



## Notes of the Christchurch Housing Forum – 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020

**Facilitator:** Lisa Coulter  
**Note taker:** Sarah Wang  
**Presenters:** Leilani Farha

**Jill Hawkey** (*Executive Director from Christchurch Methodist Mission*)

Acknowledgement to everyone and especially to Leilani Farha for coming to Christchurch and spending time with us. Today we are expecting to have a conversation rather than doing a presentation.

**Leilani Farha** (UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing)

My NZ tour is an official visit which is a 10-days mission in terms of housing, and we are looking at the following aspects to see what NZ government are doing compared with the international standard.

These aspects include:

- whether people enjoy the rights to adequate housing.
- housing adequacy/affordability/displacement/cultural adequacy/ social services...etc, particularly to the vulnerable groups.

And if they can't get them, is there a place for people to claim their right to housing? I will meet government officials from all level regarding what they should be doing based on human rights law and see if they are consistent with obligation - the rights to decent home.

Today is day-8 mission in Christchurch, I have met the earthquake victims/survivors this morning, which is very moving. From this forum I expect you to tell me about housing in Christchurch and I encourage you all to speak up as your stories will all contribute to the conversation. There will be an end-mission statement published in Wellington. It includes the preliminary findings from 10-days touring in NZ and it is expected to make contribution to the National Housing Strategy and my successor will report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva at international forum on March 2021. Therefore, this will be the opportunity for NZ to speak for yourself.

However, report is not meaningful unless we do something with it.

Most rapporteurs in UN have to develop the content of human rights themselves. For example, I actually run a NGO in Canada called Canada without poverty:  
<http://www.cwp-csp.ca/about-us/staff/>





I have used international mechanism to support my work and advocacy. In my last report I have sent a guideline of the implementation of right to adequate housing so you can use the whole body of my work under the NZ context to push forward.

So now I will open up and let you tell me what I need to know.

Q: Robin Tinga

I have particular interest in accessibility in Housing, especially for the elderly or people with disability or by accident. When I see a lot of property with stairs (like the one from Kāinga Ora) My question is: is there a universal design for housing which can be implemented by NZ government? I observed that people living in the car or being isolated and the reason for is the house is just not available for them. It also makes it difficult to visit homes without accessibility.

Q: Ofa Boyle

I would like to identify the problem from the transitional housing at the moment is that we lack big houses for larger family (eg. family has 6 children) so the families split between NZ and the Pacific Islands. This issue seems to be more serious among indigenous/pasifika/migrants' groups.

Q: Leanne Bayler

How can we cope with financialization of housing? The government has mentioned that there will be more 2-bedroom homes by 2048 while we have developer that built 3-bedroom home. Councils don't have a say in the covenants on developers. How do we know that the council doesn't have sway over government which make sure those developers provide more affordable homes and also right types of homes for the future? And how can we work collaboratively together?





A: Leilani Farha

One tool that governments can use to redirect the housing under the human rights obligation is by regulation.

What could be the inclusionary scene in NZ?

eg. In Montreal (mayor 2020 rule)

20% New builds

20% Social Housing

20% Affordable Housing (use market Rent for affordability measure)

20% Larger Units for family (fit into migrant population)

If you belong to none of above, you need to pay certain amount of money to Affordable Housing Fund and city council will take the money and redirect to build houses which fit above category.

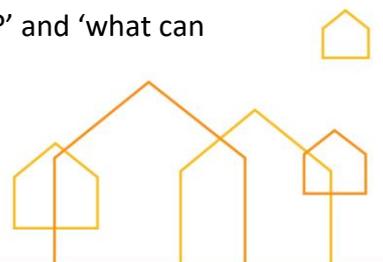
Tax are good for raising resources but it needs to be targeted and tied.

Q: Vicki Tahou

I think the houses own by the council or Housing NZ have unacceptable standard which breaches the human rights. For example, there is a flat in Hei-Hei suburb which has serious moisture problem. Another example would be families have to share a sleep-out or garages in order to stay together. The government gives up to \$4000 fine to the landlord whose house did not meet the standard while leave those social housing which not meet the human standards. Homeownership is hard in NZ with limited affordable houses within the community. For vulnerable group like indigenous people or refugees, it is even harder to get a property. How can we address these challenges?

Q: Margaret Duggan

I have an American mother so what I have seen in the United States was that the government made a very low entry level to let the families stay in the community through the likes of trailer parks. However, the government here are not making the community available to people - which is possible! There are so many unclaimed land here that could have tiny homes on them and I think the government should broaden their scope in terms of 'what housing is?', 'What is possible?' and 'what can be done?'





