

IF THE

CAP FITS

**THE CASE FOR RENT
STABILISATION IN WA**



makerentingfairwa.org.au

INTRODUCTION

Over five years ago, the state government sought feedback about proposed rent stabilisation mechanisms as part of broader reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA) (RTA)¹. Following this consultation, the first tranche of reforms was introduced in 2024, which included a reduction in the frequency of rent increases from every six months to once per year. While this change provided some improvement, we were concerned that simply limiting how often rents can increase isn't enough if there is no limit on the amount of the increase.

The findings in this report confirm that our concerns were justified. Weekly rents have continued to spiral, leaving hundreds of thousands of Western Australians with no option but to go into debt, take on another job, or cut back on essentials to keep a roof over their head.

With no limits on how much rents can rise, and very little protection against unfair evictions, WA renters face an impossible choice: accept rent hikes they cannot afford, or risk homelessness.

This isn't just a housing problem anymore, it's becoming an economic crisis. When families have to spend more and more of their income just to keep a roof over their heads, they have less money for everything else, which hurts local businesses and undermines the state's economic stability and productivity. Mechanisms to stabilise rents are an urgent necessity for protecting both individual families and WA's broader economic resilience.

We are urging the WA Government to make the following amendments to the RTA:

1. **Introduce a rent stabilisation mechanism** which either caps rent increases to CPI or at a prescribed formula;
2. **Increase the length of notice periods** for rent increases;
3. **Reverse the onus** so landlords are required to prove why higher rent increases are justified, rather than tenants having to prove they are excessive; and
4. **End 'no grounds' evictions** so a tenant can't be forced to move just so their landlord can raise the rent for the next tenant.

We are also calling for the WA Government to commit to continue the WA Rent Relief Program for at least two years from its current 30 June 2026 end date, to provide rent relief for vulnerable WA renters until these legislative changes can be enacted.

Methodology

Make Renting Fair has collated data on average rents in 2021 and 2025 for all 59 Lower House Electorates across Western Australia. We used SQM² data to compare Weekly Rents of "combined" 3-bedroom house and 2-bedroom unit data in both July 2021 and July 2025, for each State Electorate.

For large electorates we used a representative sample of suburbs within to get an aggregate.

WA renters have also shared some of their own experiences of rental price increases with us. We have included these stories throughout the report. In most cases, renters have requested to remain anonymous, as they are fearful that being identified will pose a risk to current or future tenancies.

Overview of findings

Rent increases in WA from 2021-2025 have been severe and widespread, impacting renters across all 59 electorates.

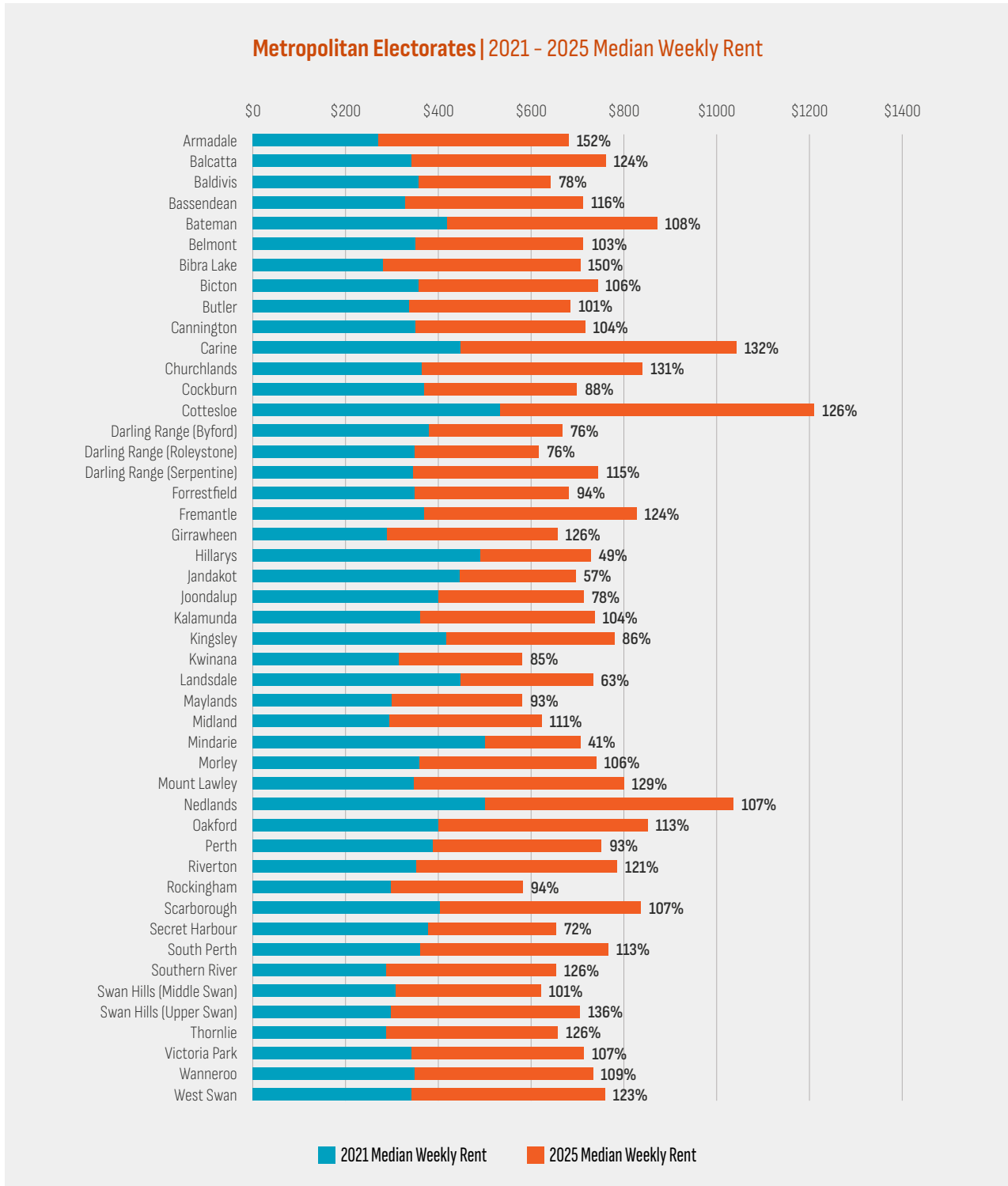
The median weekly rent in WA is now \$716, up from \$339 in 2021, with the average WA household paying an additional \$377 per week, or \$19,622 extra per year.

