable to households living on various income support payments such as Newstart or the Age Pension, and to those living on the minimum wage. To this end, we found that:

- 432 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 796 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)
432	796

¹ In 2016, a data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (REA) from the REA website. This method, replacing the former manual collection that we used before 2015, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.



Table 1: Rental Affordability, Central Queensland, 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)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	187	17%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	91	8%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	369	34%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	169	15%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	71	6%
6	Single	Age Pension	103	9%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	103	9%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	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)	647	59%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	399	36%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	186	17%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	501	46%
Total No of Properties		1101		



Discussion

Over the past 24 months, Central Queensland has seen some improvements in housing affordability across the region. This can be attributed to the downturn in the local mining sector, which has seen rental prices ease across the region and particularly in the Emerald and Gladstone regions.

This year's Rental Affordability Snapshot showed high affordability percentages across the region except for singles on newstart and youth allowance payments. However, we must be cautious of treating easing rental prices as a positive change when it is symptomatic of a downturn in an important local industry and a sign of a struggling local economy. It also provides incentive for transient households to take advantage of lower rents, without the support networks in place and often leads to further stress on an already struggling community.

Policy Implications

Despite the easing of housing affordability, there are still Central Queenslanders struggling to find a suitable, affordable place to call home.

AnglicareCQ supports Anglicare Australia's calls to grow the supply of social housing, creating more affordable housing in the communities where it's needed.

AnglicareCQ also supports calls for a mix of housing, to meet the needs of the diverse Central Queensland community. Every individual's housing needs vary across their lifetime, and many in our community have extra needs which are not met through conventional housing stocks. We need to examine our communities' needs for accessible, culturally appropriate housing that is sensitive to the needs and lives of the people who live there.

Conclusion

On the weekend of 24 March 2018, 1,101 private rentals were advertised for rent through online sources² in the Central Queensland communities surveyed: Rockhampton, Gladstone, Longreach, Barcaldine, Capricorn Coast, Central Highlands and Emerald.

Local results show sound rental affordability in the region, however this can be attributed to the downturn in the local mining sector and consequent negative effects on the local economy. Central Queensland, like Australia as a whole, needs a reliable and forward-thinking supply of social housing to ensure all our residents have a safe, suitable place to call home.

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