



## Snapshot: Anglicare Willochra- North and West Country South Australia

### Introduction

Anglicare Willochra is the caring and welfare arm of the Anglican Diocese of Willochra, a large rural diocese covering a diversity of communities across 900,000 square kilometres of rural and regional South Australia. With a concern for the welfare of rural people, Anglicare Willochra partners with ministry groups in the Diocese, and with Anglicare SA to find ways to be 'good neighbours' within our communities.

The 2017 Willochra Rental Affordability Snapshot surveyed private rental properties across the Willochra Diocese, focusing on the larger towns and regional centres within the area - the regional cities of Whyalla, Port Augusta and Port Pirie, the mining township of Roxby Downs and the Copper Coast LGA.

### Findings

Anglicare Willochra collected data on a total of 588 rental listings advertised online<sup>1</sup> on the weekend of 24 March 2018, and calculated the advertised properties' affordability and appropriateness for a range of household types. 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:

- 312 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 488 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

These headline figures mask a complex situation across a range of locales that are discussed below

<b>On the Snapshot weekend, these are the number of unique properties affordable and appropriate for:</b>	
Households on income support payments (#1-10)	Households on minimum wage (#11-14)
312	488

<sup>1</sup> In 2016, a data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE 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, North & West country SA, 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)	204	35%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	141	24%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	266	45%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	161	27%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	54	9%
6	Single	Age Pension	89	15%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	89	15%
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)	414	70%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	306	52%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	175	30%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	349	59%
Total No of Properties		588		



## Discussion

While industry prospects have improved in key regional centres, particularly Whyalla, the rental market has yet to reflect any upturn in economic activity. A drop in the number of properties listed and captures in the Rental Affordability Snapshot this year may reflect some homeowners choosing to stay out of the market until conditions and rents improve. As a result there has been something of a drop in the number of properties both affordable and suitable for people on government incomes, and single people on Newstart and Youth Allowance continue to be locked out of the private rental market, both in Whyalla and across the region.

Once again this finding demonstrates the inadequacy of these allowances, even in a region with more affordable rental options. With South Australia and our region continuing to experience particularly high youth unemployment, the inadequacy of youth income support payments and affordable housing as a result is a serious issue.

There has also been a further small decline in the number of houses affordable and suitable for families on the minimum wage. This along with the drop in number of overall listings suggests that properties previously available to rent may have been withdrawn from the market.

In contrast to Whyalla, The Copper Coast, including the townships of Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta has seen median rental prices either hold steady or increase, and there are less affordable rental options for people on low incomes as a result. Notable again is the lack of a single private housing option for single households, including single parent households, and youth unemployment remains a critical issue

## Policy Implications

The changes in the economic fortunes of Whyalla highlight the need for regional renewal programs to create diverse and enduring employment options, rather than a passive acceptance that local economies, historically reliant on single industries, will simply disappear. There is now some hope with efforts to promote renewable energy generation and infrastructure in the region. However while the likely eventual revival of the local housing market will be good news for home owners, it will not be so positive for people in our region reliant on government income payments, unless there is a commensurate increase in employment prospects.

It is not enough to leave people in dire circumstances on government support payments that are so low they cannot even rent affordably in highly depressed markets like Whyalla, and face the prospect of less housing options as the local economy recovers. This is particularly the case for young and single people on Youth Allowance and Newstart, which are both so low that even in depressed economies like Whyalla, they are still priced out.

## Conclusion

The prospect of better employment opportunities in Whyalla highlights the need for both positive government intervention to create new industry in regional Australia; and also most importantly to ensure new economic development creates targeted opportunities for those who are unemployed in the region. Without this, local populations on government incomes remain stranded.

It must also be remembered that improved economic prospects can see a reduction in affordable housing for non-working or part-time working populations such as those on the aged pension and single parenting payments, and once again reflect the need for governments to ensure there is both sufficient affordable social housing, and that government income payments are adequate.