

Public Rental Housing Data Collection, 2016–17; Quality Statement

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Identifying and definitional attributes

Metadata item type:	Data Quality Statement
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Data quality

Data quality statement summary:

Description

All states and territories provide a range of public housing programs and maintain administrative data sets about these programs. Extracts of these data sets are provided annually to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). This collection contains information about public rental housing (PH) dwellings, households assisted and households on the waiting list. Data are provided for the following two reference periods: 2016–17 financial year and point in time at 30 June 2017.

Summary

- The data collected are an administrative by-product of the management of PH programs run by the states and territories and conform well in terms of scope, coverage and reference period.
- The administrative data sets from which this collection is drawn have inaccuracies to varying degrees, including missing data, out-of-date data and data coding or recording errors.
- Care is required when comparing outputs across states and territories. Differences in the data collected and which records are included or excluded from a calculation can affect the coherence of the outputs. Coherence over time has also been affected by changes in methodology (see 'coherence' section for details).

Institutional environment: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is a major national agency set up by the Australian Government under the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987](#) to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. It is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity established in 1987, governed by a [management Board](#), and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health portfolio.

The AIHW aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians through better health and welfare information and statistics. It collects and reports information on a wide range of topics and issues, ranging from health and welfare expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury, and mental health, to ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection.

The AIHW also plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The AIHW works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and, where possible, to compile national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse these data sets and disseminate information and statistics.

The [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987](#), in conjunction with compliance to the [Privacy Act 1988](#), (Commonwealth of Australia), ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under the strictest conditions with respect to privacy and confidentiality.

For further information see the AIHW website www.aihw.gov.au.

The AIHW receives, compiles, edits and verifies the data in collaboration with states and territories. The finalised data sets are signed off by the states and territories and used by the AIHW for reporting and analysis.

Timeliness: The reference period for the Public Housing (PH) collection is based on the financial year (ending 30 June). The specific reference period for these data is 2016–17.

Accessibility: Data are reported in the AIHW's annual [Housing assistance in Australia](#) reports and the Productivity Commission's annual [Report on government services](#).

Users can request additional disaggregation of data which are not available online or in reports (subject to the AIHW's confidentiality policy and state and territory approval) via the AIHW's online data request system at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/our-services/data-on-request>. Depending on the nature of the request, requests for access to unpublished data may also incur costs or require approval from the AIHW Ethics Committee.

General enquiries about AIHW publications can be directed to info@aihw.gov.au.

Interpretability: Metadata and definitions relating to this data source can be found in the [Public rental housing data set specification 2014-17](#).

Supplementary information can be found in the housing collection data manuals which are available upon request.

Relevance: The data collected are an administrative by-product of the management of public rental housing programs run by the states and territories and conform well in terms of scope, coverage and reference period.

Classifications used for *income*, *disability status*, *greatest need* and *vacancy reason* are not consistent across the states and territories, however, the states and territories map these data to an AIHW standard.

Accuracy: There are known accuracy issues with the data collected:

- The administrative data sets from which this collection is drawn have inaccuracies to varying degrees including missing data, out-of-date data and data coding or recording errors.
- Not all states and territories capture all data items. For those outputs that are

calculated using *gross income*, New South Wales and South Australia use *assessable income* instead. In addition, *disability status* is derived using the receipt of a disability pension as a proxy in New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory. Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory reference payment type as well as other information.

- Information about disability is not reported under eligibility requirements for some programs.
- Indigenous status is self-identified and not reported under eligibility requirements for some programs.
- Most states and territories do not update income information for non-rebated households, that is, households who pay the market rent value of the dwellings. Therefore, some household income information may not reflect current income levels. Outputs produced that require income information do not include households with missing income and therefore may not be complete.
- Waitlist data are reported separately for each social housing program. Where jurisdictions have an integrated waitlist (New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory), applicants may be counted once irrespective of the number of programs for which they are applying.

State- and territory-specific issues:

New South Wales

- Since a system change in 2010, New South Wales continues to report problems encountered when linking files containing date variables within their system. This may occur when linking 'dwelling history', 'household' and 'waitlist' files. Where date variables contradict between files, they are recoded as missing.
- Data on 'number of Indigenous households at 30 June' are incomplete and unreliable. These data are substituted with estimates from the 2016 census.
- A new maintenance system was introduced during 2016–17. The transition and implementation timing has meant there are significant data gaps in the 'dwelling history' file. Therefore, for 2016–17, New South Wales did not supply the 'dwelling history' file which includes the variables necessary for the calculation of turnaround time.
- Income details are only reported for rebated households, that is, 93% of all households.
- Fewer waitlist applications were closed in 2015–16 because the annual Housing Eligibility Review (HER) process was delayed due to a review and redesign of the process. This process was completed during the 2016–17 reporting period. The 2016–17 waitlist data also excluded suspended applicants. The most frequent reasons for suspending an application include pending receipt of further information; pending receiving information from a client rejecting an offer of accommodation; or if a client is temporarily unable to accept an offer of accommodation for reasons such as illness, hospitalisation or imprisonment. Data may not be comparable to 2015–16 due to outstanding data remediation at that time and the exclusion of suspended applicants.

