

Cost of Living in the Northern Territory

June 2026

An updated examination of price changes in the key household expenditure areas of housing, transport and utilities.



NTCOSS

Northern Territory
Council of Social Service

The NT has the second highest rents in country. With almost half of Territorians renting,^[1] the cost of private rentals has a significant impact on households.

The **average rent** paid for a 3-bedroom house in the NT was \$710 per week in December 2025. This is an increase of \$85 since December 2024.

The NT has the second highest average rent paid in the country, behind NSW (\$750/week). The national average was \$650/week.

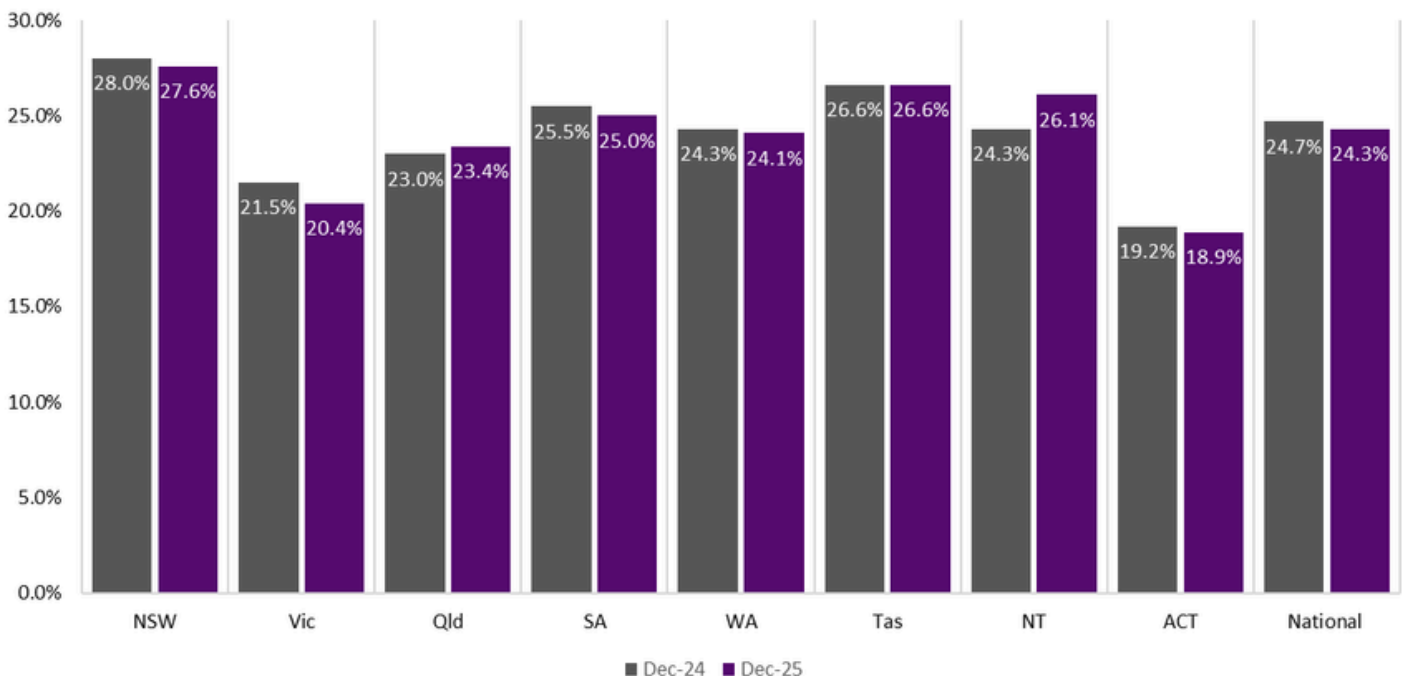


The **average mortgage** repayment in the NT was \$919 per week, in December 2025. This is an increase of \$31 since December 2024.

The NT has the lowest average mortgage repayment nationally. The national average was \$1265/week.

Proportion of Median Weekly Family Income needed to Rent a 3BR Home in the Private Market

