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Census confirms deepening rental crisis

Today's Census data shows that more Australians are renting than ever before, with rents increasing at twice the rate of inflation, and leaving more people in rent stress.

Victoria's peak body for homelessness says the housing crisis is driving increased rates of homelessness, as low income renters are pushed out of the market.

"As housing prices have skyrocketed, more Australians are forced to stay renting, creating greater competition and squeezing low-income renters out of the market and into homelessness," said Ms Jenny Smith, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons.

"For a Newstart recipient receiving \$268/week plus Commonwealth Rent Assistance, there are almost no affordable rental options in metro Melbourne, meaning they're increasingly finding themselves in rooming houses and other forms of marginal accommodation," said Ms Smith

The Census data shows that there has been a 10% increase in the number of households paying more than 30% of their income on rent.

"Rents are rising faster than incomes and people on low incomes are forced to skimp on the basics just to put a roof over their head, or fall into rent arrears and lose their home," said Ms Smith.

Median rents in Melbourne have risen from \$300/week in 2011 to \$350/week in 2016, the Census showed. Disturbingly, the number of unoccupied dwellings has also risen, pointing to the trend of landlords sitting on vacant investment properties.

"This is yet further evidence of the Federal Government's failed approach to housing policy and housing taxation. We need action to stem the ravaging impact of the housing affordability crisis."

Table: Census data 2011 vs 2016

	2011	2016
Median Rent	\$277 (\$300 Melb)	\$325 (\$350 Melb)
Renting households	26.5%	28.7%
Unoccupied dwellings	11.3% (9.0% Melb)	11.7% (9.6% Melb)
Renters paying more than 30% income	9.1%	10.4%

Top reasons people seek help from homeless services (AIHW, 2015-6)

- Housing: 45%
- Family violence: 26%
- Financial Issue: 12%
- Other relationship issues: 8%
- Physical, mental health & addiction: 3%
- Other 6%

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