As a percentage, rent increases ranged from a 29% to 511% increase depending on electorate. This translates to an average increase of 118%, or more than doubling, across WA.

Even in areas where rents have increased the least, the picture is not much brighter. Electorates with the lowest increases in median rent since 2021 are still significantly higher in 2025.

METRO SPOTLIGHT

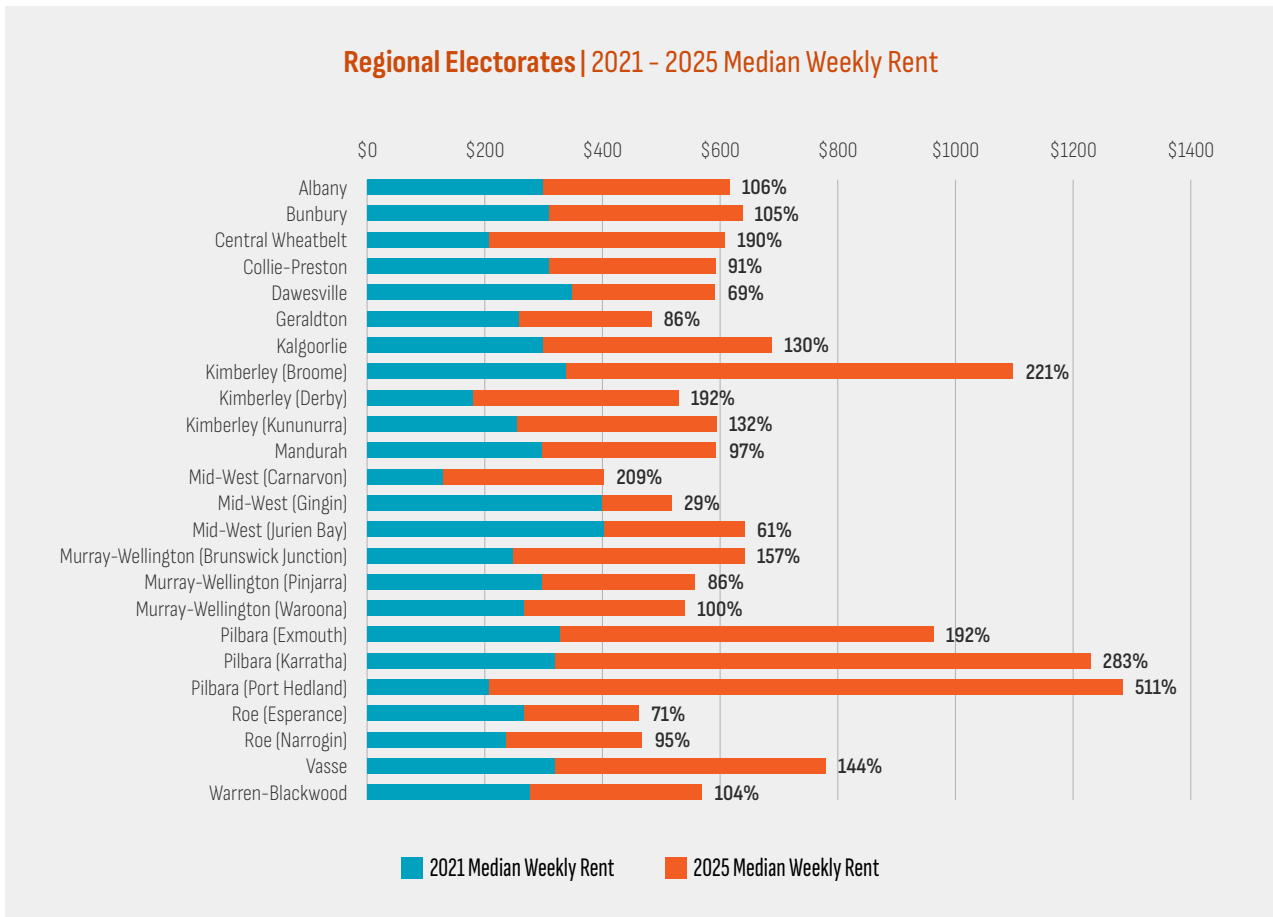
- In 2021, median weekly rental prices across metro WA electorates ranged from \$270 per week in Armadale to \$535 per week in Cottesloe
- In 2025, median weekly rental prices across metro WA electorates range from \$580 per week in Maylands to \$1,212 per week in Cottesloe
- Metro WA has seen an average increase of \$373 in median weekly rent. This translates to an average increase of 104% in median weekly rental prices for metro WA residents between 2021 and 2025.



