

**CONFERENCE OF LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**CLRI (NSW)**

ABN 52 476 362 010  
Member of Catholic Church Religious Group

The Honourable Daryl Melham  
Australian Labor Party  
Parliament House  
Canberra

Thursday 24 June, 2004

Dear Mr Melham,

**Re: the crisis in housing**

I write on behalf of the CLRI Justice committee, a group representing the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW. CLRI includes approximately 4,000 Catholic Religious and their associates.

We write to express our growing concern about the deteriorating housing situation in Australia, as outlined at the Housing Summit this week in Canberra. It is clear that real estate trends are set to cause a huge rise in economic inequality in Australia, as the unprecedented property boom concentrates wealth in the hands of the already wealthy.

As experts pointed out at the Summit, housing in Australia has been traditionally the great leveller. Cheap land historically has allowed ordinary workers and poor immigrants to buy into the Australian dream, and high rates of home ownership have meant that wealth is more evenly shared here than in many parts of the world.

This situation has reversed in recent years as, increasingly, housing is becoming the great divider. With affordability at record lows, the Housing Summit has heard evidence that the property boom has increased the economic distance between the old and the young, between rich and poor. Tax concessions are benefiting both property investors, and homeowners and owner-occupiers, who possess about 75 per cent of the housing wealth in Australia. Since our tax system allows owner occupiers, when they sell the home to possess it totally tax free, the biggest gains for the tax system are going to owner-occupiers.

Unless the Government is prepared to consider policies reversing the current trends, enacting legislation and funding, which demonstrate its commitment to housing as a universal human right, and not merely as a safety net for

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situations of extreme need, the gaps in wealth and opportunity opened up by the property boom are set to increase massively in the not too distant future.

We look forward to receiving your response to the recommendations to the Housing Summit.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Barnett rsj  
(CLRI NSW)

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