December 2024 vs December 2025

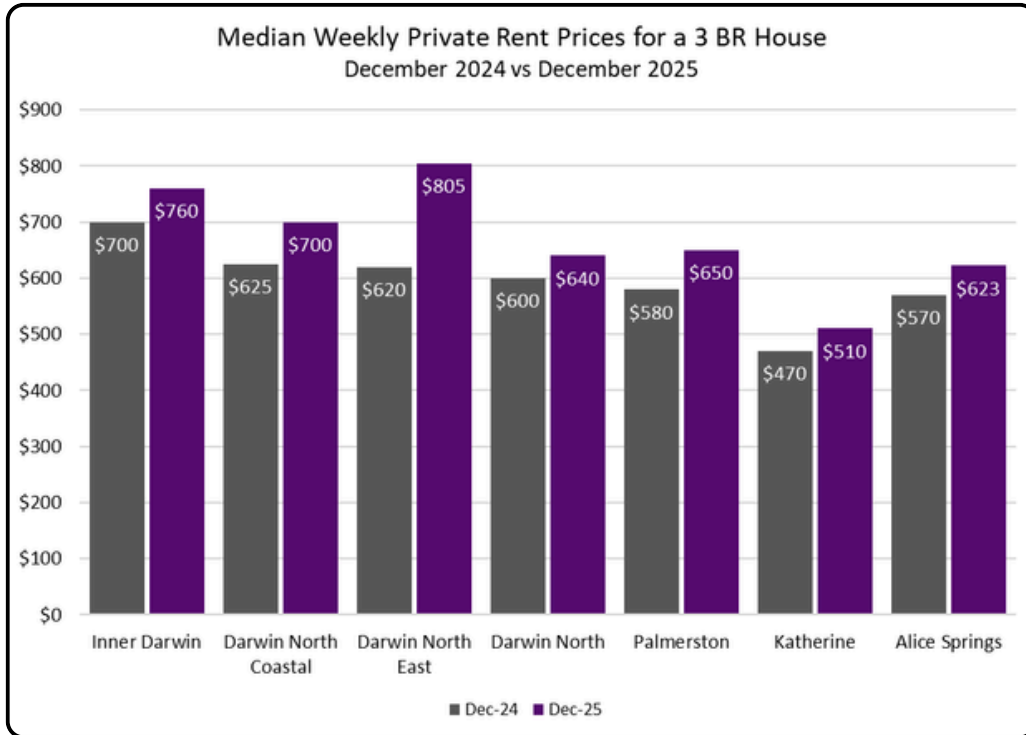


[2]

Over the 12 months to December 2025, the proportion of income needed to afford median rent for a 3-bedroom has increased from 24.3% (December 2024) to 26.1% (December 2025)

Affordability figures are based on a median weekly family income of \$2720 in the NT. This is calculated on wage earner's incomes; income support recipients are not included.

Median private rental prices have increased in all areas of the NT.

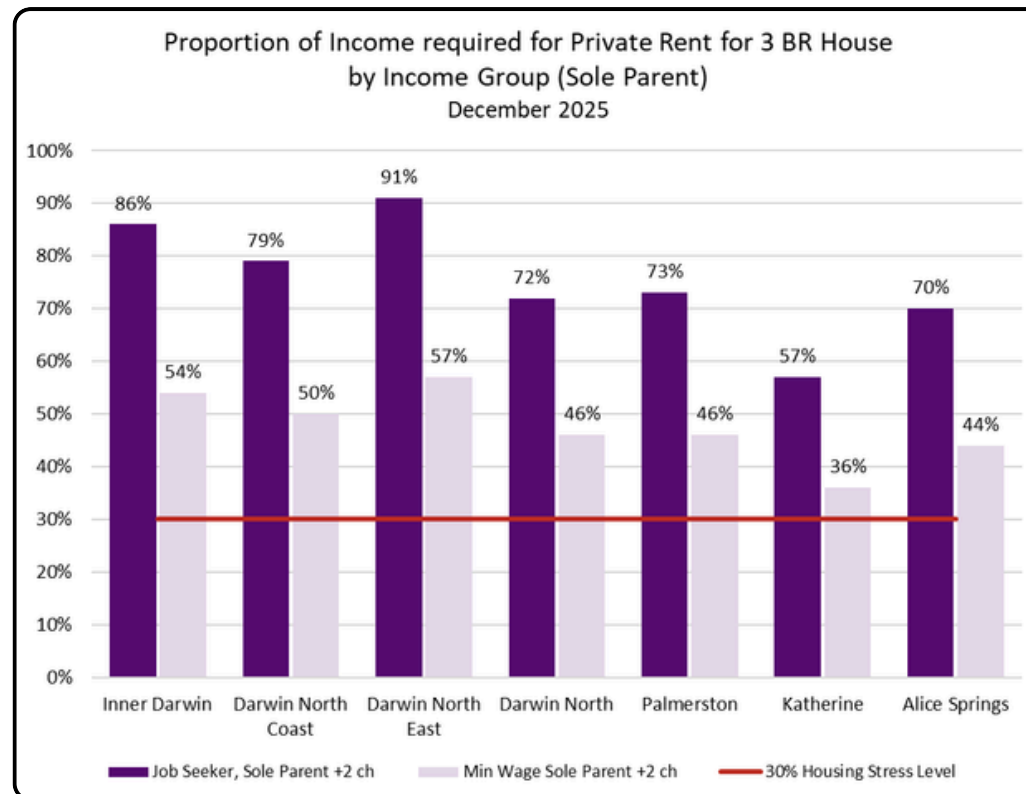


The smallest increases were \$40/week in Darwin North (including suburbs like Anula, Karama and Wulagi) and Katherine.

All other areas had an increase of more than \$50/week. Darwin North Coastal (including Alawa, Casuarina and Nightcliff) had an increase of \$75/week between December 2024 and December 2025. Alice Springs had an increase of \$53/week.

[3]

If housing costs exceed 30% of a low-income household's income, they are considered to be experiencing housing stress. In all regions of the NT, **private rent for a 3-bedroom house would put a low-income household in housing stress.**



The typical total weekly rate of JobSeeker for a sole parent with 2 children was \$888.73 in December 2025. There were no areas where median rent for a 3-bedroom house is less than 50% of their income.

If a parent is working full-time earning minimum wage of \$1403.64 a week, median rent is still above the housing stress threshold in all regions.

[4]

When the private rental market fails to provide affordable housing, it is essential that there are other options available to Territorians.

