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Low income families crushed by rent in outer suburbs

Outer suburban and regional electorates are home to some of the most rent stressed households in Victoria, according to new ABS analysis released today, with Broadmeadows, Thomastown, Dandenong, St Albans, Frankston and Melton amongst the top 10 worst electorates for rental stress.

The data shows that 1-in-3 renters in outer suburban electorates are in housing stress; on a low income (\$640 per week or less) and paying more than 30% of their wage on rent.

At an affordable housing forum today, housing experts, academics, and former public housing tenants will discuss how Victoria's lack of affordable housing has created a crisis situation for low-income families.

"If you're earning \$640 or less a week, and paying a third of that on rent, you're in dire straits, and yet this is the case for 120,000 households across Victoria," said Ms Jenny Smith, CEO of Council to Homeless Persons (CHP).

"People on low incomes move further out to find cheap rent, but find that they're still paying more than they can afford and are left with only a few dollars spare for groceries and bills. It's a diabolical situation, causing stress, anxiety and contributing to family breakdown."

Top 10 worst Victorian metro electorates for rental stress			
Rank	State electorate	Number of low income households paying more than 30% of income on rent	As a percentage of all renting households
1.	Broadmeadows	2030	37%
2.	Yuroke (includes suburbs of Craigieburn, Roxburgh Park, Tullamarine)	927	34%
3.	Thomastown	1261	33%
4.	Dandenong	2582	32%
5.	St Albans	1998	32%
6.	Buninyong	1353	31%
7.	Frankston	2260	31%
8.	Melton	1586	31%
9.	Keysborough	1252	30%
10.	Lara (includes suburbs of Lara, Corio, Wyndham Vale)	1905	30%

Seven peak bodies (CHP, Victorian Council of Social Services, Community Housing Federation of Victoria, Domestic Violence Victoria, Tenants Union of Victoria, Victorian Public Tenants Association and Justice Connect) have released a plan - Making Social Housing Work <http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Making-Social-Housing-Work-Web.pdf> - calling on the State Government to increase Victoria's social housing stock to the national average of five per cent by 2020 (it currently sits at 3.4%) to ease the stress for low-income families.

A forum will be held today at The Wheeler Centre to discuss Victoria's affordable housing crisis, calling for \$200 million per annum for social housing and for all new housing developments to include a minimum number of social housing properties.

“Low income households are being slowly crushed by the weight of rent, but they have few alternatives with an 11-month wait time for public housing, and tens of thousands of people in line for social housing.”

Media opportunities:

Interview available with Jenny Smith, CEO of the Council to Homeless Persons and panelists from the Making Social Housing Work forum (details below). Interviews also available with a single mother from Werribee who is struggling to find affordable rental.

Event: Making Social Housing Work forum

Speakers: *Lesley Dredge*, Community Housing Federation of Victoria; *Emma King*, Victorian Council for Social Services; *Nick Proud*, Property Council of Victoria; *Judith Yates*, housing and economics academic; *Bruce Guthrie*, journalist and former public-housing tenant; *Richard Wynne*, the Shadow Minister for Housing.

Date: Wednesday 8 October, 10am

Venue: The Wheeler Centre, 176 Little Lonsdale St

Facts:

- 1-in-3 households in most outer-suburban electorates are in rental stress, defined as paying more than 30% of your income on rent when you're earning less than \$640/week (ABS, 2011)
- 34,600 people are waiting for public housing in Victoria (DHS)
- Only 8 out of every 100 rentals in Melbourne are affordable to someone on a low income (DHS rental report)
- Victoria has the lowest level of social housing in Australia at 3.4%
- The Making Social Housing Work coalition has released a plan that calls for:
 - \$200 million per annum for the creation of 800 new social housing dwellings
 - A 5% target for social housing in Victoria's housing
 - All new housing developments to have a minimum social housing component