

Waiheke Island rental listings fall 47 per cent as Airbnb adds to housing shortage

Geraden Cann05:00, Jul 31 2021

The number of rentals listed on Auckland's [Waiheke Island](#) has dropped by 47 per cent in a year, leaving people struggling to find homes.

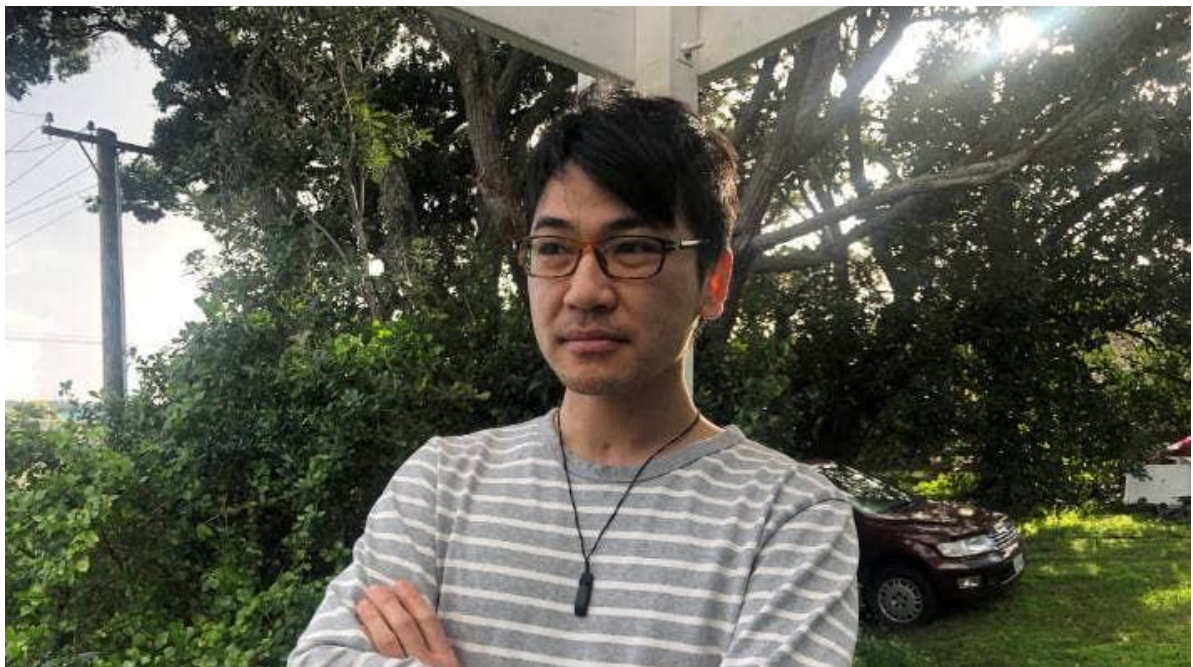
The online marketplace would not share how the fall translated into the number of rentals available, but when *Stuff* looked there were only seven rental properties listed on the island and only two flatmates wanted ads. Only one of the rentals was less than \$700 per week.

Waiheke Best Rentals property manager Nelly Toia said the shortage is being seen on the ground, with 30-40 residents applying for any rental that comes up. Two years ago, a standard listing would only attract three or four applications.

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It has left many local residents scrabbling to find rentals, and many have chosen to leave the island completely, according to Waiheke Budgeting Service manager Amelia Lawley.



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Waiheke resident and chef Danny Chang says a lack of rentals is leaving many locals in the lurch.

Danny Chang is one of the residents struggling to secure a long-term rental. He is living in his third property since he moved to the island a year and a half ago to work as a chef.

“I’m probably due to move again around October, so that will be the fourth place I’ve stayed at.

“A lot of places would rather have [Airbnb](#) clients in the summer time during the peak season.”

He moved out of his first property because his ten-month fixed term lease ended and the landlords wanted the flat over the Christmas period. His second property was too expensive to be sustainable after his partner moved away, and his current home was only available for six months.

“I have colleagues who might have lived here for 10 years and had to move around 10 times or more.”

Average rental cost falls after big rise

Rental prices have fallen since last year, according to TradeMe, with the median in April 2020 at \$710, which fell to \$645 in April this year.

This 13 per cent drop followed a jump of nearly a third in rental prices the year before.

Nelly Toia of Waiheke Best Rentals said she has noticed the dramatic drop in rental stock, and put it down to investors buying up the island and choosing to keep their properties empty.



Waiheke Best Rentals/Supplied

Nelly Toia of Waiheke Best Rentals says property listings are receiving 30-40 applications each as stocks disappear.

“You can see it at night when you drive around in summer all the lights are on, and in the winter you look up to around the areas and all the lights are off, so they are empty houses.”

Airbnb adding to rental crisis

Trade Me Property sales director Gavin Lloyd said there is a rental supply shortage nationwide, but Waiheke's is heavily influenced by tourism.

“It's likely that in response to the nationwide lockdown last year, a number of short-term rentals were moved onto the long-term market.



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Trade Me Property sales director Gavin Lloyd says Waiheke's rental shortage is heavily influenced by tourism.

“Now that domestic travel has picked up, many of these rental properties have been moved back onto the short-term market to satisfy demand from holidaymakers.”

Airbnb would not comment on how much of Waiheke's rental stock has been taken onto its platforms.

Waiheke Budgeting Service manager Amelia Lawley said Airbnbs and a glut of returning Kiwis buying on the island are making it the hardest market for residents she has ever seen.

“It's out of sight worse than it's ever been.”



Peter Rees/Supplied

Waiheke recently recorded a 71 per cent increase in asking prices for properties.

“We got really excited last year when the borders closed. Waiheke has been changed beyond recognition by tourism, and so we thought great – this is going to mean there will be a glut of houses because they won’t be able to get tourists to come and rent Airbnbs so those houses are going to go back into the regular rental market.”

It was a short-lived hope.

“There was a very brief period where there were more houses available, but that quickly changed when New Zealand tourism picked up.”

The shortage in rentals follows asking prices for properties on [Waiheke Island](#) increasing 71 per cent in a year, spurring fears the island is becoming a getaway for the rich.

Lawley knows a number of people who have bought on Waiheke after deciding to return to New Zealand as a result of Covid-19.

“There’s also a lot of empty houses over here, a lot of holiday homes. People who don’t want to rent their houses out full time, so they just keep them for the 13 days over Christmas.

“My mum lives on one of the more exclusive parts of the island, and she’s basically the only house that has lights on during the winter.”

Five years ago the affordable end of the market was in the \$400 per week range, but today Lawley said it is in the \$600 range.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/homed/housing-affordability/300367416/waiheke-island-rental-listings-fall-47-per-cent-as-airbnb-adds-to-housing-shortage?rm=a>