

Submission for 2019-20 Budget Consultation Process

Background

Private rents in Canberra are too expensive for low income earners.
About 35,000 Canberrans live in low income households.

Many public housing tenants were recently displaced along the light rail corridor.
The plight of rough sleepers is exacerbated by extremely low temperatures.

According to RIOT ACT, there was a 300 per cent increase for the Safe Shelter Homelessness program. One third of low income people are in rental stress.

The Plight of Older Women

According to the 2017 HILDA survey, single older women are the lowest earning family group, earning on average less than 30,000 p.a.

As a consequence of lower earning power and absence due to child rearing and high rates of part time/casual work, they retire with about half the superannuation accrued by males.
Increasingly, the trend is for lower rates of home ownership, which traditionally mitigated the impact of low income on the elderly.

Women sleeping rough are at particularly high risk.

All people at risk of finding themselves homeless need our help, but single older women are particularly vulnerable and their numbers are rapidly increasing well beyond the capacity of ACT government or social housing to cope.

Recommendations

I urge the ACT government to significantly increase the stock of public housing and encourage the development of social and share housing options, with particular provision for older women and families with children.

Pauline Westwood