Graph 1 - Median weekly rent in 2021 (blue) compared with 2025 (orange) across WA Metropolitan Electorates, label indicates percentage increase over this period

REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

- In 2021, median weekly rental prices across regional WA electorates ranged from \$130 per week in the Mid-West (Carnarvon) to \$400 per week in the Mid-West (Gingin and Jurien Bay).
- In 2025, median weekly rental prices across regional WA electorates range from \$402 per week in the Mid-West (Carnarvon) to \$1,284 per week in the Pilbara (Port Hedland).
- Regional WA has seen an average increase of \$386 in median weekly rent. This translates to an average increase of 144% in median weekly rental prices for regional WA residents between 2021 and 2025.
- Truly capturing the unstable rental market, Mid-West (Gingin) only saw a 29% increase compared to the Pilbara (Port Hedland) which saw a 511% increase between 2021 and 2025.



Graph 2 – Median weekly rent in 2021 (blue) compared with 2025 (orange) across WA Regional Electorates, label indicates percentage increase over this period.



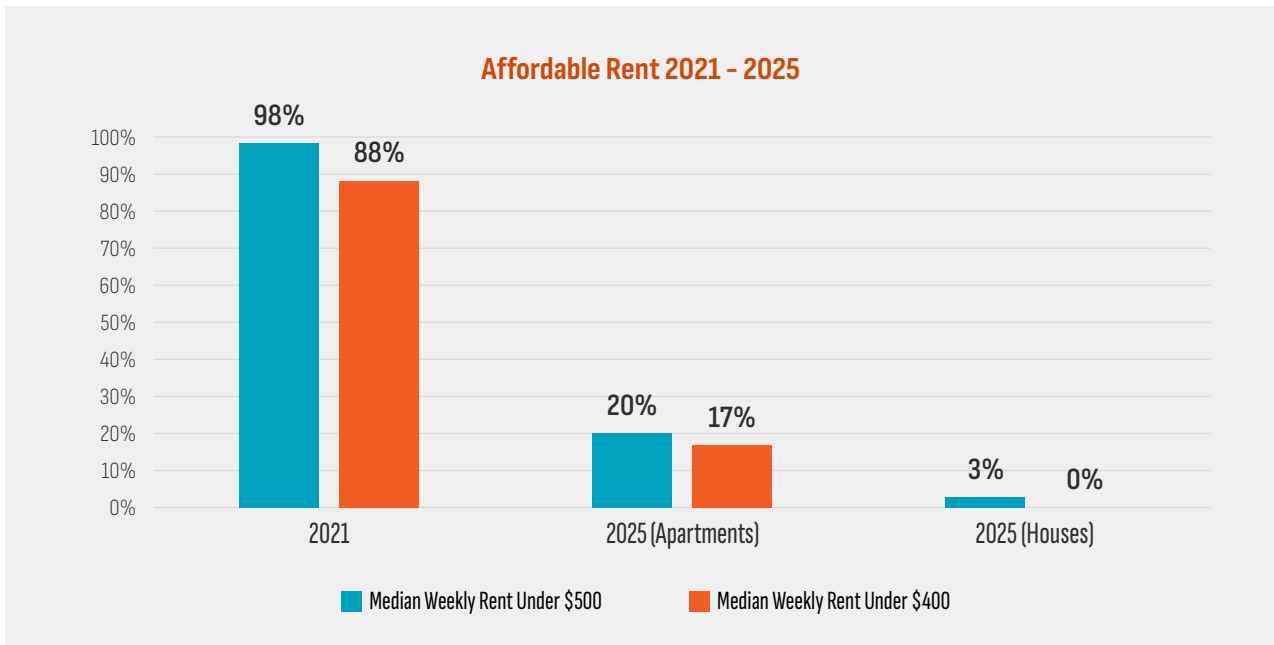
My rent was \$460 in 2018, at the end of 2023, the rent was raised to \$565 and then this year was raised again to \$780. To know that the property was purchased for 145k in 2001 has always made it that little bit harder to actually accept that such an increase is because of the interest rates or the mortgage, as it feels more like a money grab than anything else.

