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New factsheets show Territorians locked out of affordable housing and paying more for essentials

The Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS), with contributions from NT Shelter, today released new Cost of Living Factsheets showing Territorians continue to face some of the highest housing costs in the country, alongside rising household bills that hit low-income households hardest.

Average private rent for a 3-bedroom house in the NT reached \$668 per week in June 2025, up \$35 in just 12 months. With nearly half the Territory renting – far higher than the national average – more families are being pushed into housing stress.

For people on income support, the gap is stark. In Alice Springs, a sole parent with two children on JobSeeker would spend 69 per cent of their income on rent, leaving just \$268.90 for all other living costs. For single renters on JobSeeker, affording even a one-bedroom unit in Darwin or Alice Springs is impossible.

Social housing shortages in the NT are the most acute in Australia. As of June, more than 5,400 applicants were on the waitlist but only 197 homes were available – nearly 28 applicants per property – with average wait times of over 10 years.

While falling fuel prices have slightly reduced some transport costs, Territorians outside Darwin still pay far more at the pump. In Alice Springs, households spend almost \$1,500 more each year on petrol than in Darwin, and in remote communities the situation is significantly worse.

Electricity costs remain high, despite federal bill relief, with estimated quarterly power bills increasing by \$13 to \$30 depending on household size. People using prepayment meters – common across the NT – face higher tariffs and high rates of self-disconnection.

These pressures are forcing low-income Territorians into impossible choices between rent, power, food and other essentials. The Remote Area Allowance has not increased in decades, and current concessions are too limited to keep pace.

The factsheets recommend urgent actions by both levels of government, including:

- Raising income support payments to at least \$82 per day and substantially increasing the Remote Area Allowance
- Expanding the NT Concession Scheme to all Health Care Card holders
- Introducing Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning so 30 per cent of Crown land released for housing is reserved for social and affordable homes
- Establishing an independent Residential Tenancies Bond Board and stronger renter protections
- Installing solar energy across all social housing and reducing disconnection rates for prepayment meter customers

QUOTES

“Across the Territory, the rising cost of rent, fuel and electricity is hitting hardest for those with the least to spare. When almost half of all Territorians rent, when housing costs outpace wages, and when power bills climb despite national relief, the picture is clear – the people on the lowest incomes are carrying the greatest burden.

Governments must act where relief will make the most difference. That means targeted cost of living measures for those doing it toughest – people on income support, low-wage earners, and those living remotely. If we don’t direct support to where the need is greatest, we risk deepening disadvantage instead of reducing it.”

Sally Sievers, CEO, NTCOSS

“Territorians are being priced out of the private rental market and joining a social housing waitlist that’s already impossibly long. Housing is foundational, it’s what allows people to stay healthy and contribute to their community. In a caring community, we look after one another. We can and must do better to make sure no one is left behind as the cost of living climbs.”

Annie Taylor, CEO, NT Shelter

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