A: Leilani Farha

It is great to see advocates started to identify the property that already existed. Advocates are finding the vacant land and putting people on. And I think that's why we need an advocacy to push the government while identify the social need at the same time. Since it is about rejuvenating the property or upgrade the property while providing social support, kind of housing-first-model in a way. We need to have creativity and flexibility to solve the problem and keep pushing.

Q: Beth Nielson

I have a client who has difficulty finding place to live because she has 4 cats. She needs security and flexibility to have her cats as she needs them for her mental health. I think there is a special need for pet people and the legislation for them so it can lead to long-term capacity to care. As a social advocate I see a lot of homeless people who treat the pets as part of family.

We need housing that also treats pets as family, I know US has the shelter to accommodate people and accept their pets as well.

Q: Maire Kipa

I work with people to help them find a home and I found that houses in Christchurch is getting worse since the earthquake. Also that parents in custody or in prison has to face the problem of where they can go after out of prison. Usually the Children and teenager has to be shifted due to the circumstances change, the motel is often the option but there will be personal safety concern and the gang situation may remain unsafe for kids and their family. Therefore, I think more effort should be around community for people out from jail or children out from state care. Poverty concept is abstract in NZ and the policy are not working. We need to build up a collective network so that we can build up the capability building and stop the financialization.

Q: Rhys Head

I'd like to contribute a positive story from Te Ngai Tuahuriri which is the Maori Reserve Land owners. It is the first home which was built on a Maori reserve land in the past 90 years after earthquake built to Homestar 7 & Lifemark 5. As a housing company we tried to make housing affordable as well as support NGO.





Q: Simon Atkinson

City Council has built a lot of houses around 1977 and life has changed a lot in the past 50 years.

Q: Amelia Rees

Part of my role is to work with regions nationwide motelliers.

We are acting to react. It has changed and it seems like social housing become the only answer which I personally disagree with.

The stats showed that there are 191.000 ghost houses in NZ, 39.000 from above are sit in Auckland. Another example is that people has to pay \$700 for a 4-bedroom house in Lower Hutt Wellington to accommodate the family of 6 and the family may only earn \$700 per week. We have houses but no legislation for it. Instead of being a home these properties become the assets in stock market. However, we are not going to address the affordability problem if we don't deal with the capitalism at the top. If we have 8000 houses, 230,000 people could be home tomorrow.

**A: Leilani Farha**

I've been waiting and wanting to hear that since the session started. My question has always been like: are you sure we have supply problem? This is the first time I heard anyone articulate this conversation and point out there are some supply but not to the people in need.

In London, 25-30% houses are placed in inclusionary zone while Montreal has the same percentage. However, I think the inclusionary zone needs are different to different city. For example, are you sure 30% market is necessary? where is that percentage come from? the poor from the lower end of income spectrum are struggling to get houses while we build high-end units. It is not human rights driven and meet people's needs. It is developer/ economy driven.

Q: Quick Comment

In response to the Ghost House that Auckland mayor Phil Goff has started a conversation around water care, utility usage, landlord rights, private ownership...etc.





Q: Nathan Beale

We are nationwide organization in the Christchurch market which has a regional-based strategy.

There are around 10% of the Ghost Houses in Canterbury region while we are having 1400 people registered, which means 400 people have been put in the motels every quarter and that cost government 4 million dollars (Used to be around 600-700 people registered 5 years ago). At the moment there are 1200 bedrooms available on Trademe and 50-60 1-bedroom units in central city which cost them \$380-\$450 per week with no parking (Christchurch City Council aims to move 2000 people into CBD). I think the problem is we put too much focus on Auckland and the issue is not addressed here. Actually the homeless problem can be solved overnight with a simple strategy. Also, if we can solve Canterbury problem, people may be interested in moving here.

We have problem such as slum landlord and discrimination. We live in a very racist city, especially for the indigenous people. the work we do is trying to get people out of motel and move them into the private rental but sometimes it's very hard.

Q: Leeann Apps

I would like to mention another aspect around housing issue. The work I involved with after the earthquake is around housing and I think the biggest issue is the building cost monopoly which held by Fletchers as they own all the raw supply, distribution chains, commercial entities to finish the product, which makes it hard to own an affordable home.

Q: Paul Cottom

The housing in Christchurch is market-driven so the social and affordable housing is difficult and challenging. We are forever playing catch-up. It is really good to have some government leadership direction for assessing the housing issue. As the rental demand goes up, the conversation should be around how we are going to house people and improve the infrastructure in the community as well as find the balance between social/ market/ affordable housing.

