

Submission to the consultation on the

Draft Housing Tasmania Bill 2022

July 2022



Working for a just Tasmania

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About Anglicare Tasmania

Anglicare Tasmania is a large community service organisation in Tasmania with offices in Hobart, Glenorchy, Launceston, St Helens, Devonport, Burnie, Sorell and Zeehan and a range of programs in rural areas. Anglicare Tasmania's services include: crisis, short-term and long-term accommodation support; NDIS disability and mental health support services; support services following a motor vehicle accident; aged and home care services; alcohol and other drug services; financial and gambling counselling; and family support. In addition, Anglicare Tasmania's Social Action and Research Centre conducts research, policy and advocacy work with a focus on issues affecting Tasmanians on low incomes.

Anglicare Tasmania is committed to achieving social justice for all Tasmanians. It is our mission to speak out against poverty and injustice and offer decision-makers alternative solutions to help build a more just society. We provide opportunities for people in need to reach their full potential through our services, research and advocacy.

Anglicare Tasmania's work is guided by a set of values which includes these beliefs:

- that each person is valuable and deserves to be treated with respect and dignity;
- that each person has the capacity to make and to bear the responsibility for choices and decisions about their life;
- that support should be available to all who need it; and
- that every person can live life abundantly.

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1 Introduction

Anglicare Tasmania is a provider of housing and specialist homelessness support services in Tasmania. Anglicare has been consulted on and supports the Shelter Tasmania submission and its recommendations. This submission provides comment and recommendations from Anglicare Tasmania in addition to those in the submission from the peak body.

2 Inclusion of Supported Accommodation

Housing stress and homelessness have increased to a critical level over the past decade. Anglicare Tasmania's 2022 Rental Affordability Snapshot found that the total number of properties available for long-term private rental has fallen by over 70% since 2013. The need to correct the imbalance between housing supply and demand is acknowledged and the measures in the draft bill aimed at addressing the shortfall in supply are supported.

However, other measures are required (in addition to expanding supply) to meet the needs of many vulnerable Tasmanians who require supported accommodation that is not otherwise provided. These people include those who are:

- homeless or at risk of homelessness,
- unaccompanied children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- unable to maintain a tenancy in their own right
- in need of high level personal or living support not provided in social housing or private accommodation

Anglicare Tasmania provides a range of supported accommodation, with the type and level of support varying across our facilities, depending on the needs of the people who are accommodated. Importantly, providing safe and appropriate accommodation for these vulnerable Tasmanians requires significant, tailored support services on top of the cost of providing a "roof over their heads".

For example, Anglicare Tasmania manages three Youth 2 Independence facilities (Y2I) facilities for young people aged between 16-24 years who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. These centres, located in Hobart, Launceston and Devonport, provide integrated learning and accommodation to assist young people to transition to independence.

The State Government's commitment to build on current practice and seek Foyer Foundation Accreditation for these facilities is acknowledged. To deliver on this commitment, adequate, recurrent funding is needed in order to meet the prescribed

standards (including required staffing ratios) and to deliver the benefits of this model of care for vulnerable young Tasmanians.

3 Summary

Anglicare Tasmania supports the submission and recommendations of Shelter Tasmania, on which we were consulted.

In addition to the issues and recommendations of the peak body, Anglicare Tasmania's believes that:

- As a community, we should provide for the housing needs of vulnerable Tasmanians who require supported accommodation on an ongoing basis
- Ensuring that supported accommodation needs are identified and met is a responsibility of Government
- This includes ensuring that there is adequate and recurrent funding for support services (including staffing) in addition to funding the provision of housing
- Vesting this responsibility in a single entity will enable it to be discharged effectively and efficiently

We recommend that these responsibilities are articulated in the legislation and reflected in the objectives, functions and powers of the Housing Authority.

4 Recommendations

Powers and Functions of the Housing Authority

1. Make clear in the legislation that:
 - The government has responsibility for ensuring that vulnerable eligible persons have access to appropriate, affordable and safe accommodation;
 - AND
 - this responsibility is vested in the Housing Authority.
2. The objectives of the new housing authority include improving ongoing access to appropriate housing, assistance and support for vulnerable Tasmanians, including those who are:
 - homeless or at risk of homelessness,
 - unaccompanied children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
 - unable to maintain a tenancy in their own right
 - in need of high level personal or living support not provided in social housing or private accommodation.
 - ageing and wish to remain in their own homes
 - living with a disability

3. Core Functions of the Authority should include:

- 3.1. Funding adequate, safe and appropriate supported accommodation and specialist homelessness services. This includes ensuring that, in relation to each type of supported accommodation, adequate and recurrent funding is provided:
- for integral support services
 - to meet any prescribed standards
 - to meet required staffing ratios
- 3.2. Identifying and reporting the housing and support requirements of vulnerable Tasmanians (including those listed in recommendation 2).

Composition and selection of the Board

4. The legislation requires that the process for selecting and appointing the Board members is made publicly available (for example, on the department's website) prior to their selection and appointment.

Minister's Statement of Expectations

5. Targets for affordable rental housing are set and measured against the aim of ensuring all Tasmanians have secure housing they can afford with reasonable access to services, and, where appropriate, to education, and employment.
6. That appropriate investment by the Housing Authority in social housing is a key tool of Government in meeting its affordable rental housing target.
7. That the Housing Authority balances its investment across its housing portfolio to ensure that the needs of Tasmanians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, living with disadvantage or on low incomes are prioritised.

Other powers and recommendations

8. The Housing Authority be given necessary powers to support a responsibility for providing safe, adequate and appropriate supported accommodation to the meet the needs of vulnerable Tasmanians, including ensuring adequate recurrent funding for services and staffing. This would include, for example, revising the definitions of 'housing support services', 'residential accommodation' and 'eligible persons' to make it clear that the provision of supported accommodation and specialist homelessness services are within the scope of the legislation.

Other recommendations

9. Any Ministerial Direction issued under section 24(1) should be made publicly available within 21 days of being provided to the Board, except in the case of the Board objecting to the Direction under 24(6).

10. Review and reform the Residential Tenancy Act to ensure:

- tenants are not evicted into homelessness
- prospective tenants are not discriminated against on the basis of parenthood or unemployment
- prospective tenants are not unreasonably discriminated against on the basis of pet ownership

11. Review policy settings to ensure that they are likely to increase or have a neutral impact on the supply of affordable rental housing.