– Anon, Electorate of Maylands

DISAPPEARING AFFORDABLE SUBURBS

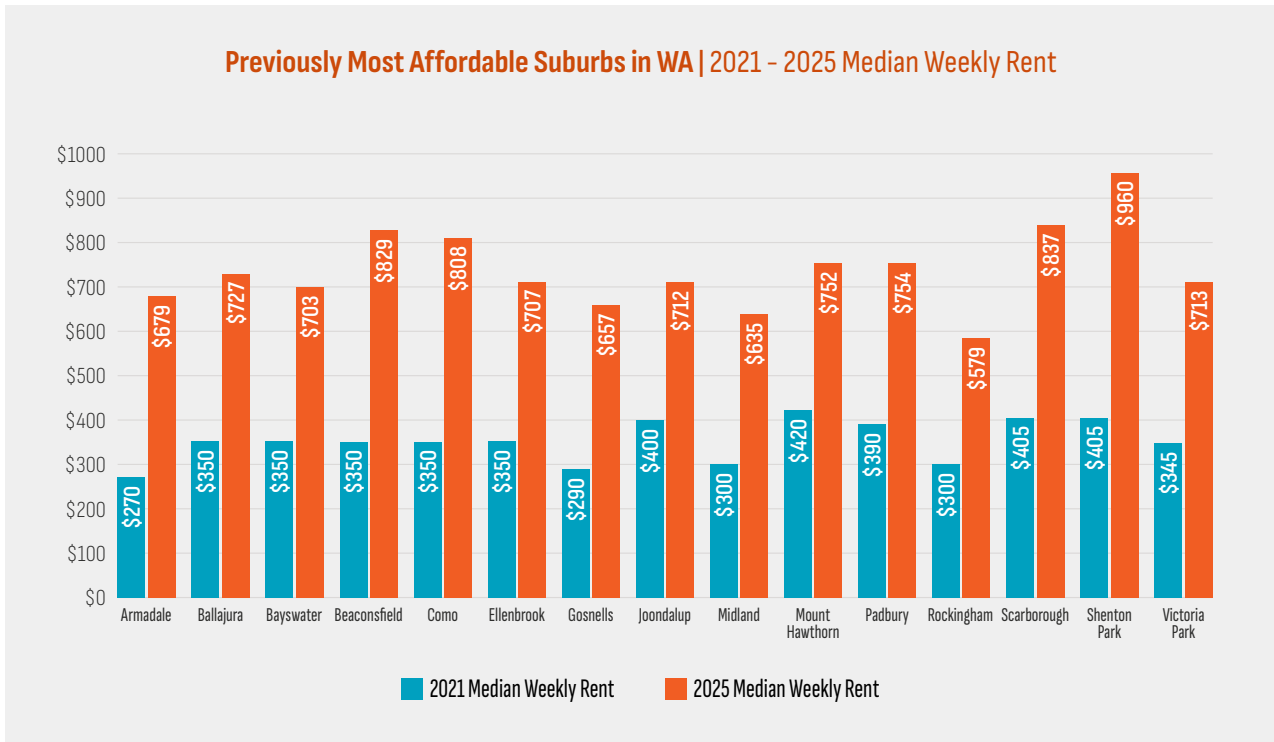
A significant impact of uncontrolled rent increases is the shift across almost all electorates which used to be considered “affordable” – being those electorates with a weekly median rent of \$400–\$500.

We have gone from almost universal median rent of \$400 per week across WA to no electorates with homes at this median price and only 17% of electorates with apartments at this median price.



