

Media Release

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Attention: Newsdesk/News editor

Issued: Wednesday 4 February, 2009



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE



Overhaul called on housing taxes as affordability remains at record lows

Australia's complex and contradictory set of government subsidies and taxes on housing needs an overhaul, according to Melbourne Law School Associate Professor Miranda Stewart.

"Our governments intervene massively in housing through the tax system. Problems of affordability and inefficiencies are well known but systematic reform is lacking."

Associate Professor Stewart, Director of the Law School Tax Group and a Governor of the Australian Tax Research Foundation, will host a symposium on housing and tax reform next week.

"In Australia's federal tax system, housing receives many tax breaks", says Stewart, "but state and local governments rely heavily on transfer duties, land tax, rates and levies for nearly half of their tax revenues. Duties deter residential mobility while new international evidence suggests housing tax breaks may contribute to house price bubbles and busts. Fiscal subsidies for environmental sustainability may improve housing stock but must be considered in light of the overall tax transfer system."

The *'Housing and Taxation Economics and Law Research Symposium'* brings together international and Australia academic experts including Professor Steve Malpezzi (University of Wisconsin, USA), Professor John Freebairn (University of Melbourne) and Professor Peter Abelson (University of Sydney) with key state and federal policy makers.

"Melbourne University is also excited to be working with RMIT, who are hosting a Forum on housing, mortgages and financial turmoil the day after the symposium".

"It's time we had a fresh and comprehensive look at the design of sustainable housing tax systems across Australia to minimize negative impacts and negotiate a new compact for housing tax reform that is efficient, sustainable and fair."

Event Details:

['Economics and Law of Housing and Taxation Research Symposium'](#)

Wednesday, 11 February 2009

9am to 5pm @ Melbourne Law School

185 Pelham Street, Parkville

The RMIT Public Forum is held on Thursday 12 February.

Professor Gavin Wood, AHURI-RMIT

W: <http://www.rmit.edu.au/gsssp/ahuri/hmft>

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