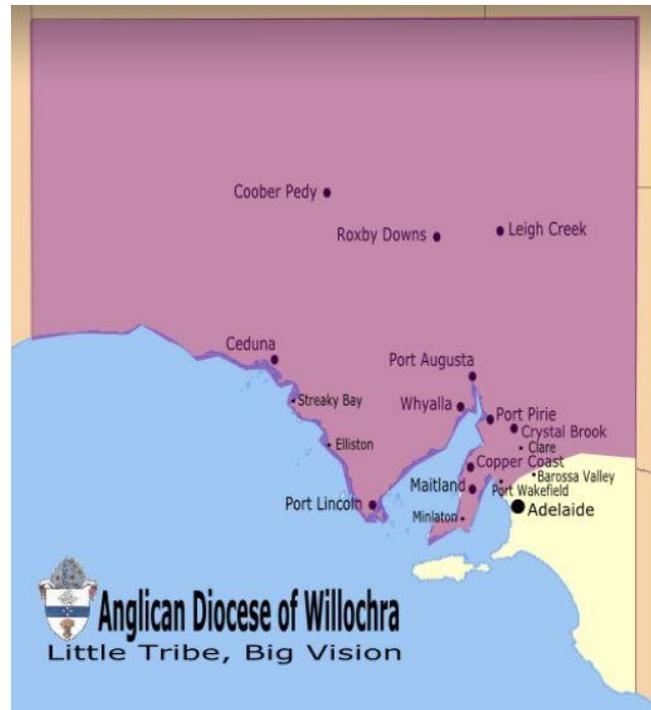


## Snapshot: Anglicare Willochra – North & West Country SA

### 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 2019 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

On the Snapshot weekend of 23-24 March 2019, 542 private rentals were advertised online for rent across the Willochra Diocese. Private rentals were surveyed from realestate.com.au. 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:

- 237 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress.
- 443 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	Households on minimum wage
237	443

Compared to last year, this is a decrease in the number of properties for rent from 588 to 542 on the snapshot weekend. Less properties are suitable for households on income support, down 10 percent from last year, whilst the overall suitability for households on minimum wage has remained the same.

While these figures might not appear too daunting, with 44 percent of properties rated suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress, it is



important to see the breakdown per household and payment type. It is also useful to look closer at whether properties are available in the places where they are required, i.e. in places where there are opportunities for employment and services. We have therefore focused on two areas in particular, the regional city of Whyalla and the 'Copper Coast LGA' comprising the rural townships of Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta.

The overview below gives a breakdown of the rental suitability in the Willochra region for different household and payment types, including a breakdown for the Copper Coast LGA and Whyalla.

*Table 1: Rental Affordability, Willochra region, by household type and percentage*

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Willochra	Willochra	Copper Coast	Whyalla
			Diocese	Diocese	LGA	
			Total Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	158	29	27	40
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	102	19	14	37
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	199	37	30	58
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	95	17	0	44
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	22	4	0	23
6	Single	Age Pension	37	7	0	29
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	37	7	0	29
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0	0	0
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0	0	0
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0	0	0
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	389	72	84	66
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	266	49	66	52
13	Single	Minimum Wage	115	21	0	48
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	322	59	75	59
Total No of Properties		542				

The table above shows that the suitability of rentals varies greatly by household and payment types. The most striking finding is that there is no single rental property suitable for a single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance across the Willochra region and any single person on income support payment would have a rather hard time finding anything suitable. This has been the tune as long as Anglicare Willochra has been running the rental affordability snapshot.



However, the table above also shows that this year there are important variations across geographical locations. In Whyalla, a single person on the higher income support payments, such as Age Pension and Disability Support Pension, have a somewhat better chance of finding a suitable rental property. That also holds true for single with children on either Newstart or Parenting Payment. While there is no properties suitable for a single person on any income support payment in Copper Coast, there is nothing suitable for a single person on minimum wage either.

## Discussion

### *Whyalla*

Whyalla, located on the Spencer Gulf in South Australia, with a population of 21,501 [ABS 2016 Census] saw hope and optimism ahead when the British-based industrialist Sanjeev Gupta bought the debt-ridden steelworks in 2017. Last year he announced a \$600 million upgrade of the existing plant and build a new plant with the capacity to produce between five and 10 million tonnes of commodity steel a year. This announcement was followed with further investments announced that may define the future of Whyalla including: building of a \$1 billion solar farm near Whyalla early 2019 by the Adelaide-based energy company Zen Energy<sup>1</sup>, a \$145 million horticulture business backed by Chinese investment, a \$45 million four-star hotel for Whyalla's foreshore, and a \$6 million organics recycling business<sup>2</sup>. However, the effect of these factors in the private rental market seems yet to eventuate as the median weekly rent has decreased further to \$200 down from \$280 five years ago. The number of properties for rent has also decreased. This may indicate that more people are purchasing homes as they see a more stable economic future in the region.

Affordability has accordingly increased for all household types, except for the standout single household on Newstart or Youth Allowance who still have no viable options.

### *Copper Coast LGA*

The Copper Coast, including the townships of Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta is located on the Yorke Peninsula, and has a population of 13,139 [ABS 2016 Census]. The local economy is based predominantly on agriculture, bulk grain handling and agricultural manufacturing but there is some industry diversification with extraction, fishing, transport and tourism with supporting business and service infrastructure. Compared to the Australian population in general, the population of Copper Coast is older, has a larger proportion of family couples without children as well as single person households.

The median private rental price for the Copper Coast on the snapshot weekend has increased over the last five years, and is now at \$270 compared to \$250 five years ago. The lack of a single private housing option for single households has been dire and unchanged over the last five years.

Youth unemployment is a major issue for this area with the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Youth Unemployment Snapshot ranking the 20 worst hotspots for youth unemployment around the nation reporting that youth unemployment for the Barossa-Yorke-Mid North region currently sits at 15.3%<sup>3</sup>. High youth unemployment coupled with no affordable housing for individuals relying on Newstart or Youth Allowance lead to young people leaving the region, young people continuing to stay in the family home in a forced relationship of ongoing dependency, or homeless young people resorting to couch surfing.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-24/whyalla-steelworks-how-a-town-saved-itself/9984998>

<sup>2</sup> <https://theconversation.com/not-wiped-out-why-whyalla-of-all-places-now-has-a-sustainable-future-108506>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bsl.org.au/media/media-releases/australias-latest-20-youth-unemployment-hotspots-ranked/>



## Policy Implications

If emerging new industries are to give opportunities to young people and young (single parent) families, including those on the lowest income payments, there needs to be serious investment in suitable housing stock as the data from the Willochra region still shows it is near impossible for young single people and single parent families to access a level of housing that is appropriate and affordable.

## Conclusion

Rental affordability results across the Willochra region have been quite different when individual communities are disaggregated. The Whyalla community has seen announcements of important future investments but which has yet to influence the rental market.

A home, along with life and employment opportunities, are essential ingredients for the wellbeing of individuals and families who live in our regional communities. While interventions and investments are needed by State and Federal governments and businesses to assist regional South Australia prosper, the rental affordability snapshot shows that there also needs to be interventions and investments in the housing market to give younger generations' real opportunities to find suitable homes.