

ELIGIBILITY HURDLE

'Lift' income limit for housing

EXCLUSIVE

■ Phoebe Wearne

WA has the highest eligibility hurdle for public housing in Australia, with the amount a tenant is allowed to earn before they no longer qualify remaining unchanged for almost a decade.

A single adult cannot have an income of more than \$430 a week if they want to stay in their public housing property — a figure last reviewed in 2006, despite wages increasing 37.8 per cent over the period.

WA's income "eligibility limit" is lower than in all other States, with single tenants allowed to earn up to \$501 a week in Tasmania, \$519 in Victoria, \$560 in NSW, \$609 in Queensland and \$970 in South Australia.

Shadow housing minister Fran Logan has criticised the State Government for keeping the eligibility limit below the minimum wage, saying it is a "shocking tactic" to try to bring down the public housing waiting list.

There were 20,294 applications on the waiting list at the end of last month.

Mr Logan said the Government

should increase the eligibility limit to the award rate and build more public housing stock to shrink the waiting list.

"For people who are in (State housing) that are trying to move on and get their own place, it keeps them in their current situation," he said.

Single pensioner Enid Miller, 75, has lived in a public housing property in Mt Claremont for the past eight years but was last month told she could not continue to live there because she worked eight hours a week as a domestic cleaner.

Mrs Miller said she was upset to have been told to "give up your job or give up your unit", because her eight hours of work helped her stay fit and pay for her private health insurance.

She said the Housing Department had since backed down and told her she could stay in her home for another 12 months.

Department general manager of service delivery Steve Parry said the income eligibility limit was set in 2006 to ensure that public housing was targeted at those most in need.

Mr Parry said that other States

were starting to use more stringent indicators to assess housing needs.

Housing Minister Bill Marmion said the department was not undertaking a formal review of public housing eligibility limits but it constantly monitored housing demand and eligibility requirements.

Mr Marmion said the Government's affordable housing strategy was aimed at delivering affordable housing options for people on a range of incomes rather than expanding eligibility for social housing.

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