

# Affordable rental properties proving difficult to find

By Melissa Pretorius May 1, 2013, 4 a.m.



Tahlia Hyde has been unable to find an affordable home in Port Macquarie. Youth Housing support manager Peter Carnaby says she is not the only one with statistics painting a dire picture for the region's most vulnerable.

AFFORDABLE rental properties for low income earners are almost impossible to find in Port Macquarie.

A new study from Anglicare has highlighted a shocking shortfall in the availability of rental homes suited to the back pockets of everyday Australians.

While regional areas along the North Coast – like Port Macquarie – paint a particularly negative picture of an impossibly tough rental market.

For 18-year-old Tahlia Hyde the truth behind the statistics has shaped the past two years of her life as a couch-surfer.

Anglicare's Rental Affordability Snapshot 2013 said regional areas are too expensive for people living on a government payment and slightly less expensive for single people living on a minimum wage.

"In Port Macquarie there is really not much available," Ms Hyde said.

"The prices go up because the demand is so high."

"I've looked at places covered in mould, and in flood-affected areas because I'm so desperate."

Endless set-backs, denials and a simple lack of affordable properties in Port Macquarie means Ms Hyde will need to move further north to find a rental property she can afford.

"I moved to Port Macquarie to get away from a violent environment, to begin a new life and career, to make a name for myself," she said.

"The rental market has made it impossible for me to stay here.

“When there has been one or two properties I can afford, no one is willing to give me a chance.”

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According to the study there were no affordable properties available for single persons supported through Youthstart or Newstart allowance along the whole North Coast of NSW.

For Port Macquarie the group evaluated the 168 properties listed for rent on the weekend of April 13, 2012.

Of those properties none were suitable for single persons living on government support and well under half of those properties – 44 per cent – would be affordable for two-parent families on the minimum wage.

Properties were considered suitable if costing up to 30 per cent of a household’s weekly income – a common measure for rental affordability.

When you consider the wage of someone on Newstart Allowance at \$497 per fortnight or Youth Allowance at \$407.50 a fortnight – competing with those prices seems impossible.

Youth Housing Support coordinator Peter Carnaby said single and young people were seriously disadvantaged in the local housing market.

“You don’t have to look far to find places that are a lot more affordable than Port Macquarie,” he said.

“At Kempsey and Taree you may find a property for \$100 per week but the going price in Port is at about \$220 per week.”

“Sometimes there will be one or two for \$180 per week.”

He said more young people were moving away from the area, not only because of a lack of work and educational opportunities – but because they are unable to find a place they can afford.

The report said households on the north coast region were significantly disadvantaged compared to state and national averages.

Specifically, the report said, because of a higher representation of – “households over 60 years old, single parent households and single person households”.

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