



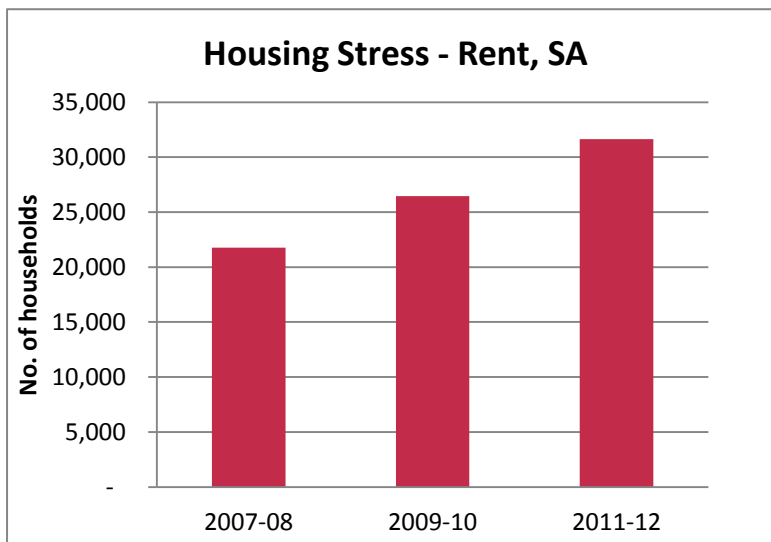
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Housing stress identified as key election issue

SACOSS' latest Cost of Living Update released today shows that over 100,000 South Australian households, including over 31,000 low income renters, are experiencing housing stress in their weekly budget.

That is, they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Approximately 22,000 households are spending more than half their income on housing.

The SACOSS report also breaks down the housing stress data by Local Government Area, finding that among the 40 largest LGAs, the highest levels of housing stress were in Adelaide City (25.6% of households), followed by Playford (21.9%), Salisbury (19.6%) and Port Adelaide Enfield (19.2%).



Housing stress is a well-known indicator of hardship and an important indicator of risk of homelessness, particularly for low income households. ABS statistics cited in the SACOSS report show the numbers of low income renters in housing stress have been rising in recent years and SACOSS is calling on the state government to take action to support struggling

households.

SACOSS Executive Director Ross Womersley said, "Housing is one of the most basic human needs and we are deeply concerned that over 60,000 low income South Australian households are facing housing stress.

“We are particularly concerned that almost one in five households in public housing are experiencing housing stress despite rents being capped at 25% of income.

“When nearly 2,800 households in public housing are paying more than 50% of their income for housing, there is clearly something wrong with our housing safety net.

“This is a recipe for homelessness, and we are calling for preventative action to support people in need and reduce future demand for crisis services”.

SACOSS is recommending that the state government:

- Increase the stock of social housing to assist those who are disadvantaged in the private rental market;
- Establish a Housing Stress Emergency Payment Fund to provide temporary assistance to prevent homelessness;
- Establish a moratorium on collection of rent arrears for people in public housing on recommendation from financial counsellors where debt will never be paid; and
- Implement the agreed funding for consumer credit legal services.

Beyond housing issues, the SACOSS *Cost of Living Update* found that in the year to September 2013, cost of living for households on base level government income support went up less than income increased breaking a run of 8 quarters in a row where benefits slipped behind cost of living increases. However, the “windfall” for welfare recipients was only \$1.31 per week.

Further data is available on the SACOSS Housing Stress Fact Sheet (attached)

Housing Stress Fact Sheets are also available for selected Local Government Areas at www.sacoss.org.au/publications/housing_fact_sheets.html

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