Anglicare Rental Affordability in the Northern Territory: Snapshot Report 2026

Anglicare's latest data shows that on the snapshot weekend (14-15 March 2026), 257 private rentals were advertised across the NT. The number of advertised rentals has continued to drop, with 370 listed in 2025, and 578 in 2024. Of those in 2026:

- Only **2%** of properties were affordable for a couple on the Age Pension.
- Only **5%** of properties were suitable for a couple with children on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.
- **0%** of listings were affordable for a single person on JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, Disability Support Pension, Age Pension, or a single person on minimum wage.

[5]

Estimates indicate the NT's shortfall of social and affordable housing is projected to reach 14,500 dwellings by 2036.



[6]

Social Housing

Social housing is an important part of the housing system and provides a vital safety net for those in need. However, there is a significant shortfall of social and affordable housing in the NT, with wait times of up to 8-10 years.

As of 31 December 2025, there were **6,250 total applications** for social housing, compared to **236 vacant homes**.

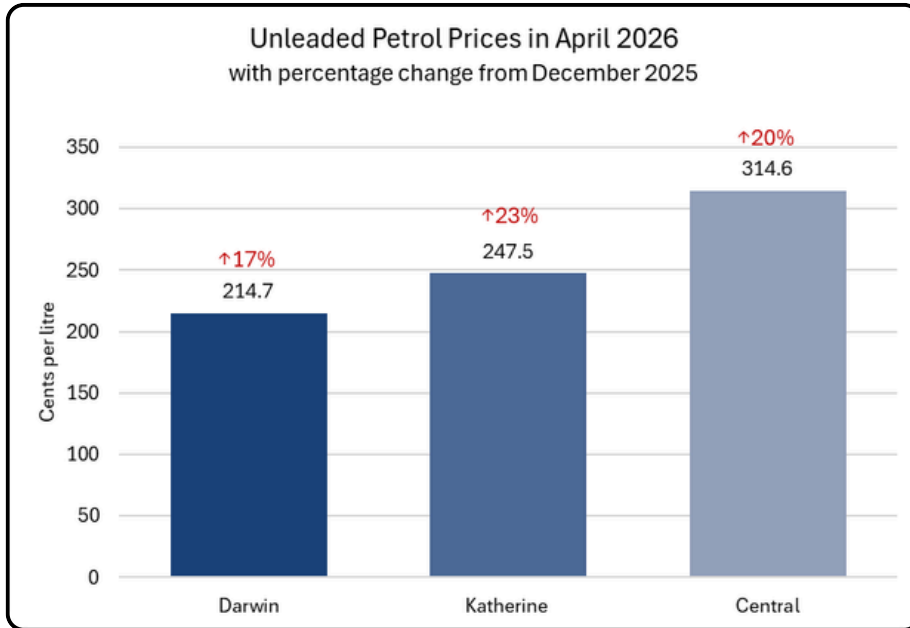
That is a ratio of more than 26 applicants per home:



[7]

Current Fuel Crisis

While most data in this report covers the 12 month period to December 2025, it is important to acknowledge the recent increase in fuel prices globally since early 2026. From **December 2025 to April 2026**, both unleaded and diesel prices have risen significantly across the NT.



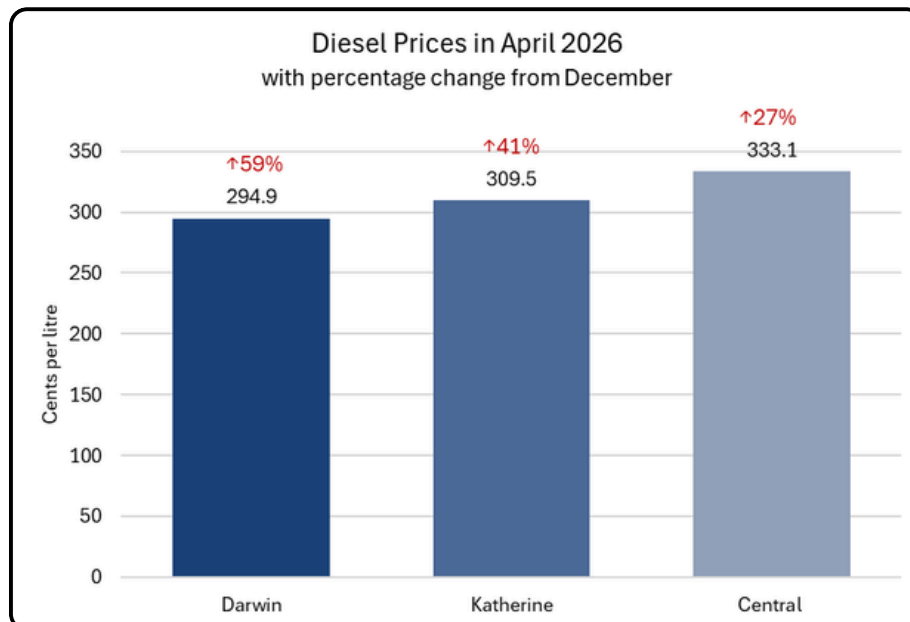
Unleaded petrol prices rose between 17–23% across the major centres of the NT from December 2025 to April 2026.

In Central Australia, the average price of unleaded petrol was already high at 261.1 cpl in December 2025. In April 2026, the average price had risen by 53.5 cpl (or 53%) to 314.6 cpl.

[8]

In Darwin, in December 2025, a tank of diesel cost **\$149**.
That same tank in April 2026 cost **\$236**.

