



ANZASW press release on state housing sales

A cruel trick on the poor

Social workers are appalled to learn that state houses may be sold to commercial landlords with no guarantee that they would remain available for those in most need.

These houses are an asset not a liability, they should remain public property, and we are not surprised to hear that the voluntary sector, including the Salvation Army, does not have the resources to purchase and operate them.

Increasing the amount available for income related rent subsidies will make more money available to commercial landlords, without necessarily benefiting the poor. The government needs to be very careful about this.

The experience of having elder care and child care facilities operated at a cost to government and a profit to investors based on a low-waged work force does not give us confidence in the model. The best and maybe the only way to ensure that New Zealand continues to be able to house those most in need is to retain and operate the service publicly.

Getting adequate accommodation, even getting secure tenure of a state house, is already a difficult challenge to many of our clients. We see the sale of state rental properties on the open market as a cruel trick on those least able to fend for themselves in an open profit-driven housing market.

We ask the government to think again before disposing of this socially valuable asset without a commitment to replace and increase the stock.

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