



EMBARGOED UNTIL 12.01AM, APRIL 27 2017

## RENT DEEMED UNAFFORDABLE FOR REGIONS MOST VULNERABLE

New research has highlighted alarming statistics on rental affordability for the most vulnerable people in our local community- the young, the old and people living with a disability.

Research undertaken by Samaritans in April has shown that out of 68 available rental properties in the Cessnock area, affordable and appropriate rentals are hard to come by for people relying on support benefits, especially single income families where there were no options available.

Samaritans CEO, Peter Gardiner, said people who are most vulnerable because of other circumstance, be it age or disability, can often find themselves without proper supports and accommodation options, and then easily fall into a cycle of poverty.

“Over the past five years, we have seen no relief for people seeking affordable rental, and especially those supported by pension payments. Since our 2016 research, we have seen a decrease on the number of affordable and appropriate rentals available in the market, despite there being more properties available to rent,” Samaritans Chief Executive, Peter Gardiner said.

The research was undertaken by analysing the number of rental properties advertised during one day in April and assessing affordability (30% of weekly income on rent) and appropriateness (accessibility and number of bedrooms per family unit).

Samaritans Specialist Homelessness services listed housing affordability stress as being one of the top three reasons for people seeking support over the last twelve months.

“With almost half of the snapshot region on some form of income support, all levels of government must work together to inform and progress realistic social policy- increasing social housing, investing in the organisations who support the vulnerable and eliminating homelessness by making housing affordable and accessible to all,” Mr Gardiner said.

In the lead up to the Federal Budget, Samaritans along with the wider Anglicare Australia network, is calling for tax system reform that improves rental affordability for people who are struggling and a commitment to growing the supply of social housing.

“Governments are elected to care for people, and that means ensuring that everyone has a safe place to sleep at night- a place to call home. The market has failed and it’s time to address the poverty trap,” Mr Gardiner said.

**-ENDS-**

**Media are invited to contact Samaritans Communication Coordinator, Laura Dawson on 4960 7157 or 0438 475 772 for interview/photo opportunities.**