

We must speak up about our housing crisis...

April 12 2017

If you give New Zealanders the facts, most of us know what's a fair deal.

Most of us have a gut instinct that owning a home makes us more secure and stable. And if we were pressed, we'd say that home ownership builds healthier and happier individuals, families, and communities.

The research released by the Housing Foundation today demonstrates that our instincts here are right.

Three pieces of distinct, inter-related research demonstrate a direct link between decent housing; and healthier, happier, stronger, more resilient individuals, families, and communities.

This research also confirms, beyond doubt, that the housing scene in New Zealand is radically different from what it was 25 years ago – and those changes are for worse, not for better. For example, the research shows that:

- Between 1991 and 2015 the proportion of Kiwi households who owned their homes had shrunk from 74 percent to 64 percent.
- While over the same period the proportion of Kiwi households who rent had ballooned from 23 to 32 percent. Those are Statistics New Zealand figures.
- And that's saying nothing about the runaway cost of housing in our largest city, where today's research shows that 115,000 renters can't afford the median Auckland rent of \$540 per week.

We are at a tipping point.

Families are paying to live in places that are simply not fit to live in, places that make them and their children sick. There are no consequences for landlords, but significant consequences for all taxpayers who pick up the costs of the consequences.

Churches and church agencies up and down the country are directly supporting those who are struggling, and our people at the coalface tell us that things are not improving.

They are seeing *more* signs of need, *greater* levels of poverty, *more* stress, and a *growing* gap between those who have, and those who do not have.

This is an issue for all New Zealanders. We need to raise our voices in support of the right of everyone to a dry, warm, safe and secure home – and we call upon all political parties to provide policies that will deliver this.

We need to raise our voices against the 'wisdom' that suggests that market forces can and should meet the need. Because this Housing Foundation research, and our experience, proves they do not.

Councils, governments, private property owners, and investors *all* have a role to play to make the housing system in New Zealand work better to meet the needs of all Kiwis.

We believe that every person is created in the image of God, and that every person has the right to flourish. But no-one in poverty can flourish.

Ensuring everyone has a dry, warm, safe and secure home is the single most important thing we can do to lift all New Zealanders out of poverty.

A generation ago, owning your own home was an achievable aspiration for most New Zealanders. *We must not let that aspiration go – we must not sell off our Kiwi birth right.*

Signed:

Cardinal John Dew (Catholic Church) and Archbishop Philip Richardson (Anglican Church)