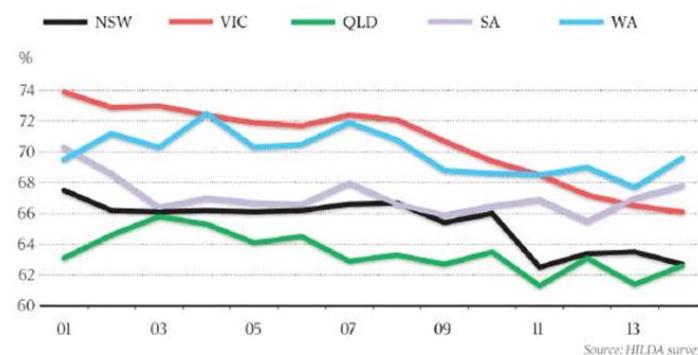


Private Renter Policy & Advocacy Project

In March 2017, National Shelter jointly released their private renter research project findings with Choice Australia and the National Association of Tenant Organisations. The project was initiated by National Shelter and delved into the experiences of Australians who are living in private rental accommodation. The report was titled “Unsettled: Life in Australia’s private rental market”¹ and it really resonated with thousands of people across the country, evidenced by overwhelming mainstream media coverage and through the use of a Twitter hashtag “#RentInOz” which trended number one nationally for over 24 hours. The housing affordability crisis Australians are experiencing means that many people no longer aspire to owning their own homes as they cannot see any way they will be able to save for a house deposit or manage mortgage repayments at current property prices. More and more people will therefore spend their lives in private rental accommodation than ever before in this country.

The proportion of home-owner households by state



The home ownership rate in Australia decreased to 67 percent in 2011 from 68.90 percent in 2006. Home ownership rate in Australia averaged 69.23 percent from 1966 until 2011, reaching an all time high of 71.40 percent in 1966 and a record low of 67.00 percent in 2011.
 Source: <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/australia/home-ownership-rate>, Graph: The Australian, 20/7/2016 - The Australian dream.

Every State and Territory in Australia has a dedicated tenant resource organisation except South Australia. The tenant organisations differ in size however; the majority are funded through the interest earned on private rental bonds. Broadly, the tenant organisations fulfil the functions of housing legal advice, policy work, individual advocacy, advice and education for tenants. South Australia has the ingredients of a tenant organisation but they are spread across a number of government and non-government organisations as follows:

- Consumer and Business Services Tenant Advice and Education;
- Housing legal clinics;

¹ The “Unsettled” report is available here:

<http://www.shelter.org.au/sites/natshelter/files/public/documents/The%20Australian%20Rental%20Market%20Report%20Final%20Web.pdf>

May 2017 National Rental Affordability Index is available here: <http://www.sheltersa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/RAI-Report-May-2017-Small.pdf>

- Service to Youth Council currently operate the Tenant Information and Advice service (TIAS) and;
- Shelter SA conducts policy, legislation and systems advocacy, research, community education and awareness-raising.

Interest payable on South Australian private rental bonds also funds the South Australian Administrative and Civil Appeals Tribunal and the administration of the Residential Tenancies Act.

There have been many instances when Shelter SA has conducted systems advocacy on behalf of groups of tenants and other marginalised groups of people, for example, the closure of the Brighton Caravan Park, problems around tenant engagement in plans to redevelop public housing and issues in the Adelaide Parklands related to rough sleepers, public intoxication and the dry zone.

Shelter SA aims to explore the need for and possibility of increasing the private rental tenant resources available in South Australia through increasing its private rental tenant policy and systems advocacy and to look at how we continue to include other tenants such as people who are living in rooming houses, residential parks, supported residential facilities and other marginal accommodation. Shelter SA does not wish to compete for or redirect the existing resources or funding of other organisations, nor disrupt the current arrangements in South Australia for individual tenant assistance (as listed above). Pending the findings of our community consultation and research, we will make collaborative recommendations about a way forward to better serve private renters and identify the extra resources we may need to increase our policy and advocacy in South Australia. This project will provide an update to our earlier papers and recommendations² related to private renter advocacy and policy work³.

If you wish to find out more about our project, please contact us via email sheltersa@sheltersa.asn.au. We will also be consulting tenant organisations interstate about their history, experiences and structures, to draw on their knowledge base. We will keep you informed about the project as it progresses, as it is expected to be completed by the end of June 2017.

² See Attachment 1

³ <http://www.sheltersa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/150519-Shelter-SA-Renting-a-House-in-SA1.pdf>

<http://www.sheltersa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/160203-Shelter-SA-YourSAY-information-sheet-final.pdf>

Attachment 1

Extract from a 2014 Shelter SA paper - Recommendations



Shelter SA welcomes the opportunity to utilise its research and community engagement expertise to expand its work with private renters and to continue to assist the Minister for Social Housing, the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion and the Housing Minister to fill the gap in reliable data. There are several options that could be considered which vary in the resources they require as follows:

1. Conduct a focus group with private rental tenants to provide rich, in depth, up to date information about current issues tenants are experiencing and insight into ideas about the relief of housing stress and cost of living pressures.
2. Undertake consultation/engagement events with a larger number of tenants as a predominantly qualitative exercise with some quantitative measures incorporated such as demographic information and a short survey, contributing similar insights as above with the addition of some statistical measurement.
3. A State-wide survey of private rental tenants promoted and marketed with the assistance of State Government, to provide a representative sample and reliable State-wide data, on which to base future policy and service provision decisions. Shelter SA to take responsibility for independent data analysis. The Tenant's Union of New South Wales has designed and delivered a survey which could inform a South Australian study.
4. South Australia is the only State/Territory without a tenant union. Shelter SA acts to fill this void by working closely with the Tenant Information and Advocacy Service and the Housing Legal Clinics. Accordingly, Shelter SA is recognised as a member of the National Association of Tenant Organisations. State Government to consider a more formal arrangement and extra resources to increase the capacity of Shelter SA to ensure that this large group of citizens has adequate representation.