

SUBMISSION

Draft *Short Stay Accommodation Bill 2018*

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Introduction to Anglicare Tasmania

Anglicare is the largest community service organisation in Tasmania with offices in Hobart, Glenorchy, Launceston, St Helens, Devonport, Burnie and Zeehan and a range of programs in rural areas. Anglicare's services include emergency relief and crisis services, accommodation support, mental health services, acquired injury, disability and aged care services, alcohol and other drug services and family support. In addition, Anglicare'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, staff, research and advocacy.

Anglicare'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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Introduction to submission

Anglicare was pleased to participate in the Premier's Housing Summit and to contribute to the development or amendments of bills that lead to greater access to affordable housing for Tasmanians, especially Tasmanians on low incomes experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

Along with TasCOSS, Shelter and the Tenants' Union, Anglicare Tasmania advocates for affordable, appropriate, safe and secure housing for all Tasmanians and for an end to homelessness.

Through Housing Connect, Anglicare provides assistance state-wide with crisis accommodation, bond and rent for private rentals and applications for public and community housing; Anglicare also provides information, advice and referral to help people establish or maintain long-term housing.

Anglicare also offers safe and affordable long-term housing with on-site support with sites specifically for young people as well as for sites for people over 18 years of age along with communal housing in lodges and crisis accommodation for young men.

Anglicare welcomes the draft Bill's focus on addressing compliance issues in the short stay accommodation industry as well as increasing our understanding of the impact it is having on the broader housing market. We support the intent of each of the ten sections of the draft Bill and provide in this submission some suggestions to increase the likelihood that the Bill leads to better housing outcomes for Tasmanians. The Tasmanian Government must prioritise providing and supporting homes for Tasmanians over short term accommodation.

Recommendations

1. Tasmanians need to know whether short stay rooms and properties have been lost from the rental market

According to Inside Airbnb, Airbnb property listings have increased from 2,874 in February 2017 to 4,459 a year later, with three quarters of listings on Airbnb in Tasmania being for the entire property¹. Many of these properties would have previously been homes for people in the rental market.

Anglicare's 2018 Rental Affordability Snapshot reported a nine per cent drop in the number of properties advertised since 2017 and a 38 per cent drop since 2014². Just 1,245 properties were advertised for rent in Tasmania on the weekend of the Rental Affordability Snapshot, 24-25 March 2018.

The growth in short stay accommodation and reduction in private rentals come as 3,216 applications for public housing wait an average of 60 weeks for accommodation to become available³.

Section 4 of the draft Bill focuses on the collection of relevant information about short stay accommodation and lists items such as planning permit number, number of bedrooms, address and whether all or part of the dwelling is used for short stay. For the intent of section 4 to be useful, we also need to know whether short stay accommodation has removed a place previously available for private rental. Since ancillary dwellings may be rented privately, they also need to be included in the collection of data. This information along with number of bedrooms and location can be used by State and local governments so they can consider appropriate policy initiatives, which might include a pause on issuing short stay accommodation or a particular rental supply response under the Affordable Action Housing Plan.

Anglicare recommends

1. *Under section 4, potential and existing hosts should have to declare whether the dwelling or room was previously used for rental accommodation.*
2. *The State Government should adjust legislation so that ancillary dwellings require a permit and information about them is collected under section 4.*

¹ Inside Airbnb 2018, <<http://insideairbnb.com/tasmania/>>

² Anglicare 2018, Rental Affordability Snapshot 2018 Tasmania, Social Action and Research Centre, Anglicare Tasmania.

³ DHHS 2018, Human Services Statistics, Human Services Dashboard, <https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/humanservicesstats/human_services_dashboard>

2. Compliance data and penalties should be made public

Non-government organisations and researchers make important contributions to public debate about housing. Public access to data collected through section 4 of the draft Bill would assist analysis of trends and potentially lead to more comprehensive responses to housing need and supply. Thus, section 8 of the draft Bill should specify that the information collected about data and penalties will be made public and will be monitored to inform public policy to ensure the needs of Tasmanian citizens for homes are prioritised over the provision of dwellings for tourism.

It is vital that all Government policy initiatives work together to increase access to affordable and appropriate homes for Tasmanians on low incomes. Given the impact that short stay accommodation is having on supply of private rentals and the reliance that the Affordable Housing Strategy has on private rentals the data should also be incorporated into the Affordable Housing Strategy and associated action plans.

Anglicare recommends

3. *Section 8 should specify that data collected through compliance and penalties will be published, with regional and local government-area analysis, and used to inform public policy.*
4. *Information collected on short stay accommodation should contribute to the Affordable Housing Strategy and its action plans.*

Further comments and conclusion

An increasing proportion of Tasmanians are residing in the private rental market, with the expectation that this trend will continue. In light of this, any diminishment in the number of private rental properties is concerning. Tasmania already finds itself experiencing a severe lack of affordable housing options to meet the current need in the community. Further loss of private rental stock to the short stay accommodation market will heighten the current housing crisis, with the worst impact felt by those who are most vulnerable.

This situation makes it imperative that the short stay accommodation market is appropriately monitored and regulated, including the collection and public availability of data on the movement of properties between the private rental market and the short stay accommodation market.

The Tasmanian State Government must prioritise the needs of its citizens for affordable secure homes over the expansion of the short stay accommodation market. Central to this outcome is the preservation of an appropriate quantum of properties in the private rental market to meet the growing housing needs of the Tasmanian community.

Supply of affordable, appropriate, safe and secure housing is currently not meeting demand and there is a risk of a widening gap if short stay accommodation is not carefully monitored and controlled.

All aspects of housing in Tasmania, whether it be privately or publicly owned, need to be utilised to solve the current housing crisis and to avoid future crises. This means public policy initiatives ensuring that rental properties are not turned into mini hotels, vacant properties are not left vacant, people who are homeless are housed and householders are able to afford to maintain their current tenancies.