Note: Figures based on a tank size of 80 litres.



Diesel prices have seen larger increases than unleaded petrol between December 2025 and April 2026.

The largest increase in this time period was in Darwin. The average price in Darwin for diesel was 294.9 cpl in April 2026, compared to 185.8 cpl in December 2025 – that’s an increase of over a dollar per litre (109.1 cpl) or 59%.

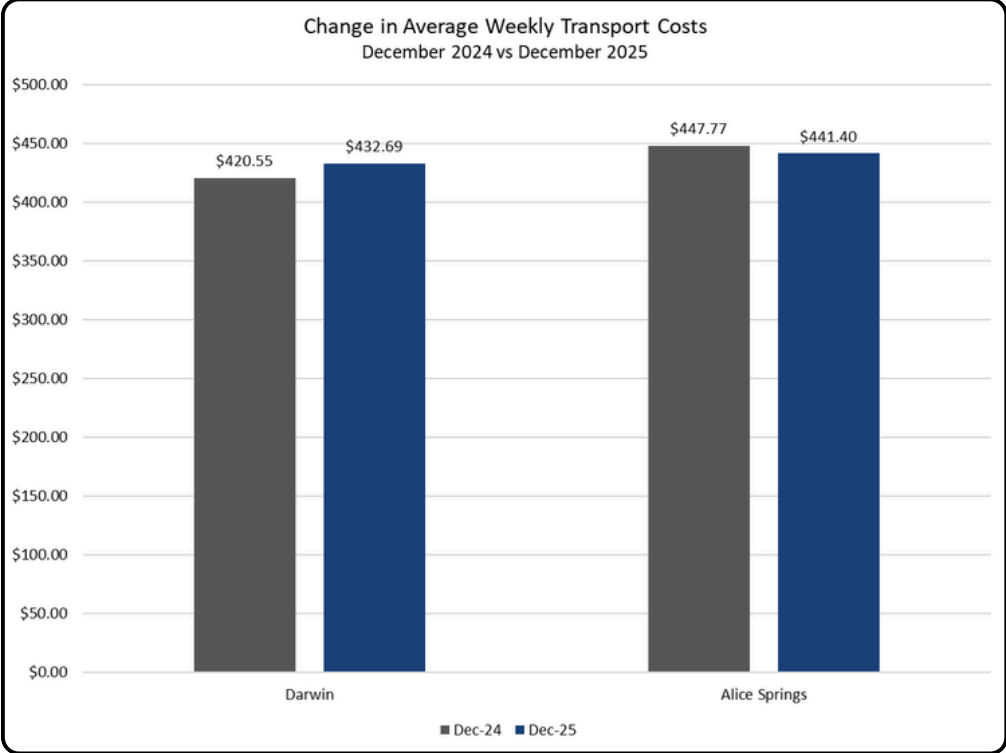
[9]

The **Australian Automobile Association’s Transport Affordability Index** shows that as of December 2025, Darwin and Alice Springs affordability rankings have remain unchanged - at 4th least affordable capital city in the country for Darwin and 2nd least affordable regional centre for Alice Springs.

As of December 2025, a typical household in Darwin is estimated to spend 15.6% of their weekly income on transport costs. This has decreased from 16.3% in December 2024.

In Alice Springs, transport costs represent 16.9% of a typical household’s income - down from 18.4% in December 2024.

Note: These proportions are based on a hypothetical household with two adults working full time and a total weekly income of \$2773.65 in Darwin and \$2611.83 in Alice Springs



[10]

Fuel prices in major centres (December 2025)

Unleaded 91
Darwin: 185.4 cpl
Australia average: 181.8 cpl


For both unleaded petrol and diesel, the average price of fuel in Darwin in December 2025 was close to the national average.

Diesel
Darwin: 189.9 cpl
Australia average: 189.8 cpl

As of December 2025, the price of unleaded fuel in Darwin was 3.6 cpl more than the Australian average. Diesel prices in Darwin were on par with the Australian Average, in December 2025.

However, consistent with previous years, prices are higher outside of Darwin.

[11]

