

Affordable housing block set to open as vacancy rates hit 10-year low



By [Matt Dennien](#)

February 7, 2021 — 9.38pm

A new affordable housing complex in Brisbane's south will welcome the first tenants through its doors this month as rental vacancy rates across most of the city hit 10-year lows.

The Woolloongabba apartment building was completed last month after a year-long construction period, with the first tenants – four young people and a young family – moving in to the Cornwall Street site in the coming weeks.



An artist's impression of Woolloongabba's new residential housing block, which will welcome its first tenants this month.

Developed by not-for-profit Brisbane Housing Company, five of the 32 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments have been allocated specifically to young people already living in transitional housing supported by Brisbane Youth Service, with the aim to move them into long-term homes.

Kate, who graduated from high school in December, had been living in transitional housing for more than 12 months. She said it was tough for any person her age to find a place to live that was suitable and affordable.

Advertisement

“It has enabled me to finish school, to work, and it’s been really good because it’s convenient and there’s a lot of support,” she said. “Especially when I first moved in, I needed a lot of support.

“It’s really tricky. I have two jobs, I have a year’s worth of rental history, and it’s still not enough to get into most private rentals. It’s not really possible for a young person to have much more than that, especially if you’re 18 or 19.

“That’s why we need more social housing options that are affordable to young people. Otherwise, how do you ever get out of homelessness?”

December quarter data from the Real Estate Institute of Queensland showed fewer than 2 per cent of rental properties were available in suburbs outside the CBD.

Chief executive Antonia Mercorella said COVID-19 rental protections and the [migration of renters from interstate](#) had both contributed to the situation, which left 90 per cent of regional rental markets squeezed further.

“In the last six months, we’ve witnessed some record lows across capital city suburbs – figures we’ve certainly not seen for well over a decade,” Ms Mercorella said.

“It’s a similar scenario as you travel around the wider regions of Brisbane, including Ipswich, Logan, Moreton Bay and Redlands, which all have uncomfortably low stock levels around 1 per cent.”

Brisbane Housing Company chief executive Rebecca Oelkers said young people in need of housing had the “greatest difficulty” accessing affordable and safe accommodation due to their incomes and preconceptions about their ability to manage and sustain a tenancy.

“As the additional JobSeeker payments have now been reduced and the true fallout from COVID-19 becomes evident, we expect to see more young people pushed into poverty and homelessness,” she said.

Brisbane Youth Service chief executive Annemaree Callander said couch surfing was the most common form of homelessness experienced by young people, with a quarter of presentations to homelessness services those aged between 12 and 25.

“Despite this huge demand at the frontline, less than 3 per cent of people living in social housing are young people, showing that there are barriers for

young people in accessing all types of housing, not just private rentals,” Ms Callander said.

A 20 per cent rise in applications to Queensland’s public housing waiting list in less than a [year reignited calls for a construction boost](#) to meet still-growing demand and help drive COVID-19 recovery efforts in July.

The \$10.69 million Cornwall Street building is the first joint build under the Queensland government’s Partnering for Growth initiative. The government also provided the site and funding towards the project.

Tenancies are now being advertised to begin from mid- to late-February.