**Press release – section 12**

***The Missing 2016 Review* – Are home-ownership levels really falling?**

**24 July 2017**

Michael Chamberlain and Michael Littlewood have launched what they say is the review of retirement income policies that New Zealand should have received from the Retirement Commissioner in December 2016. Their report is called *The Missing 2016 Review – building trust for life beyond work* and is available online at [www.alt-Review.com](http://www.alt-review.com/).

This press release looks at the gaps in home-ownership data: we do not know whether home-ownership rates are falling and that’s not good enough.

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**Summary:** We do not know whether home ownership levels are falling as the Census questions (since 1996) have been porous. Until we have accurate data, we do not know if there is an issue to be concerned about. Having a paid-off home by retirement age is an important objective for savers.

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*The Missing 2016 Review – building trust for life beyond*, a new report by Michael Chamberlain and Michael Littlewood, says that we do not know whether home-ownership rates are falling in New Zealand. Many commentators cite the apparently steady fall since a peak in 1991.

Chamberlain and Littlewood say, however, that Censuses have failed to gather accurate information because the questions have been so porous.

“We now (2013) have no information on the ownership, or the relationship between occupier and owner for more than one fifth of all 1.76 million dwellings in New Zealand – that’s a total of 362,000 dwellings. So, when Statistics New Zealand say that home-ownership peaked in 1986 and 1991 Censuses and has been falling since, we say the evidence doesn’t necessarily support that.”

What can we say?

“On ‘ownership’ all we can really say is that, of the 79.3% of all dwellings for which we have some details on tenure in 2013, 60.7% either own them directly or through a family trust. That is not good enough. The questions must change for the 2018 Census if we want to understand the tenure of occupied dwellings and the status of unoccupied dwellings. It may already be too late for that.”

Chamberlain and Littlewood suggest that a more accurate, indirect measure of home-ownership may be the proportion of occupiers who are paying rent. Rent-payers have been less than 30% of all ‘declared’ tenures since 1956 – an average over the 57 years to 2013 of 25.3%. That proportion has varied but hasn’t been greater than 30% since the 1950s. “That leaves the other 70%+ less-than-accurately accounted for.”

“No-one really knows whether home-ownership rates are currently falling and, in the context of New Zealanders’ financial preparation for retirement, we need better information. We cannot even start a discussion about home ownership issues without answers to some fairly basic questions.”

*The Missing 2016 Review* finishes its analysis of the home-ownership issue with the four questions that Statistics New Zealand should be asking in the 2018 Census. The authors suggest that it may be too late for next year’s Census to be finding out whether home-ownership is even something we should be worried about.

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**Contact details:**

Michael Chamberlain Michael Littlewood

**E** Michael@mcanz.co.nz **E** MichaelR.Littlewood@gmail.com

**P** +64 9 930 7772 **P** +64 9 5200 367

**M** +64 21 890 999 **M** +64 21 677 160

**Report accessible at:**

[www.alt-Review.com](http://www.alt-review.com/)

* Full report downloadable;
* Also, each of the 22 sections;
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