

How is the private rental market treating us?

By Choice, National Shelter & National Association of Tenant Organisations (NATO)

Australians are living with a housing affordability crisis that negatively affects people who are renting. People who are living with housing stress (paying more than 30% of household income on housing costs) are a growing demographic across the country and the cost of their housing makes it difficult or impossible for some people to afford the basic necessities of life. With the highest cost of utilities in the Nation, South Australians are really struggling to survive on their after housing costs incomes.

Choice, National Shelter and NATO wanted to understand more about the affordability issues renters face and the other concerns private rental tenants have about their homes. Dr. Alice Clark, Executive Director of Shelter SA said, “the results are revealing and equally affect renters in South Australia”. Shelter SA understands that there are many excellent landlords however some of the key findings include the following:

- 83% of renters in Australia have no fixed-term lease or are on a lease less than 12 months long – Dr. Clark said, “Moving is expensive, especially for people living on low incomes who are struggling day to day and can also result in disruption to employment and school, and going without even more basic necessities to pay for the costs of relocating”.
- 50% of renters report experiencing discrimination when applying for a rental property – the reasons people were discriminated against included having a pet, receiving government payments, on the basis of their age (more likely to be older people), for having young children or being a single parent.
- 50% of renters worried about being listed on a residential tenancy database if they complained to their landlord about their tenancy or property.
- 20% renters experiencing leaking, flooding and issues with mould that landlords were not willing to repair. Dr. Clark said, “Anecdotally we hear about this all the time, when landlords are letting their properties run down, with a view to demolishing them or selling for land value.
- Nationally, 8% of renters are living in a property in urgent need of repairs, however in South Australia the figure is 12%. This is surprising given we have Housing Improvement Legislation and a Housing Improvement team, but perhaps not enough people are prepared to contact them, fearing retribution by their landlord, in terms of eviction and leases not being renewed.

The National Rental Affordability Index, produced by National Shelter, SGS Economics and Planning and Community Sector Banking shows us that in South Australia, 28% of individual renters are paying more than \$301 per week and 40% of household renters are paying more than \$301 for their rental housing. The Newstart Allowance is only \$500 per fortnight, so its not hard to calculate that \$300 is much more than 30% of that amount. You can read the full report [“Unsettled: Life in Australia’s private rental market”](#) here

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