



Media Release

Old “pavlova paradise” thinking a hurdle to affordable housing target

New Zealand will not achieve the government’s target to build 35,000 affordable homes in six years unless we throw out old ways of thinking, says New Zealand Infrastructure chief.

Stephen Selwood, Chief Executive of Infrastructure New Zealand is speaking at this week’s Community Housing Aotearoa conference in Nelson and says the old ways of building homes, house by house and builder by builder have got to go.

“Our culture has been around the quarter acre pavlova paradise. A single house on a single section built one by one, block by block. But if we really want to reduce the cost of housing we need to reduce the amount of land we consume, build up instead of out and shift to modular construction of new homes at scale. We should be looking at developments of five hundred or more homes at a time. We need to be creating new communities to achieve the transformation we need.”

Stephen Selwood says New Zealand is lagging behind countries such as Australia and Canada where strong partnerships between community housing organisations and private sector developers have been successful in creating mixed tenure mixed development communities at scale.

In New Zealand, he says there is resistance to intensified redevelopment exemplified by the objections to Auckland council’s unitary plan.

“People have not seen what good urban development looks like and when you start talking about intensification it conjures up student apartment developments in Auckland’s CBD or high rise isolated tower buildings in Britain and people don’t want a bar of it.”

He says New Zealand needs good examples to show there is a good way of achieving intensification. A model development on land in Tamaki offers an ideal opportunity.

“The Creating Communities redevelopment of 270 new homes in Northern Glen Innes is a good start. The initiative will create more housing choices in the area – including homes for first home buyers and for the general market, as well as 78 new state homes. A key part of the plan is to build on strengths of the community that exists in Glen Innes, encouraging new opportunities, and enhancing a greater sense of community pride and belonging.”

“I’d like to see this kind of development extended further with strong partnership between the development industry, equity investors including iwi, the banks and community housing organisations providing place management and wrap around support services for those who need it.

“In Glenn Innes, we need to create a whole new community that’s a nice place to live, affordable to buy into, has good amenities around it and provides good social interaction. There needs to be a mixture of private and social housing and mixed tenures alongside amenities like shopping, parks, and relative proximity to jobs,” he says.

Stephen Selwood says the government could provide state housing land and go to community housing organisations and private sector providers and ask them what it would take to deliver what is needed.

He says more leadership from government is needed to support interest from the community and business sectors. Government will also need to provide subsidy through transfer of existing state housing stock or commitment of existing social support budgets to fund the provision of necessary wrap around services for socially disadvantaged tenants. But if existing budgets can be redeployed to deliver better long term results that has to be a good outcome for government and the local communities.

The government is slowly making changes with its support for community housing organisations creating a competitive model to the traditional Housing New Zealand model, but could do more to put long term funding and settings in place.

“Community Housing Organisations are doing a fantastic job. We need more partnerships between them and our urban property developers who specialise in this redevelopment delivery model at scale. Let’s test the model.”

[ends]

For more information:

Stephen Selwood, Infrastructure New Zealand 021 791 209

Scott Figenshow, Community Housing Aotearoa 021 061 9664