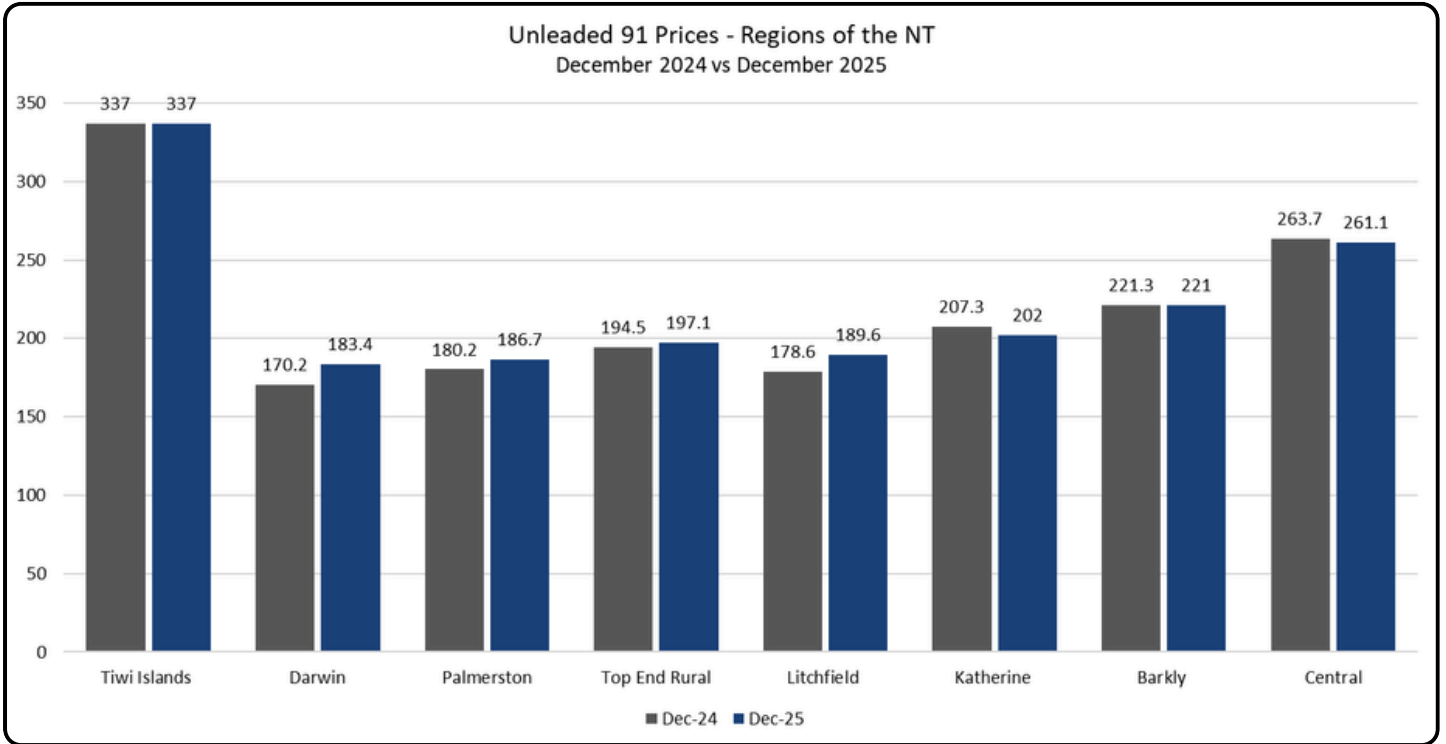


In Darwin, a tank of unleaded petrol would cost **\$91**.
In Alice Springs, a tank of unleaded petrol would cost **\$122**.

Note: Figures based on a tank size of 50 litres, using December 2025 prices

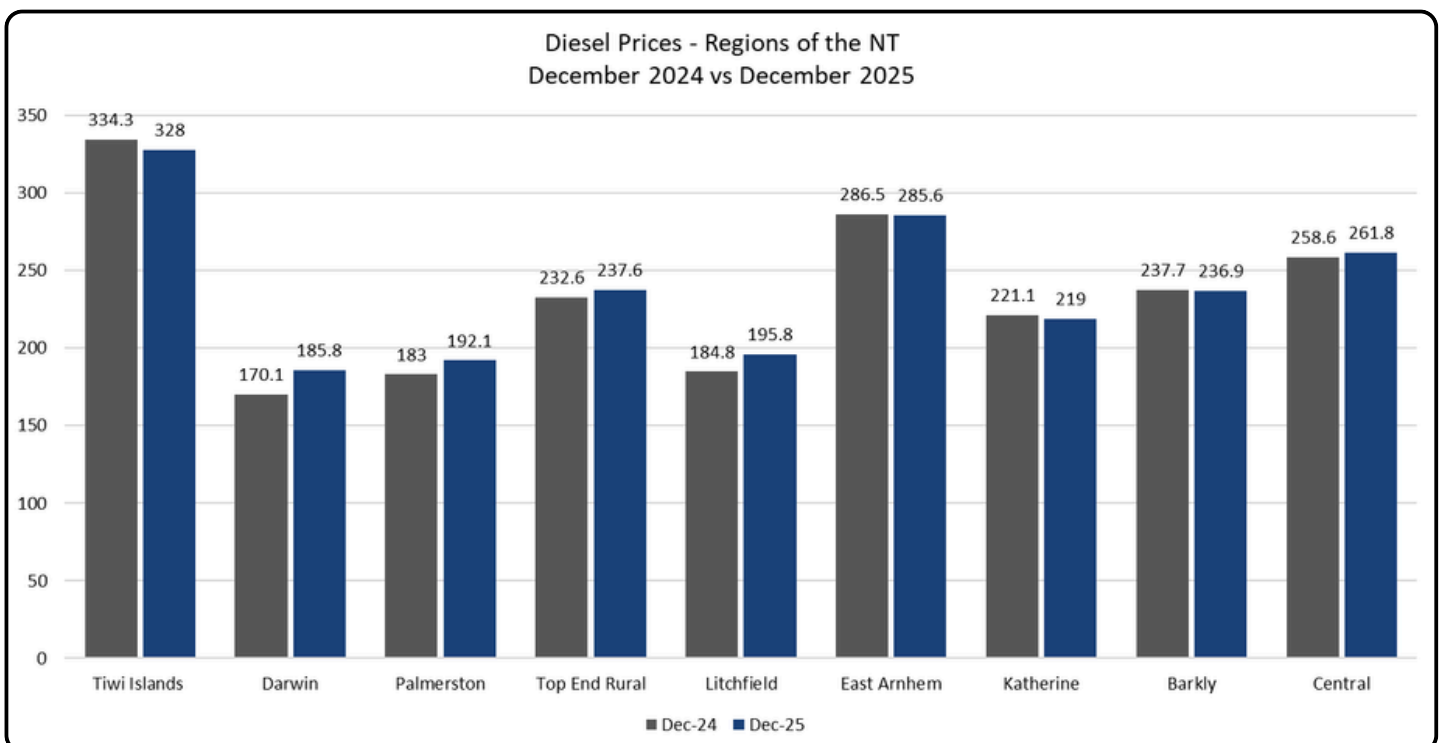
[12]

Fuel prices are significantly different across the NT. Regional and remote areas are the most impacted by high costs.