Graph 3 – Percentage of rentals under \$500 and \$400 in 2021 compared to 2025.

We also found that the biggest increases in rents have occurred in the areas traditionally considered the most affordable – and therefore the places people are least likely to be able to afford these increases. People are not only being priced out of their homes, but out of their neighbourhoods and communities.



Graph 4 – Median weekly rent in 2021 (blue) compared with 2025 (orange) across previously most affordable suburbs in WA. Source: ABS Median Weekly Rent by suburb (2021) and SQM Median Weekly Rent by suburb (July 2025).

IMPACTS

Uncontrolled rent increases have a range of serious impacts. These include:

- **Renters going into severe debt** – uncontrolled rent increases are leading renters into severe debt. Data from evaluation of the Rent Relief Program found that the average household is paying rent equalling 74.3% of their household income. WA renters do not have enough income to cover rent and monthly expenses, falling short by around \$965 each month.³
- **A hidden form of eviction: rent increases forcing renters not to renew leases** – as rents continue to increase, tenants unable to take on the extra cost have to leave their homes, sometimes moving back in with family or otherwise being forced to compete for a more affordable property in an incredibly tight market.
- **A new driver of homelessness** – homelessness services are seeing an increasing cohort of renters presenting to their services for assistance, experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We have heard from a number of service providers about increasing contacts from renters seeking food and emergency relief as they struggle to keep on top of rent and other bills.
- **Mental health impacts** – the mental health impacts of precarious housing has been well documented; forced moves and unaffordable housing have a detrimental impact on wellbeing. Unabated rent increases put pressure on renters' wellbeing and mental health.⁴

Anglicare WA: Rental Affordability Snapshot 2025

In April this year, Anglicare WA released its [Rental Affordability Snapshot 2025](#), showing that across the entire state, there was not a single property – not even a room – affordable to someone on JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, or the Disability Support Pension. The WA median rent was \$680 per week, up 5% from 2024 and 21% from 2023, and still well out of reach for most households on income support or the minimum wage.

The Snapshot, taken each year in March, captures the number of affordable and suitable rentals available for Western Australians on low incomes. A property was considered affordable if it required less than 30% of a household's income and appropriate if it had an adequate number of bedrooms.

There were 3,523 private rentals available across WA when the Snapshot was taken, an 18% increase from last year's total of 2,989. Despite the addition of 534 properties in 2025, affordability remains a concern.

The [Rental Affordability Snapshot: Essential Workers Edition 2025](#) released in October 2025 takes the March rental data and assesses it for affordability across sixteen essential worker categories: aged care worker, ambulance officer, childcare worker, cleaner, construction worker, delivery driver, dispatcher, firefighter, freight driver, hospitality worker, meat packer, nurse, postal worker, retail worker, school teacher, and social and community services worker.

This report indicates that, of the available properties, fewer than 1% (just 16 properties) are affordable for an early childhood educator or a hospitality worker. Even the highest-earning essential workers – such as ambulance officers, firefighters, and school teachers – could afford just 2% of all available rentals.

The problem is particularly prevalent in regional WA, with not a single property or room affordable to any essential worker in Bunbury, and only four across the Kimberley and Pilbara regions combined.



After 18 years in our home, we were forced out when the owner had to sell, and suddenly found ourselves homeless – a family of three with a dog and a cat, sleeping in a friend's spare room for months. We finally found a place, but at \$900 a week we now rent out one of the rooms just to make ends meet. It's not how my family and I would like to live, but unless we work 12 hour days, six days a week, that's our reality for now.

– Rose, Electorate of Mount Lawley

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

We are calling on the WA Government to make several key amendments to the RTA:

1. **Introduce a rent stabilisation mechanism** which either caps rent increases to CPI or at a prescribed formula;
2. **Increase the length of notice periods** for rent increases;
3. **Reverse the onus** so landlords are required to prove why higher rent increases are justified, rather than tenants having to prove they are excessive; and
4. **End 'no grounds' evictions** so a tenant can't be forced to move just so their landlord can raise the rent for the next tenant.

1. Introduce a rent stabilisation mechanism which either caps rent increases to CPI or at a prescribed formula.

Rent stabilisation was included as part of the consultation on the review of the RTA in 2019.⁵ High Pressure Rent Zones were put forward for discussion, with the objective “to provide fairness and certainty in relation to rent increases for tenants, while maintaining the flexibility for lessors to make a reasonable return on their investment”

Consumer Protection noted concerns about excessive rent increases, stating:

Excessive price increases can have a substantial impact on tenants. The impact of moving is not just financial. Moving is stressful. If there are children, they may have to change schools, disrupting friendships and their education. Moving also disrupts social and support networks of the adults... Excessive rent increases also impact the local community. Pricing long term residents out of the market disrupts the fibre of the community.

