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Single working women being locked out of renting in Melbourne

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Single working women are being slowly locked out of Melbourne’s rental market, with just 1-in-4 suburbs affordable to them today, compared to 1-in-2 in 2007, according to new data analysis by the Council to Homeless Persons.

A single woman on the average working wage (\$882/week, ABS, 2016), has just 28 suburbs out of 106 Melbourne suburbs where they could afford to rent a one-bedroom flat alone without being in rental stress. Rent stress is defined by being on a low income, and paying more than 30% of your income on rent (a formula applied to those on the lowest 40% of incomes).

“Single people on low incomes are forced to spend more than they can afford on rent and unable to save money for unexpected life events. A sudden crisis like losing your job or even a car breaking down, can leave you on the knife edge of homelessness when you’re living paycheck to paycheck,” said Council to Homeless Persons CEO, Jenny Smith.

CHP says that although a range of factors can contribute to a person becoming homeless, the single common underlying factor is a lack of affordable housing, especially single-bedroom properties, suitable to those on a single income.

Fierce competition for one-bedroom rentals has seen them become unaffordable for even the average wage earner, let alone a vulnerable person on a very low income, says CHP.

“That’s why we’ve seen a boom in rooming houses, people living in caravan parks, women sleeping in cars and couchsurfing. If it’s this hard for a woman on the average working wage to find somewhere affordable to live, imagine how hard it is if you’ve fallen on hard times.”

“The affordable housing crisis and homelessness are two sides of the same coin. We can’t solve homelessness without increasing the supply of affordable housing,” said Ms Smith.

CHP wants the State Government to make more investment in affordable one-bedroom properties to meet the needs of single people from a range of backgrounds, including long-term rough sleepers. Inclusionary zoning, which would see 10% of all new housing developments designated as affordable housing is one proposal. CHP is also calling on the Federal Government to develop a plan to tackle the dearth of affordable housing and to end homelessness including winding back negative gearing to make the housing market fairer.

Shrinking number of affordable suburbs for single working women.

	March 2000	March 2005	March 2007	March 2013	March 2016
Number of suburbs a single woman could afford to rent a one-bedroom flat without being in housing stress	72 suburbs	62 suburbs	52 suburbs	30 suburbs	28 suburbs
Average female wage – combined full-time and part-time (ABS)	\$493	\$590	\$627	\$734	\$882

List of suburbs a female on the average working wage could afford to rent 2007 vs 2016

	March 2016 – affordable suburbs for a single woman	March 2007 – affordable suburbs for a single woman
1.	Altona	Altona

2.	Bayswater	Brighton
3.	Box Hill	Pakenham
4.	Brighton East	Vermont-Forest Hill-Burwood East
5.	Broadmeadows-Roxburgh Park	Newport-Spotswood
6.	Bundoora-Greensborough-Hurstbridge	Gladstone Park-Tullamarine
7.	Burwood-Ashburton	Bundoora-Greensborough-Hurstbridge
8.	Cranbourne	Sydenham
9.	Croydon-Lilydale	Noble Park
10.	Dandenong	Coburg-Pascoe Vale South
11.	Dandenong North-Endeavour Hills	Pascoe Vale-Coburg North
12.	Ferntree Gully	Eltham-Research-Montmorency
13.	Footscray	Yarrville-Seddon
14.	Frankston	Dandenong
15.	Gladstone Park-Tullamarine	Essendon
16.	Narre Warren-Hampton Park	Berwick
17.	Newport-Spotswood	Northcote
18.	Noble Park	Craigieburn
19.	Oak Park-Glenroy-Fawkner	Ivanhoe-Ivanhoe East
20.	Pascoe Vale-Coburg North	East Brunswick
21.	Springvale	Yarra Ranges
22.	St Albans-Deer Park	Werribee-Hoppers Crossing
23.	Sunbury	Broadmeadows-Roxburgh Park
24.	Sunshine	West Footscray
25.	Werribee-Hoppers Crossing	Bayswater
26.	West Footscray	Melton
27.	Yarra Ranges	Frankston
28.	Yarrville-Seddon	Heidelberg-Heidelberg West
29.		Boronia
30.		Ferntree Gully
31.		Camberwell-Glen Iris
32.		Caulfield
33.		Hampton-Beaumaris
34.		St Albans-Deer Park
35.		Brunswick
36.		Preston
37.		Aspendale-Chelsea-Carrum
38.		Burwood-Ashburton
39.		East Hawthorn
40.		Oak Park-Glenroy-Fawkner
41.		West Brunswick
42.		Rowville
43.		Whittlesea
44.		Hawthorn
45.		Brighton East
46.		Footscray
47.		Reservoir
48.		Moonee Ponds-Ascot Vale
49.		Glen Waverley-Mulgrave
50.		Cheltenham
51.		Keilor East-Avondale Heights
52.		Mill Park-Epping

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