[13]

Most areas of the NT have seen a slight increase in fuel prices from December 2024 to December 2025. The largest increase was in Darwin (Unleaded: 13.2cpl, Diesel: 15.7cpl), however Darwin remains the cheapest place overall.



[14]

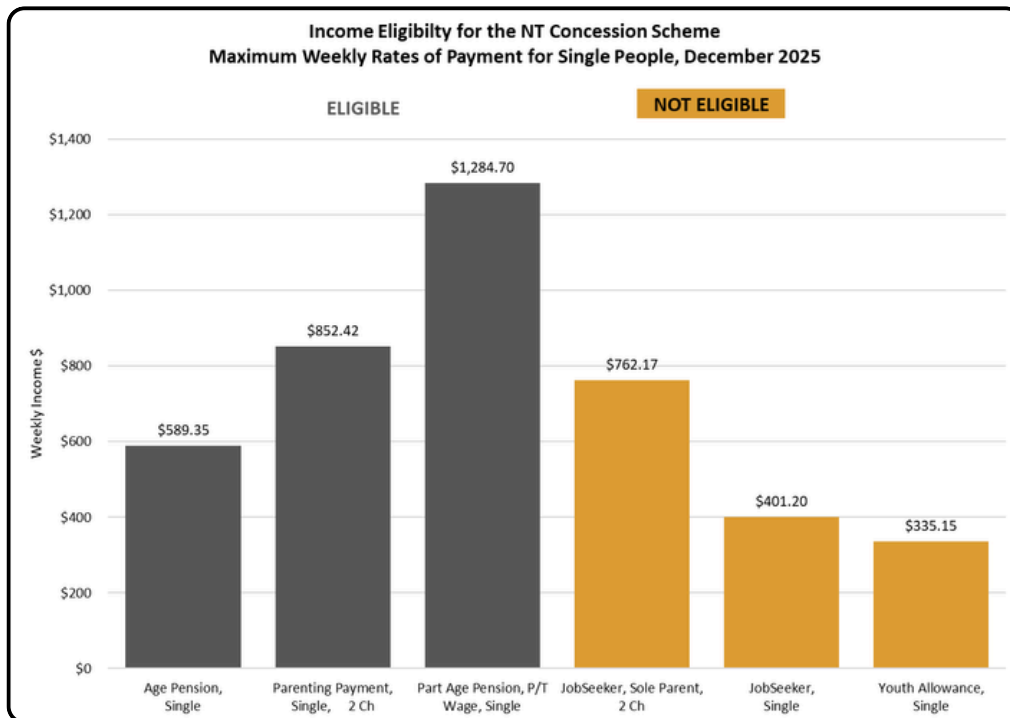
Concessions are an important mechanism to support those on low incomes to meet their basic needs.

Registration is a significant cost of owning a car. For a small car it costs about \$400 for 6 months.



The **Motor Vehicle Concession** is available to people eligible for the NT Concession Scheme to assist in paying for registration costs. It has not increased since 2009 and is a set amount of up to \$154 per year (\$77 for six months).

[15]



Under the NT Concession Scheme's current eligibility, a single pensioner, on an income of \$589 a week, can receive up to \$3200 worth of concessions per year for utilities, council rates, spectacles and vehicle registration, depending on their circumstances.

However, someone earning only \$401.20 a week on JobSeeker, would receive no concessions.

[16]

Note: income figures do not include rent assistance, and are based on the typical total rate.

Consumer Price Index (CPI) changes over the previous year - to December 2025



Electricity

CPI for electricity has increased by 3.8% in the NT, compared to a increase of 21.5% nationally.



Gas

CPI for gas and other household fuels has increased by 2%, compared to an increase of 5.8% nationally.