Consumer Protection highlighted that rent increases in some suburbs and mining towns in particular “were so great that long-term residents found themselves priced out of the market” and gave examples of average rents in Newman increasing from \$1,300 per week in 2010 to almost \$2,250 in 2011.

It put forward three options for rent stabilisation measures:

- **Status quo** (lessors are able to increase rent by any amount),
- **Cap on rent increases in designated zones** highly susceptible to sharp spikes in rental affordability, or
- **Cap on rent increases for all rentals across the state**, for example limiting rent increases to CPI.

Rent stabilisation was excluded from the first tranche of reforms introduced in 2024, and to date there has been no confirmation as to the expected timeframe for the second phase of reforms or what is being recommended with regard to rent stabilisation mechanisms – which are all the more urgent given the findings of this report.

There are a number of options for placing a cap on rent increases. Options include:

- (a) Capping rent increases at CPI, and/or requiring the lessor to justify any rent increase above CPI.
- (b) Capping rent based on a utility value system whereby rent is calculated based on similar price to comparable premises (considering size, location, utilities, furnishings, energy systems etc).
- (c) Linking rent increases to average wage increases.
- (d) Further provisions for rent freezes in boom times (such as in high pressure rent zones – e.g. the Pilbara) or in an economic crisis (as we saw during COVID).
- (e) A combination of the above.

Rent stabilisation has been implemented in other jurisdictions and provides successful models for WA to adopt.

<p>ACT</p>	<p>Regulations specify a threshold for increasing rents capped at CPI plus 10%. For example, if rent is \$400 per week and the CPI is 3%, the maximum rent can be increased is 3.1% of \$400, or \$12.40 per week. An increase above this threshold requires tenant agreement or approval by the Tribunal.</p>
<p>Ireland</p>	<p>From 20 June 2025 the entire country fell under a Rental Pressure Zone (RPZ), meaning rent cannot be increased by more than 2% or an increase in line with the rate of inflation, whichever is lower. Landlords can be exempt from the rent cap if the property has not been rented for a period of two years or if it has undergone a substantial change in the nature of the accommodation.</p> <p>Prior to this, rent could not be increased above 4% in high pressure rent zones. Rent Pressure Zones were originally located in parts of the country where rents were highest and where households had the greatest difficulty finding affordable accommodation, and were intended to moderate the rent increases in these areas to ensure a stable and sustainable rental market.</p>
<p>France</p>	<p>A nationally governed index to regulate rent increases was introduced in 2008. The Rent Reference Index uses the annual average CPI minus rents and tobacco to determine the maximum allowable rent increase. In 2025 this was 1.4%.</p> <p>Between 2022-2024 the French government also introduced a temporary cap on increases due to rising inflation, with caps limited between 2-3.5%. Paris and Lille also have rent ceilings - which is the maximum rent that can be charged, calculated on the property's location, age, and size.</p>
<p>Spain</p>	<p>The Rent Update Index (IRAV) became law on 1 January 2025 as a new index to limit rent increases to reduce unpredictability and mitigate impacts of inflation. It was developed by Spain's National Statistics Institute and is published monthly, similar to the CPI. The rate in February 2025 was 2.28%. Landlords had been previously limited to a 2% rent increase in 2023 and 3% in 2024.</p>
<p>New York, USA</p>	<p>Rent-stabilised apartments in NYC have their rent increases controlled by the Rent Guidelines Board. In 2025 rents could be increased by 3%-4.5%. Tenants are also protected by additional rights in rent-stabilised homes, including the right to renew their lease. Unfortunately, renters not living in rent-controlled/stabilised buildings are unprotected.</p>
<p>British Columbia, Canada</p>	<p>Maximum rent increases are controlled by Residential Tenancy Act regulations. In 2025 this was 3% and tenants must be provided with three months' notice.</p>
<p>Germany</p>	<p>Rents can be increased in two ways, by CPI or an automatic rent increase clause included in the agreement. The lessor may make further increases only if substantial improvements have been made to the property.</p>

2. Change the process for challenge or review of rent increases.

Currently, if a tenant believes they have received notice of a rent increase that is excessive, they bear the onus of applying to the Magistrates Court and proving this. Due to lack of reported Court decisions and uncertainty of outcome, and the lack of security of tenure more generally, it is rare for tenants to take this step.

We support changing the relevant provisions of the RTA so that if a tenant challenges a notice of rent increase, it should then be up to the lessor to prove that the rent increase is reasonable before it comes into effect. This ensures the onus remains with the lessor, rather than shifting to the tenant as soon as the tenant receives a notice of rent increase.

