

SYFSClarificationInquirySocialHousing2021

19 November 2021

Dora Oravec
Committee Manager
Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Re: Potential inquiry into options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage

Dear Dora,

Please accept the following clarifications to my evidence provided to the above committee inquiry on 8 November 2021.

The figure cited in my evidence – that there are 70,000 homes vacant in Sydney due to speculation – was publicly reported as 68,000¹. The number is based on the reported number of vacant homes on census night in 2016, paired with analysis of water usage from Prosper Australia. As this analysis is based upon water usage data and determines usage of less than 50 litres per day as vacant, this would exclude properties that are used as short-term rentals or holiday homes.

Speculative vacancy – where property is held vacant purely for speculative purposes – treats property merely as an investment opportunity, divorced of its social function. The issue of speculative vacancy is a growing concern, which has been criticized by the UN Special Rapporteur on housing.² This process affects both old and new properties and has become more acute due to improvements in cartographic and algorithmic processes for identifying investment opportunities and locations.³ Speculative vacancy remains a particular concern as the housing system works its way through the pandemic and due attention should be paid to this issue throughout the inquiry.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further clarification and thank you for the opportunity to participate in this inquiry.

Kind Regards,

Craig Lyons
Senior Project Worker
Southern Youth and Family Services.

¹ <https://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/skewed-priorities-two-vacant-properties-for-every-homeless-person-in-nsw/>, <https://www.thebigsmoke.com.au/2021/05/07/there-are-two-vacant-properties-for-each-homeless-person-in-nsw-law-homeless-person/>

² Davy, B. (2020). 'Dehumanized housing' and the ideology of property as a social function. *Planning Theory*, 19(1), 38–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095219848469>

³ Noterman, E. (2021) 'Speculating On Vacancy.' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 00, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12477>