

**ATTACHMENT:           QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE AND FURTHER  
INFORMATION AGREED TO BE SUPPLIED AT THE  
HEARINGS**

**Hon Martin Foley MP**

**HOUSING, DISABILITY AND AGEING PORTFOLIO - MINISTER**

- 1. With respect to Budget Paper No. 4 (p. 109) and the public housing renewal program, please provide a breakdown of the actual increase by number of public housing units across the nine sites, and the mix of the other types of housing on those sites.**

The Public Housing Renewal Program is designed to replace poor quality, not fit for purpose 'walk up' style housing. It does so in the absence of any new funding contributions by the Commonwealth to the states to support the construction of new social housing.

The Program will deliver more public housing dwellings across the nine Melbourne sites it is funding. The procurement process will identify development partners and is underway across many of the sites. This procurement process will resolve the final number of new dwellings.

The final agreement between the State Government and development partners will determine yields on each site, including the mix of housing types. Any agreement will honour public commitments made by the State Government.

*(Asked by Ms Pennicuik, pages 7-8 of the Housing, Disability and Ageing portfolio transcript)*

**2. Please provide any reports on the condition of the nine sites under the public housing renewal program.**

The Department of Health and Human Services (the department) has reviewed its asset base and has identified walk ups built between the 1950s and 1970s that are at the end of their life and require replacement.

The properties to be replaced on the nine sites are all walk up style accommodation with the following characteristics that do not meet modern tenant requirements:

- they have no lifts, making them difficult to access for the elderly or people with small children or inaccessible for people with disabilities
- they have structural issues leading to poor energy efficiency and high heating and cooling costs
- These structural issues mean that older stock is at risk of becoming obsolete without significant intervention
- the majority have external or shared laundry facilities
- they are poorly designed resulting in unsafe environments or a perception of lack of safety due to the landscaping creating concealed places, the paths being poorly lit and limited passive surveillance
- the buildings are oriented badly on the site for both the weather and light into the homes, and for social harmony as they cut the sites off from the surrounding community.

*(Asked by Ms Pennicuik, pages 9-10 of the Housing, Disability and Ageing portfolio transcript)*

**3. Please provide the most recent data on how many public housing tenants are currently in arrears with rent, and how many have been evicted.**

Tenancies at risk, with the tenant's consent, are referred to the department's funded tenancy support services. These services explore the full range of issues impacting on the tenant and provide wrap around services to meet the tenant's needs. These services may include family violence support, public tenant employment programs, financial counselling and multiple and complex needs support.

With the chaotic Commonwealth robo-debt program unleashed this year, and a very high percentage of public tenants reliant on welfare as their sole or dominant form of income, our tenants are disproportionately affected and more likely to fall into arrears through the incompetence and mean-spirited nature of the Turnbull Government rather than any fault of their own.

Continual attacks on vulnerable people by the Abbott/Turnbull Government have occurred as crucial tenancy support was slashed at under the former Victorian Government, with the Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP) subject to devastating cuts, resulting in vulnerable tenants missing out on the support they need, and meaning more were evicted into homelessness when they got behind on their rent.

The Andrews Labor Government has reversed these cuts to SHASP, with the new Tenancy Plus program yielding immediate results. While in the past year following Commonwealth cuts there has been a slight increase in arrears by 2.6%, there has been a 19.6% reduction in evictions due to rental arrears.

*(Asked by Mr O'Brien, pages 11 and 16 of the Housing, Disability and Ageing portfolio transcript)*

**4. Energy Safe Victoria has recommended that types of gas heaters be tested every two years. How often has this testing been done within public housing?**

I am advised that the Coroner made this recommendation in 2013, however the former government instead instigated a five-year gas heater servicing program in 2013, amidst cuts of \$330 million to the housing budget as outlined in the Royal Commission into Family Violence Final Report.

I can advise that unlike under the former Minister, this government has implemented a two-year gas heater service program.

*(Asked by Mr O'Brien, page 13 of the Housing, Disability and Ageing portfolio transcript)*

**5. With respect to rough sleepers aged 18 years and under:**

**a. Please provide details of how many are attending school.**

The case management of young people under the age of 18 is managed by funded Specialist Homelessness Services on an individual basis. Generally speaking, the immediate priority for working with an individual who is rough sleeping is to find stable and suitable accommodation.