3. Extend the notice periods required for rent increases.

The current 60-day notice period is not long enough for either the matter to be negotiated or successfully resolved through the Magistrates Court process, or for a tenant to determine reasonable prospects of finding alternative housing.

Increasing the notice periods provides with tenants a greater opportunity to negotiate with the lessor and, if unsuccessful, dispute the proposed rent increase in the Magistrates Court prior to that rent increase taking effect.

4. End 'no grounds' terminations of both fixed-term and periodic tenancies, and introduce a range of prescribed grounds for a lessor to end a tenancy.

Security of tenure is the cornerstone upon which all other rights and responsibilities of both tenants and lessors rest. Insecure tenure results in a complete destabilisation of the power balance between parties resulting in an asymmetry which can negatively impact every part of a tenancy.

In relation to rent stabilisation, this is especially important, as lessors will be incentivised to turn over tenants more quickly in order to be able to increase the rent between tenancies.



My rent went from \$300 to \$330 to \$430 then \$550 and then \$670 all in the past 5 yrs. I had to move to my parents and their rent has just been increased from \$640 to \$790 for a shitty 3x2 and all because of location (20 minutes from city)

— Anon



My rent has gone from \$325 to \$425 to \$550/wk in three years. Last increase was \$125/wk in one hit. House is old, no oven, gardens, water damage to ceilings, peeling paint and will prob need to be demolished within a couple of years.

— Anon, Electorate of Armadale



Next month rent will be \$500 per week. I already skip 2 meals a day so I can feed my children. I can't afford the increase and I can't afford to move. It's a very small house, with 2 of us in each bedroom and a barely functional kitchen and no toilet inside. The drainage from the house is faulty, but not a priority for fixing. The roof is leaky and the ceiling sags in some rooms, where peeling paint is constantly dropping down.

— Anon, Electorate of Maylands

Make Renting Fair also supports extension of the Rent Relief Program

We are pleased to see it has been extended a further 6 months to 30 June 2026, and are calling for the WA Government make a longer term commitment to continue this program, as well as expanding the eligibility criteria to allow more than one payment to be made to participants who accessed the grant more than 12 months ago.

Any continuation of the Rent Relief Program must be done in conjunction with regulatory changes to address what is a systemic issue, and a market failure. Rent stabilisation is an essential tool to help address this.

WA Rent Relief Program

The WA Rent Relief Program provides a one-off rent payment of up to \$5,000 to renters at risk of eviction due to rental arrears and who are experiencing rental stress, helps them to negotiate with their landlords to extend their tenancy and provides financial counselling and other supports. The Program is administered by the WA Government in conjunction with Anglicare WA and Vinnies WA.

As of 3 November 2025, \$15,511,206 in WA Rent Relief Program brokerage payments have been made to 3,571 households at risk of eviction.

Households have received an average payment of \$4,344 towards their rental arrears and, in some circumstances, up to 50% of future rent costs for up to three months. Since the Program's inception, the brokerage distribution has resulted in \$7,096,253 being paid towards rent arrears and \$8,414,953 being paid towards future rent costs. 85.3% of households managed to keep their tenancy six months after receiving payment from the WA Rent Relief Program.

The program has played a critical role in offering stability and hope to vulnerable West Australians during a time of immediate crisis.

"I was off work for so many weeks. If I didn't find the rent relief, I think I would have been out on the streets... I'm so thankful that the opportunity came to me."

"The brokerage paid my arrears and a little bit in advance... having that support meant we could have a good relationship with our real estate agent... We know that we're caught up and don't have to stress about being evicted or having a bad record."



As of last week, my rent was raised \$100 per week. I am a single mother of a 14 month old so things are extremely tight now. Due to this increase I am now having to look for food handouts as we are struggling to afford enough per week. Due to the tough rental market I could not choose to move out as I could not afford a bond for a new place and moving costs. I feel extremely frustrated as there is nothing I can do but accept the increase.

