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MEDIA RELEASE

Housing bodies invite UK expert to advise on affordability crisis

Director of economic affairs for the British Home Builders Federation, John Stewart, is in Australia this month to address industry and government on the steady decline of housing affordability.

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA), which today (6 August) released '*An industry report into affordable home ownership in Australia*', invited the UK expert to Australia to undertake a number of key speaking engagements next week.

Mr Stewart was the first to publish a report on the United Kingdom's housing supply crisis and is a strong supporter of the sophisticated unit that has been set up by the UK government to address the crisis.

The UK expert's first speaking appointment will be at a special industry briefing by the UDIA and the Residential Development Council (RDC) of the Property Council of Australia at the Canberra Press Club on August 13.

Federal ministers, shadow ministers and backbenchers and their representatives have been invited to attend the function along with public sector and industry experts.

UDIA President Grant Dennis and RDC Executive Director Ross Elliott said the industry briefing would provide federal politicians and senior public servants with greater detail on the current housing affordability crisis in Australia and solutions being implemented in the UK to address the problems there.

"The United Kingdom is some years ahead of Australia both in terms of the severity of the chronic housing affordability problem that has developed over there but also in their sophisticated approach to remedying the problem," they said.

"While we recognise that each country's situation is quite unique, we are hopeful that research into international models will provide direction to the Australian response."

The UDIA today called on the federal government to immediately implement a Ministerial Council on Housing Affordability to ensure that appropriate national strategies are developed.

The Institute has recommended that the first action of the Ministerial Council be to establish a National Housing Policy Research Unit, similar to that in the United Kingdom.

"If government fees and charges are increased, or land is released or withheld, we need to know what actual impact this is likely to have on housing affordability so we can constantly monitor what is happening in the marketplace," said Mr Dennis.

"Complex economic modelling needs to be undertaken and independent advice on planning schemes provided to local authorities so that we avoid the pitfalls into the future," he said.

Following his Canberra briefing, Mr Stewart will speak at an industry event in Sydney on Wednesday, August 15 and at the UDIA (Qld) State Conference to be held at Cooloom on August 17.

The undersupply of British markets was identified by John Stewart in his article "Building a Crisis" which was published in June 2002 and Mr Stewart is a regular speaker at major events associated with the housing industry throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr Stewart is an independent housing economist, holds an MSc in Economics, an MA in English, and is a highly regarded conference speaker.

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Media:

The UDIA Report '*An industry report into affordable home ownership in Australia*' is available for viewing and download at: www.udia.com.au. For more information or to interview Grant Dennis, please contact Susan McCosker on 0422 567 667.