

NZPI MEDIA RELEASE

Need for Constructive Solutions to Lack of Affordable Housing

In a recent set speech the Hon Bill English has once again attributed inequality, poverty and the lack of affordable housing within New Zealand to ‘planners’, citing Auckland as the ‘most evident indication of the problem.’

The regions of New Zealand face quite different pressures. Land availability and housing affordability are not typically problems that confront provincial New Zealand and yet poverty is very evident in our provinces. This in itself should suggest that there is no one single catalyst at work here, albeit planners who recommend planning regulations or the local government councillors who endorse or reject them. All of which operate within a nationally determined and owned planning legislative regime.

Local planning policy is but one piece of the jigsaw that can be used to influence housing affordability and not a large piece at that. Other pieces of the puzzle that have a significant impact on levels of affordable housing are the inability to build at scale, the relatively high cost of building materials within New Zealand, land banking by developers, our tax structure, our interest rates and profiteering.

Simply releasing land for housing does unfortunately not equate to more affordable houses, if that were the case then the Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Act 2013 (HAASAA) operating within Auckland could be reasonably expected to already have taken the heat out of the affordable housing issue within that region.

HAASAA is just one example of where planners are being innovative in responding to the vexatious issue of housing affordability; the Act reduces notification requirements and appeal rights, emphasises urban design and allows a proposed plan to be implemented and varied before submissions are heard and decided.

NZPI encourages the Hon Bill English to constructively consider a raft of issues that could make a real difference to the affordable housing issue within Auckland, for example, discouragement of land banking through investor incentives, development of new infrastructure funding policies and building material competition within New Zealand.

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