**b. What is the department doing to help ensure that they are attending school?**

The Navigator program works with young people and their support networks to help the re-engage with education and learning. The Department of Education and Training funds community agencies to work closely with local schools and regional departmental offices to provide tailored interventions, providing referrals to specialist support services to address their barriers to engagement. The program is being expanded across Victoria over the next three years following a successful pilot in eight areas.

Young people who are homeless face particular barriers in engaging with education, employment and training. Unaccompanied young people are assisted to engage or remain engaged in study through case management provided by specialist youth or mainstream homelessness services. Homelessness services link young people to specialist and mainstream education programs and supports as part of their case management plan.

The Department of Health and Human Services funds homelessness outreach services, including the Rough Sleepers Initiative, that seek out and work with people sleeping rough to connect them to accommodation and specialist support services. This includes linking young people sleeping rough into specialist homelessness, family and community services to stabilise their housing and get the support they need to re-engage with education.

There are a range of specialist brokerage and support programs that assist young people in homelessness services to engage with education and assist with the costs of education. These include tailored service responses to young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with a focus on increasing access to employment, education and training opportunities by providing practical support and pathways into study or work. Brokerage funds through the Creating Connections Education and Employment Program (CEEP) provides young people with up to \$1,200 to assist with school or work expenses.

In Victoria, there are 11 youth foyers providing up to two years of accommodation and support for young people aged 16 to 25 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness while they are studying and building skills so that they can exit into independent living.

The Department of Health and Human Services also funds Kids Under Cover to build one and two bedroom studios on the properties of parents/carers to prevent young people becoming homeless due to overcrowding and family conflict. Young people then have their own space in which to study and this can prevent them from early school leaving. Young people living in these studios may also access scholarships to meet education costs.

The Statewide Children's Resource Program improves the support provided to the large number of children accompanying homeless families by developing the ability of homelessness, family violence and allied services to respond effectively to children. The program assists services to include children's educational and other needs in their own or their parent's case plans. It also has a brokerage component to help children to participate in education related activities that they would otherwise miss out on.

Children are eligible for Family Violence Support Packages (FSPs) if the child's family violence related support needs are identified in a case plan. FSPs can be used to meet the costs of education.

*(Asked by Mr O'Brien, page 18 of the Housing, Disability and Ageing portfolio transcript)*

- 6. With respect to Budget Paper No. 4 (p. 109) and the \$185 million set aside for the public housing renewal program, please provide information about costings by the Victorian Government on the renewal of the public housing renewal sites of just replacing them or with a 10 per cent increase. What would the total cost of that be – without any sale – to government?**

The Public Housing Renewal Program is designed to replace poor quality, not fit for purpose 'walk up' style housing. It does so in the absence of any new funding contributions by the Commonwealth to the states to support the construction of new social housing.

The cost of replacing existing properties with new homes would be approximately \$430,000 net cost per dwelling. This figure takes into account the current market pricing, mandated local content requirements on government projects, additional standards for public housing, the provision of some new community infrastructure and holding costs.

The construction and delivery costs are averaged across one, two and three bedroom dwellings, and do not include demolition costs.

The total cost would be for construction will depend on finally settled numbers for delivery of the replacement units and associated infrastructure but would not address community integration issues on the estates or provide any additional opportunities for affordable housing which the current Public Housing Renewal Model is expected to deliver.

*(Asked by Ms Pennicuik, pages 18-20 of the Housing, Disability and Ageing portfolio transcript)*

## HOUSING, DISABILITY AND AGEING PORTFOLIO - SECRETARY

- 7. Please provide a breakdown of the 20 communal family violence refuges, by region or department and timeline for each one.**

One core and cluster facility was completed in 2018. The remaining timelines are as outlined in the *Victorian Budget 2018/19* budget papers.

Specific locations cannot be disclosed to protect the safety of women and children.

I can confirm that there will be six refuges located in the North and West DHHS division, and four located in the South and East division. Locations are determined by demand and in close consultation with service providers.

*(Asked by Mr O'Brien, pages 22-23 of the Housing, Disability and Ageing portfolio transcript)*