

'Housing Crisis Requires Radical Solutions'

As academics, researchers and experts in the area of housing, economics, social policy and human rights, we would like to outline our serious concerns with current housing policy.

Our housing system is not experiencing a temporary blip or a 'market correction'. Rather, the current crisis is the manifestation of deep structural problems in housing policy and the philosophy that underpins it. Unless there is a radical change, we believe the crisis will simply deepen and worsen.

The housing emergency is jeopardising the productive capacity of the economy, threatening the recovery and, most importantly, damaging our social fabric by denying the opportunity of a secure affordable home to hundreds of thousands of people across the country, including students, workers, those with disabilities, older people, and those on housing waiting lists.

However, this crisis can be resolved and there are effective measures that can be introduced: We propose:

- A new guiding framework for policy to address the perpetual housing crisis comprehensively. This framework should be underpinned by a human rights approach, obliging government to ensure that people's need for an affordable, accessible and secure home is met.
- To this end, we should hold a referendum to enshrine the right to housing in the Constitution
- We should emulate countries that provide successful housing systems, like Austria and Denmark, where the social housing sector comprises between 25% and 45% of total housing stock.
- The state should use its land bank and 'fiscal space' to increase the building and provision of public housing dramatically, for a mix of incomes (including cost rental) and household types.
- Derelict properties should be subject to CPOs by local authorities and brought back into use
- The recommendations of the Kenny Report on acquisition of land should be implemented, and the Vacant Land tax increased and brought forward.
- Private rents should be affordable and tenancies secure, with tenants having the option of life time tenancy.

· Emergency legislation should be introduced to make it illegal for landlords, banks and investment funds to evict tenants and homeowners in mortgage distress into homelessness.

Those affected by the crisis have a right to express their concerns through peaceful protest.

Indeed, the public demand for alternative policies, such as outlined above, can play a vital role in shifting policy on a better path.

That is why we support the Raise the Roof rally taking place outside Dail Eireann on October 3rd.

We also support the broad thrust of the policies outlined in the cross-party Housing Private Members Motion agreed by a range of opposition parties, which will be debated in the Dail on the same day.

The housing crisis can be resolved. It will require institutional and political will to implement policies that can ensure everyone has access to an affordable, secure home in a well-planned community.

Yours,

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