— Anon, Electorate of Rockingham

APPENDIX – Changes in median rental price across all electorates (2021 – 2025)

Electorate Area	2021 Median Weekly Rent (\$)	2025 Median Weekly Rent (\$)	Dollar Increase	Percentage Increase
Albany	300	616.9	316.9	105.63%
Armadale	270	679.6	409.6	151.70%
Balcatta	340	760.1	420.1	123.56%
Baldivis	360	639.9	279.9	77.75%
Bassendean	330	712.4	382.4	115.88%
Bateman	420	872.7	452.7	107.79%
Belmont	350	710.7	360.7	103.06%
Bibra Lake	283	706.7	423.7	149.72%
Bicton	360	742.9	382.9	106.36%
Bunbury	310	636.6	326.6	105.35%
Butler	340	684.9	344.9	101.44%
Cannington	350	715.3	365.3	104.37%
Carine	450	1043.4	593.4	131.87%
Central Wheatbelt	209	606.6	397.6	190.24%
Churchlands	365	844.6	479.6	131.40%
Cockburn	370	697	327	88.38%
Collie-Preston	310	591.4	281.4	90.77%
Cottesloe	535	1211.7	676.7	126.49%
Darling Range (Byford)	380	668.4	288.4	75.89%
Darling Range (Roleystone)	350	616.3	266.3	76.09%
Darling Range (Serpentine)	348	746.7	398.7	114.57%
Dawesville	350	592.4	242.4	69.26%
Forrestfield	350	679.6	329.6	94.17%
Fremantle	370	828.6	458.6	123.95%
Geraldton	260	482.9	222.9	85.73%
Girrawheen	290	655.6	365.6	126.07%
Hillarys	490	729.9	239.9	48.96%
Jandakot	445	697	252	56.63%
Joondalup	400	712.3	312.3	78.08%
Kalamunda	360	735.9	375.9	104.42%
Kalgoorlie	300	689.4	389.4	129.80%
Kimberley (Broome)	342	1096.3	754.3	220.56%
Kimberley (Derby)	181	528	347	191.71%
Kimberley (Kununurra)	256	594.3	338.3	132.15%
Kingsley	418	779.1	361.1	86.39%
Kwinana	315	581.3	266.3	84.54%

Electorate Area	2021 Median Weekly Rent (\$)	2025 Median Weekly Rent (\$)	Dollar Increase	Percentage Increase
Landsdale	450	732.7	282.7	62.82%
Mandurah	300	592.4	292.4	97.47%
Maylands	300	580.3	280.3	93.43%
Midland	295	623.1	328.1	111.22%
Mid-West (Carnarvon)	130	402.3	272.3	209.46%
Mid-West (Gingin)	400	516.4	116.4	29.10%
Mid-West (Jurien Bay)	400	642.6	242.6	60.65%
Mindarie	500	706.1	206.1	41.22%
Morley	360	741.3	381.3	105.92%
Mount Lawley	350	800.3	450.3	128.66%
Murray-Wellington (Brunswick Junction)	250	643.6	393.6	157.44%
Murray-Wellington (Pinjarra)	300	558.7	258.7	86.23%
Murray-Wellington (Waroona)	270	541.3	271.3	100.48%
Nedlands	500	1035.3	535.3	107.06%
Oakford	400	851.7	451.7	112.93%
Perth	390	752.1	362.1	92.85%
Pilbara (Exmouth)	330	963.6	633.6	192.00%
Pilbara (Karratha)	320	1226.4	906.4	283.25%
Pilbara (Port Hedland)	210	1284.1	1074.1	511.48%
Riverton	355	785.9	430.9	121.38%
Rockingham	300	583	283	94.33%
Roe (Esperance)	270	462.9	192.9	71.44%
Roe (Narrogin)	240	468.1	228.1	95.04%
Scarborough	405	836.9	431.9	106.64%
Secret Harbour	380	654.1	274.1	72.13%
South Perth	360	765.7	405.7	112.69%
Southern River	290	656.6	366.6	126.41%
Swan Hills (Middle Swan)	310	623.1	313.1	101.00%
Swan Hills (Upper Swan)	300	706.6	406.6	135.53%
Thornlie	290	656.6	366.6	126.41%
Vasse	320	781	461	144.06%
Victoria Park	345	713	368	106.67%
Wanneroo	350	732.7	382.7	109.34%
Warren-Blackwood	280	572	292	104.29%
West Swan	340	758.9	418.9	123.21%

Endnotes

- 1 **WA Government**, *Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement: A review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA) (C-RIS)*, December 2019, available at: <https://www.consumerprotection.wa.gov.au/system/files/migrated/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rtacrisfulldiscussionpaper.pdf>
- 2 SQM Research – Property – Weekly Rents, July 2021 and July 2025.
- 3 Households in the financial support stream of the program – **Francis et al for the Centre for Social Impact (CSI)**, *Evaluation of the WA Rent Relief Program: final report: final report (March 2025)*, available at https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2025-03/apo-nid332027_0.pdf. See also the Rent Relief box below, at page 9.
- 4 See, for example **Ong Vifor, R., Singh, R., Baker, E., Bentley, R. and Hewton, J. (2022)** *Precarious housing and wellbeing: a multidimensional investigation*, AHURI Final Report No. 373, available at <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/finalreports/373>.
- 5 C-RIS at pp 52–53.