

Opening Statement of Niall Byrne, Director, Residential Tenancies Board

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government & Heritage

10 October 2023

Introduction

Thank you, Chairperson and Members, for the invitation to attend this afternoon. I am Niall Byrne, and I am the Director of the Residential Tenancies Board, the RTB. I am accompanied by my colleague Ms Lucia Crimin, Deputy Director at the RTB

To assist the Committee, we have sent some information in advance.

RTB role and remit

The RTB was established under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2004 and is an independent, public body under the aegis of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Our role is to register tenancies, to operate a dispute resolution service, and to regulate aspects of the residential rental sector in Ireland. We also provide information to the public and advice to the Minister.

RTB Register of Tenancies

A central regulatory function of the RTB is the maintenance of an accurate register of residential tenancies. This includes private tenancies, social tenancies provided by approved housing bodies (AHB), cost rental tenancies and student specific accommodation. The RTB register of tenancies is an important national dataset.

Since April 2022, all landlords are required to renew the registration of their tenancies on an annual basis. This, still relatively new, annual registration requirement is greatly improving the quality and the currency of the RTB register.

To facilitate annual registration and to provide new functionality and customer service, the RTB redesigned its registration system in 2021. During 2022, issues arose with system performance which caused difficulty for the public. Over the last year, we have worked hard to stabilise the system and we have successfully introduced changes to improve the user experience and our data quality.

Despite these issues, the new system has already yielded many benefits including, for example, enhanced data quality due to strict validation of identities and the capability to automatically remove tenancies from the

system which are not renewed on time. We know it is critical that the highest standards of data quality and integrity underpin our register and we will continue to work to ensure this is the case.

Discrepancies between RTB data and CSO data

We share the concern of the Committee that there are differences between the RTB's registration data and the figures published by the CSO from the 2022 Census. We have been engaging with colleagues from the CSO on this matter since July.

We understand from the CSO that an analytical exercise will commence in November and our colleagues here from the CSO will doubtless describe that process in more detail. I have agreed with the Director General of the CSO that the RTB will support this work as a priority and that when concluded, both organisations plan to issue explanatory statements.

RTB research, data and insights

Before finishing, I want to mention two examples of how the RTB works to produce accurate information, research and insights to inform the public and policymakers.

We partner with the ESRI to produce the Quarterly RTB Rent Index. This is the most accurate and authoritative rent report of its kind on the private rental sector in Ireland. A comparison between rent levels in new and existing tenancies, informed by the more comprehensive and current data generated as a result of annual registration, will be a permanent feature of the rent index as from November this year.

We also carried out large-scale research in 2022 and 2023 on the experience and sentiment of landlords, tenants and agents. We have included some excerpts in the briefing pack and we will circulate the six reports to the Committee once these are published next month.

We are happy to address any questions that Committee members may have.

[ENDS](#)