

ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK SOUTH AUSTRALIA



MEDIA RELEASE

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‘Use It Or Lose It’: Governments Must Use Levies And Compulsory-Acquisition To Target Vacant Houses

To mark Homelessness Week, Anti-Poverty Network SA has [released a new paper calling for the Malinauskas Government to take radical action tackling the thousands of long-term empty dwellings across SA](#), including a vacant houses levy, and using its compulsory-acquisition powers. Anti-Poverty Network SA is calling for the Malinauskas Government to:

- **Introduce a vacant houses levy**, that would steeply rise for those with multiple unused dwellings
 - The levy would start at 0.5% of property-value, but dramatically increase for those with multiple empty homes, with a maximum 20% marginal rate for those with empty houses with a combined worth over \$6.812 million
- **Use its compulsory-acquisition powers** to purchase empty houses when there is non-payment of the levy, as well as other dwellings kept empty long-term, to add to public housing supply

The number of vacant houses could be as many as 20,000, just in the Greater Adelaide region, according to expert analysis. With over 7,000 people homeless, and almost 14,000 people on the public housing waiting-list, the Malinauskas Government must use every tool at its disposal.

Anti-Poverty Network SA spokesperson John Kempen said: *“It’s unconscionable to leave thousands of habitable houses empty while people reside in cars or tents, or struggle to pay their rent. While there are valid reasons why houses are kept, we know there are thousands of dwellings sitting empty, sometimes for years, simply because of investor preferences. We need a housing system that treats housing as a fundamental need and right, not a commodity.*

A steep vacant houses levy and compulsory-acquisition are two tools that could help tackle this emergency. These measures would reduce competition for rentals, increase affordability, and boost public housing supply, at a time when building new houses is being slowed down by labour and materials shortages. Governments purchase homes for widening roads, why not use those same powers, for housing those desperately in need?”

But with rents soaring, and community need for public housing substantial, we also need State Government to:

- Implement an emergency 2-year rent-freeze, to give renters some stability after years of huge rent rises, followed by strict rent-caps
- Boost the number of new public homes being built per year, committing to a longer-term target of 20,000 new public homes (reversing the 20,000 public homes sold between 2000-2020)

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