

Leader

PUT EMPTY HOUSES TO BETTER USE

LEADER revealed new research last week that indicates there are more houses and flats sitting empty in Melbourne than there are people queuing for public housing.

Tax reform lobby group Prosper Australia says data from water companies shows that 24,872 properties in Melbourne used zero litres of water per day in 2014. It's fair to assume these properties are vacant.

A further 57,000 properties used less than 50 litres per day, so are likely also to be unused.

These figures will be startling news to the 32,500 people who were on the waiting list in December for public housing.

It begs the question: is there any way to entice owners of vacant properties to make them available for rent or sale?

In a free market economy, owners have the right to leave their premises empty if they wish.

But one innovative solution might be for governments to consider land tax relief, or rates relief, to encourage vacant housing to be made available for public housing, even temporarily.

This might be a cheaper option than using millions of taxpayer dollars to provide and maintain housing for a waiting list of people that never seems to end.