

Renting in WA

After escalating dramatically over the past decade, rent levels in Perth have remained relatively stable during the first part of 2011. Nevertheless, many people seeking accommodation in the private rental market in WA are finding it difficult to obtain and sustain tenancies at affordable levels. For example, older renters face particular challenges in the private rental market since their incomes tend to fall with age, but housing costs remain the same or increase.

Stats and issues:

- Renters make up roughly 28% of all households in WA. 23.7% in private (mainstream) rental and 4.3% in Public and Community Housing.ⁱ
- As of December 2010, the median rent in the Perth metropolitan area was \$380.ⁱⁱ
- In 2006, 38,174 households in the private rental market in WA were in housing stress (paying more than 30% of their income on rent). A quarter of low and moderate income renters were in extreme housing stress, paying more than 50% of their income on housing.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The vacancy rate in Perth was 3.4% as of December 2010.
- Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) provides a government subsidy to eligible Centrelink Benefit Recipient tenants living in private rental and community housing. Nearly 50% of WA Centrelink recipients (10% of all WA households) live in private rental accommodation subsidised by CRA.
- At 6 June 2009, even with CRA, 41.9% or 34,480 CRA recipients in WA were in rental stress^{iv} and 13.3% or 10,949 CRA recipients were experiencing severe rental stress.^v
- Levels of CRA have not kept pace with rising rents. A recent report prepared by RMIT for Tenants Union of Victoria found that between 1995 and 2009 rents in Australian capital cities rose by 41%. During that same period, the maximum rate of CRA remained constant in real terms.^{vi}
- Tenants' rights are covered under the WA Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (RTA). Boarders and lodgers are not currently protected under the RTA.
- 70% of all private rental dwellings affordable to households with incomes below the 50th percentile are not available to them because they are occupied by households in higher income brackets.^{vii}

Resources and links:

Tenants Advice Service <http://www.taswa.org>

- Metro Area 9221 0088
- Country (Freecall) 1800 621 888

Metropolitan Community Legal Centres

- **Eastern Suburbs:**
Midland Information Debt & Legal Advocacy Service (Midland) 9250 2123
- **North Central Suburbs:**
Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service (Perth) 9328 1751
- **Northern Suburbs:**
Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre (Mirrabooka) 9440 1663
Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre (Joondalup) 9301 4413
- **South Central Suburbs:**
Sussex Street Community Law Service (East Victoria Park) 6253 9500
- **South Eastern Suburbs:**
Gosnells Community Legal Centre (Gosnells) 9398 1455
- **South Western Suburbs:**
Southern Communities Advocacy & Legal Education Services 9550 0400 (Rockingham)
- **Western Suburbs:**
Fremantle Community Legal Centre (Fremantle) 9432 9790

Department of Commerce, <http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au>, 1300 30 40 54

- **DOCEP, Information about renting and tenancies:**
http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/ConsumerProtection/Content/Real_Estate/Renting_and_tenancy/Tenants/index.htm
- **Renting in WA, guide to tenants' rights and responsibilities:**
http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/ConsumerProtection/PDF/Publications/Renting_a_home_in_WA.pdf

Real Estate Institute of Western Australia, <http://reiwa.com.au>

ⁱ ABS Cat. 4102.0, Australian Social Trends, Data Cube – Housing, Table 2.5 Housing, WA Summary, 1998–2010 [Accessed 14 December 2010]

ⁱⁱ REIWA (2010), *Perth listings and rental trends*, <http://reiwa.com.au/Research/Pages/Perth-Listings-And-Rental-Trends.aspx> [Accessed 3 May 2011]

ⁱⁱⁱ Social Housing Taskforce (2009) *Background Paper*, January 2009.

^{iv} Productivity Commission Report on Government Services (2010) Commonwealth Rent Assistance: Table 16A.68. Number and proportion of income units receiving CRA paying more than 30 per cent of income on rent, with and without CRA, 2004 to 2009 (per cent) [Accessed 14 December 2010]

^v Productivity Commission Report on Government Services (2010) Commonwealth Rent Assistance: Table 16A.73 Proportion of income spent on rent with and without CRA, income units with more than 50 per cent of income spent on rent, 2009 (per cent) [Accessed 14 December 2010]

^{vi} Colic-Peisker, V., Ong, R. and McMurray, C. (2010), *Falling behind: the growing gap between rent and rent assistance 1995-2009*, Tenants Union of Victoria, report prepared by Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

^{vii} National Housing Supply Council (2010), *State of supply report 2010*, Canberra, http://www.nhsc.org.au/state_of_supply/2009_ssr_rpt/ [Accessed 8 February 2011]