Victoria

- There was an increase in the number of new applicants on the waiting list, and in particular, those who have a 'greatest need'. These increases were mainly in the family violence and homelessness categories which is likely to reflect coverage of and response to Victoria's Royal Commission on Family Violence.
- Household information is not collected from tenancies that are not subsidised.

Queensland

- Income details are only reported for rebated households, that is, 96% of all households.
- Changes to the Fair Rent Policy, which excludes some income previously counted as assessable, applied from 5 December 2016. Therefore, total

assessable income may be lower for some households compared with previous years.

Western Australia

- Collection methodology changed for 2016–17. Initial data extracts are now drawn from current internal reports and then mapped to the production database rather than extracting completely from the database. The extra step produces figures more consistent with the annual report. The variation from figures used in previous years is minimal.
- Inconsistent data entry practices have produced inconsistent mapping of vacancy codes.
- Market rent has dropped due to changes in the local rental market. However, the rents paid have increased due to the ongoing implementation of a new rent model. This has led to a decrease in the average weekly rental subsidy per household.

Special needs data:

- Indigenous data is voluntarily recorded and known to be an undercount.
- Disability is only recorded if it contributes to housing needs, so many people with disabilities are flagged as unknown.

As a result, special needs allocations will be undercounted.

Waitlist data:

- Due to data entry issues, some households listed on the wait for priority have been housed from the wait turn list rather than the priority list. In addition, Western Australia does not collect current rent paid for waitlist applicants and are therefore unable to determine households who are in greatest need due to very high housing costs. These factors lead to an undercount of greatest needs allocations.
- In some cases, greatest need data is not recorded and is assumed to be the application date.

South Australia

- Housing SA did not supply the 'dwelling history' file for 2016–17, which includes the variables necessary for the calculation of turnaround time.

Tasmania

- Housing Tasmania implemented a new Housing Management System (HMS) in November 2016. This has resulted in some income details not being available. This information will improve over time. Due to the introduction of the new HMS it is not possible to link the waitlist file with the household file for applicants who registered prior to October 2016.

Australian Capital Territory

- Housing ACT is undertaking a major property replacement program, with several multi-unit sites being emptied over 2016–17 and clients relocated. The properties may have excessive vacant time while the sites are being cleared until the time the property is disposed of.

Northern Territory

- The number of households that relocated from one public housing dwelling to another public rental housing dwelling increased in 2016–17 due to a rise in the occurrence social housing head leases. The Social Housing Head Leasing initiative is designed to promote the delivery of social housing dwellings by signing long term leases between the Department and dwelling owners. The leased dwellings are then subleased to tenants that qualify for social housing. The program is aimed at reducing wait lists, create a private/public housing mix and reduce the average age of the social housing portfolio. The first social housing head leased dwellings commenced December 2015.

Coherence:

Data for individual states and territories may not be comparable to previous years due to changes in systems and processes which have led to differences in the accuracy and completeness of the data over time. Differences between states and territories concerning incomplete or missing information, out-of-date information and coding errors can affect the coherence of the outputs.

Coherence over time has also been affected by changes in methodology:

- Measurements using low income cannot be directly compared with low income figures produced prior to 2009–10 due to a change in methodology. Low income cut-offs were again revised for 2014–15 data based on ABS 2013–14 Survey of Income and Housing results. This led to substantial increases in the number of households considered to be receiving a low income. Care is therefore also required when comparing data from 2014–15 onwards with previous years.
- Measurements of overcrowding cannot be directly compared with figures produced prior to 2009–10 due to a change in methodology. Prior to 2009–10, overcrowding was measured using a proxy standard of '2 or more bedrooms are required'. From 2009–10 onwards, overcrowding was measured using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) of '1 or more bedrooms are required'.
- Measurements of underutilisation cannot be directly compared with figures produced prior to 2011–12 due to changes in methodology. Prior to 2009–10, underutilisation was measured using a proxy standard of '2 or more spare bedrooms'. From 2009–10 to 2010–11, underutilisation was measured using the CNOS of '1 or more spare bedrooms'. From 2011–12 onwards, underutilisation was measured using the revised CNOS of '2 or more spare bedrooms'.

State and Territory Government housing authorities' bedroom entitlement policies may differ from the CNOS which is used in dwelling utilisation calculations.

*State- and territory-specific issues:***Western Australia**

- The Housing Authority WA changed core systems during 2014–15 resulting in a number of differences in recording practices and an amalgamation of data from the old and new systems. The 2015–16 reporting period was the first full year in which the new system was the principal data source. Therefore, any comparisons with previous years for Western Australia data should be undertaken with caution.

South Australia

- Since 2012–13, Housing SA has been unable to provide the 'dwelling history' file which includes the variables necessary for the calculation of turnaround time.

Northern Territory

- Around 5,000 social housing dwellings in the Northern Territory were transferred from the Indigenous Community Housing collection to remote public housing between 2008 and 2010 and have been excluded from administrative data collections between 2008–09 and 2015–16, inclusive. In 2016–17, these dwellings were reported in the State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing collection.

Source and reference attributes

Submitting organisation: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Relational attributes

**Related metadata
references:**

Supersedes [Public Rental Housing Data Collection, 2015–16; Quality Statement](#)
[AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 22/12/2017

Has been superseded by [Public Rental Housing Data Collection, 2017–18; Quality Statement](#)
[AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 15/11/2019