

## **Media Statement on proposed reforms for Public Housing**

Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW).

Social workers are deeply concerned about the impact of proposed reforms to public housing. Basic security requires a stable home. Inadequate housing is a profound social harm. While we welcome Mr Key's objective of seeing that those who need housing support get it, we think he is overlooking impacts of these changes for communities as well as for those who are renting.

State ownership and management of public housing has worked well in the past to ensure stability. Housing New Zealand has begun to address the negative health effects of an inadequate environment by bringing some of the scruffily built houses up to a 'warrant of fitness' standard. But association members tell us the shortage is such and the wait list so long that they have to advise some very needy people not to bother to apply.

The proposed reforms do little to address the fact that there are too few houses and apartments for the population and that this affects those who are most disadvantaged.

ANZASW does not oppose the sale of houses to tenants – indeed we recognise that a neighbourhood where people are settled for good is a stable community. This is also the reason that there need to be sufficient dwellings for tenants not to be moved on when they can afford a higher rental – if the government charges a market rental they are not making a loss on the property. There need to be more state houses not fewer!

Some of our members work for local government or community trusts who are great specialist providers, but we know of none with the capital to buy up all available state houses. It's a nonsense to say the houses for sale are of no use – try telling that to the people who live there or are expected to buy them. The government seems to be greedy for the profit from suburbs where values are going up, but these are good places to settle families. The egalitarian dream is not finished. [ends]

### **Contacts**

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