Water & Sewerage

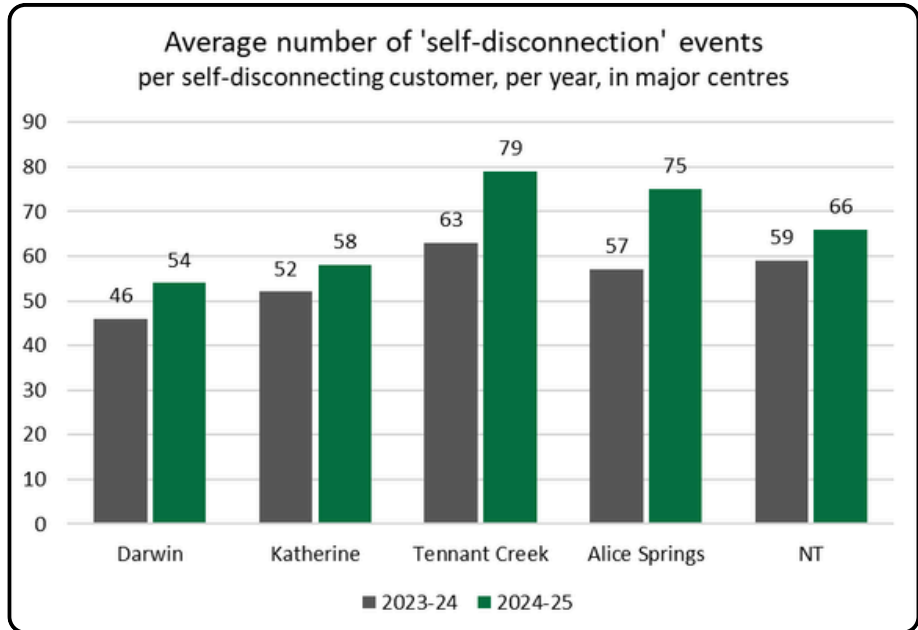
CPI for water & sewerage has risen 3.2% in the NT, compared to an increase of 5.8% nationally.

The significant difference between the increase in CPI for electricity in the NT (3.8%) and nationally (21.5%) is largely due to electricity rebates ending. While there were Commonwealth rebates that applied in every state and Territory, some states gave additional rebates that the NT did not receive. When these rebates ended, prices in those jurisdictions rose at a higher rate. Excluding the impact of rebates over the past year, electricity prices rose 4.6% nationally in the 12 months to December. The NT Government's ongoing Community Service Obligation subsidy also contributes to lower price increases in the NT, holding tariffs below cost-reflective levels regardless of what is happening in the broader energy market.

[17]

Access to reliable and affordable power is vital for the wellbeing of all Territorians. When power is disconnected, people are unable to keep their houses at a healthy temperature or safely store medication and food.

Most households in remote Aboriginal communities and some urban public houses use prepayment meters. When these meters are not topped up with sufficient funds, power is disconnected. Disconnection generally occurs when a consumer cannot afford power credit.



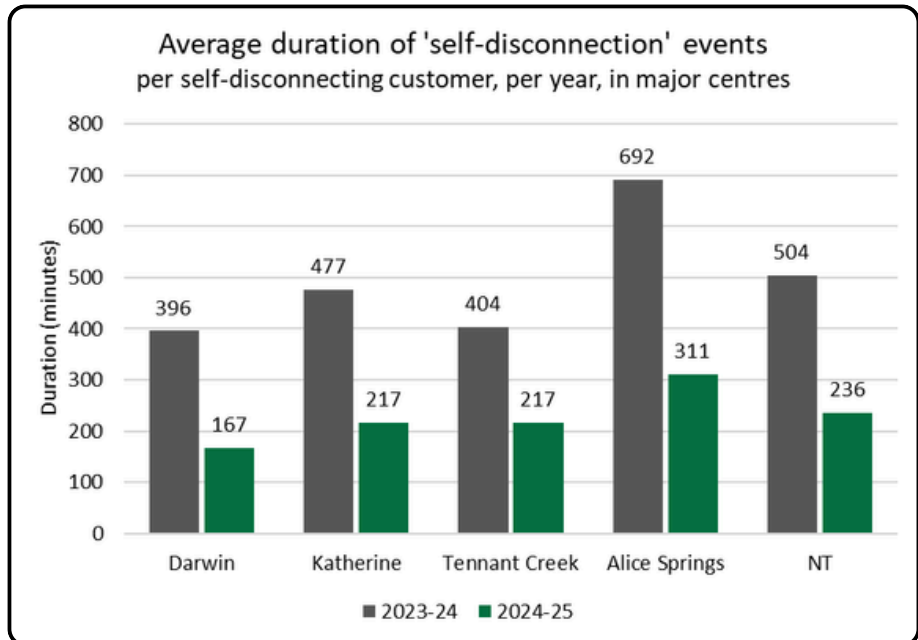
The average number of involuntary self-disconnections per year, per self-disconnection customer has increased in all major centres of the NT.

The biggest increase was in Alice Springs, with 18 more disconnections per year on average. Katherine had the smallest change, with an increase of 6 disconnections per year.

[18]

Note: The figures for prepayment meter self-disconnection events per self-disconnecting customers are based on weighted average of self-disconnected customers across the year.

103,648 involuntary self-disconnections in major centres across the NT in 2024-25. That's an increase of 30% from 2023-24 to 2024-25.



The average duration per disconnection event has decreased over the past 12 months.

Across the NT, the average amount of time a household was without power each time they were disconnected was 4 hours (236 minutes). The longest average duration was in Alice Springs, at 5 hours (311 minutes).

With 75 disconnections a year, that means an average household on a prepayment meter in Alice Springs would be without power for 5 hours, every 5 days.

[19]

Original Power: Right to Power Report

In November 2025, Original Power released the 'Right to Power' Report, researching the experiences of First Nations households using prepayment arrangements. In the NT they accessed the data of **7794 smart meter's** across the NT, and conducted **138 surveys**. Smart meter data was received from two energy retailers: Jacana (covering major centres) and Power Water Corporation Indigenous Essential Services (covering power supply in remote areas outside of major centres). **Key findings included:**

Only **15%** of households on Jacana prepayment meters are receiving energy concessions. That drops to **6%** of households with PWC-IES. Surveys reported low levels of awareness of the concession scheme, and difficult access.


