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## Regional Queensland hurting in census data

Census data released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows a disproportionate increase in regional Queenslanders experiencing homelessness compared to those living in Brisbane.

Overall numbers of people experiencing homelessness rose by approximately 800 persons State-wide and the rate in regional Queensland was a staggering 237 per 10,000 compared to 125 per 10,000 people in Brisbane.

Q Shelter, the peak body for the homelessness and affordable housing sector, said the census data confirms stories they have received from member organisations who have struggled to meet the need for housing assistance in their regions.

“Queensland has experienced the highest internal migration of any state in the country. For our regional areas, this has caused increasing pressure on limited support services already unable to meet demand,” said Q Shelter Executive Director Fiona Caniglia.

“Housing unaffordability in Brisbane and other locations contributes to this pressure, as people are pushed from the capital to historically more affordable regions but are now increasingly less likely to find housing they can afford.”

“And with vacancy rates as low as 0.4% in some regions, rental prices are soaring well beyond people’s ability to secure a home. In this time of crisis, we must consider reasonable rental market interventions as part of a healthier housing system.”

Despite the sobering increases in unaffordability revealed by reports including the National Rental Affordability Index (RAI) and CHIA’s National Unmet Housing Need, along with the overall increase in persons experiencing homelessness revealed by the 2021 census data, Q Shelter notes that there was a slight decrease in the state-wide average rate of homelessness per 10,000 people across Queensland.

“The 2021 Census was conducted in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when temporary housing support was being offered to people sleeping rough, or at risk of homelessness,” said Ms Caniglia.

“The way we rose to the challenge of securing temporary housing for vulnerable Queenslanders, during that time, shows the impact that can be made when all levels of government, the public, private, and community sectors rise to the challenge together.”

“More recently, the historic Housing Summit showed another example of the way forward towards building a healthy housing system for Queensland. The issues we are facing must

be addressed together by a broad range of stakeholders towards our common goal of a home for every Queenslanders.”

Along with the higher rates of homelessness amongst regional Queenslanders, Q Shelter also notes the increased prevalence of homelessness amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (up 6.4% from 23,437 in 2016) children (up 18.8%) and women over 55.

“There is still much more work to be done,” Ms Caniglia said. “A key focus of our policy framework is upstream, aimed at preventative programs of intensive support to reduce the number of children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and the number of children who emerge from childhood vulnerable to long-term homelessness.”

The increase of an additional 6,000 persons experiencing homelessness across Australia since 2016 points to the urgent need for national leadership, and Q Shelter joins National Shelter in calling for the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan and an immediate investment in social and affordable housing.

Q Shelter also repeats its call to the Federal Government to continue the Social and Community Services Employment Remuneration (ERO) supplementation payment, without which homelessness services in Queensland will see a shortfall of \$68 million over five years, equivalent to the loss of more than 80 frontline workers.

## **ENDS**

Media opportunities for comment by Q Shelter Executive Director, Fiona Caniglia, or Policy & Strategic Engagement Manager, Jackson Hills.

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### **About Q Shelter**

For over 35 years, Q Shelter has worked as a peak body to improve housing outcomes for Queenslanders.

Over this time, we have remained an unwavering voice for solutions through advocacy, strategic engagement and capacity building.

Besides influencing solutions and policy, Q Shelter provides professional development and shares resources to assist other organisations to be effective, so that our combined capacity to respond to housing need is strengthened.