

The ninth Speculative Vacancies report was released in early April and received significant media coverage. From drivetime mornings with Jon Faine, to half-hourly ABC new bulletins to prominence in the *Australia Financial Review*, the report promotes the need for a better understanding of land use. Mainstream analysis of housing vacancy only looks at 'advertised' vacancy, ignoring the growing role of speculative vacancies held off the market by investors.

The report brings us into contact with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the State Revenue Office and the Victorian Treasury. Behind the scenes we work to educate policy wonks alongside the general public that the role of property investment has forever changed the way we treat a place to call home. Now more than ever we need to ensure the maintainance of Australia's progressive Land Tax system.

We are concerned at recent trends such as the privatisations of state land titles offices, the Victorian loophole allowing the site values of heritage buildings to be valued at \$1 (despite \$14 million rental incomes) and the indexation of NSW state land tax thresholds to median land values. Attacks on Site Value Rating continue. Alongside these sits the policy fraud behind the Victorian regional first home buyer scheme and FHB stamp duty discounts.

With the property lobby recently complaining about paying an additional \$8.5 billion in property taxes - despite national land values increasing by \$2.18 trillion post 2012 - we need your support. Please consider becoming a member via prosper.org.au/join. One of Australia's rising comedians recently commented that we provide housing analysis 'unlike anything else out there'. Donations gladly accepted.

Please read these pages with an eye on housing supply. If supply is the cornerstone of government affordability policy, then one should be concerned at the plummeting numbers of houses currently entering the market. Just when supply is set to deliver affordability, defeat is snatched from the jaws of victory. Or perhaps this core design flaw

is part of the plan?

Poor economic analysis has allowed rent-seeking to flourish. Perhaps buying and selling property from a phone whilst on holiday was what Thorstein Veblen had in mind when writing *'The Theory of the Leisure Class'*. John August delves into the anthropological perspective of this provocative thinker.

Tony Graddon then gives insights on the extent of tax subsidies for real estate speculation. He writes "The Federal government is providing a real estate tax subsidy that has grown to \$10 billion per year. This has driven the total value of residential real estate to increase by \$100 billion per year in excess of disposable income."

New Zealand's George Grey was a powerful figure during the birthing of the progressive nation. Karl Williams provides another compelling insight in his *Geoists in History* series, including observations from the famous 1890 meeting between Henry George and Grey.

The Georgist movement has been shocked by the passing of Lindy Davies (*Henry George Institute*). Thousands have undertaken his online Georgist course over the years. He was such a decent Georgist that when he sent through the article *A Moral Structure to Address Climate Change* just a few weeks ago, I gladly accepted.

Unfortunately Lindy and his family were victims of America's privatised health system, such that his wife Lisa Cooley set up a fundraiser to cover the \$79,000 in related debts. Please give if you can - www.gofundme.com/lindy-davies-and-his-family-need-your-help

We also pay tribute to one of the region's most stoic Georgists in Bob Keall, who likewise passed away in April. Bob always impressed in his ability to critique global institutions such as the World Bank long before it became a catch cry to denounce neo-liberalism.

Our Monthly Discussion is 'Who Owns Outer Space?' with writer Angela Dennis, Wednesday May 29.