In the NT, **temperatures above 40°C are associated with significantly increased energy insecurity and disconnections.**

Households in the NT experienced an average of **41 to 59 disconnection events per year**. More than 90% were reconnected on the same day, but multiple day events were experienced 5-7% of the time.


[20]

The data below uses figures based on average daily consumption, as displayed on a December 2025 Jacana household bill, to estimate average quarterly bills.

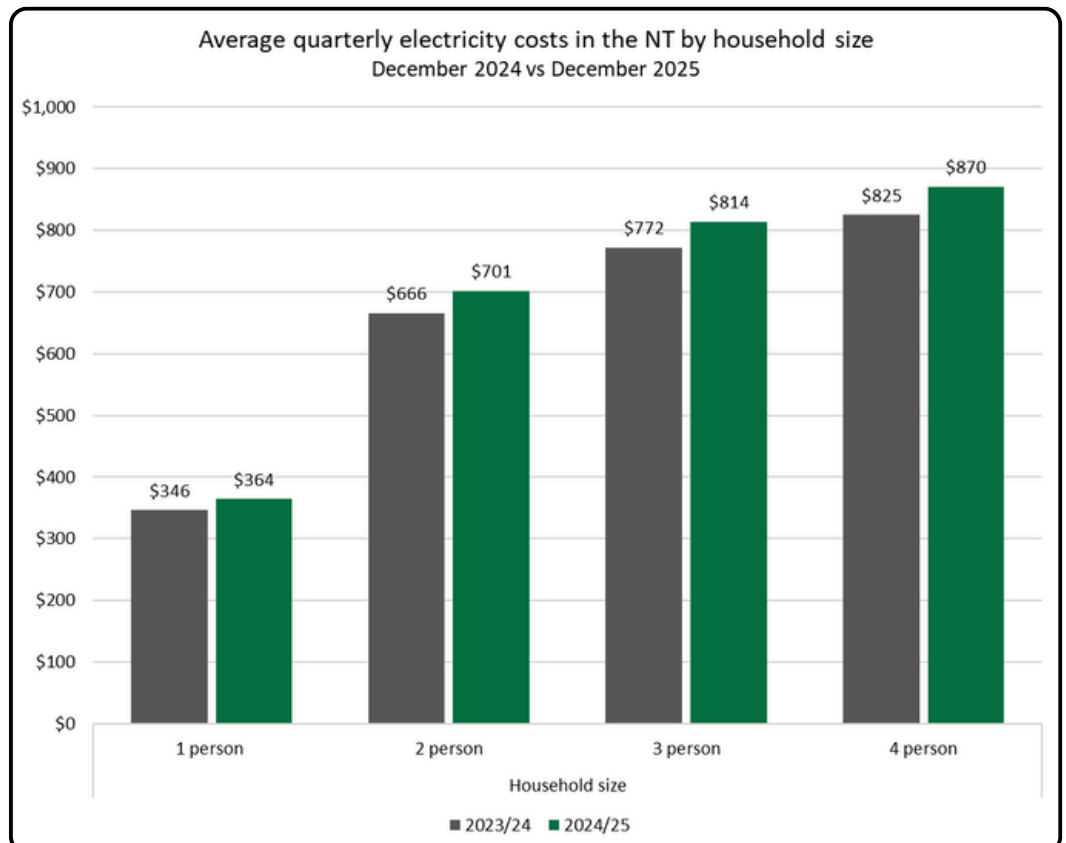
All household sizes have seen an increase in average bills, ranging from **\$19** for 1-person to **\$45** for a 4-person household.

 **\$364 per quarter**
\$1,454.83 per year

for a 1-person household based on average daily consumption of 11 kWh

 **\$870 per quarter**
\$3,481.21 per year

for a 4-person household based on average daily consumption of 29 kWh



[21]

Recommendations

- Federal**
- **Raise all income support payments to at least \$84 a day so everyone can afford to meet their basic needs**
 - **Substantially and immediately increase the Remote Area Allowance**

- NT**
- Expand the NT Concession Scheme so all holders of a Services Australia Health Care Card can receive access to concessions

Housing

- **Benchmark Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) to rents paid and lift the maximum threshold for CRA by 60%**
- Amend the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)* to ensure Territory renters have at least the same rights and protections as other jurisdictions.
- Introduce a rental affordability scheme to replace the now expired National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS).
- Adopt a Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning policy to ensure social housing is embedded within new developments.

Transport

- Increase the NT Motor Vehicle Concession to address deteriorated value and establish yearly indexation
- Remove the excessive administration fees on short-term motor vehicle registration
- Require all private transport companies receiving government grants to support their business, to have concession fare options that give a significant discount
- Conduct a review into regional and remote public transport networks

Utilities

- Install solar energy on all social housing
- Commit to reducing the number and duration of disconnections for prepayment meter (PPM) customers, including through:
 - Adopting mandatory reporting of electricity disconnections
 - Reducing the standard prepayment tariff
 - Ensuring PPM customers can access an equivalent level of hardship programs as post-payment customers across all retailers
 - Increasing payment options for PPM users to include automated payment options
- Implement minimum energy efficiency standards for rental homes

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