

**Submission  
No 757**

**INQUIRY INTO THE REDEVELOPMENT OF MELBOURNE'S PUBLIC  
HOUSING TOWERS**

**Name:** Mr Ka Wah

**Date Received:** 31 March 2025

Dear Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee,

### **Submission to Inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne's public housing towers**

Thank you for letting us have a say in the process. My name is Ka Wah. I have lived in one of the high-rise buildings in Flemington for over 20 years. I've never been consulted as an individual or as a group on the redevelopment of the area.

The redevelopment and relocation of our housing commission building have had a huge and severe impact on me, my family, and my community. I was shocked when I heard this news and I have been really worried ever since. I have had so many sleepless nights. On some nights when I can sleep, I often wake up in the middle of the night thinking about my situation and am so anxious that I cannot sleep again.

I suffer from anxiety and worry about the relocation. I have become disconnected from my usual contacts in the area because so many people have been forced to move out. I've felt hopeless and depressed ever since I learned of this news.

Everyone in my building, which is earmarked for demolition as part of tranche 1, always talks about this problem whenever we meet. The atmosphere is just as alarming as during the Covid pandemic when we were forced into a hard lockdown in 2020.

I've visited some of the new community housing accommodation because my friends have been pressured to move to live in them. We find the new buildings to be much worse than our older but well-designed and well-built buildings.

In the community housing accommodation, we have already noticed many problems:

1. There are flaws in the fire escape design, where some of the flats would be blocked from the fire exit if a fire broke out between these flats and the only fire escape route of the building (see Attachment 1).
2. The rooms in the new community housing flats are tiny and some bedrooms don't even have a window so no natural sunlight can come in.
3. They are so small that our current furniture won't fit in them. This will cost us extra money to move and buy new furniture that fits, which will drain our already limited budget. Many of my neighbours who decided to move to the new flats had to throw away their furniture because they won't fit inside their new places and had to buy different furniture (see Attachment 2).
4. People have had issues with maintenance and the quality of repairs. At least 2 friends have told me that the repair person they send is the repair person who fixes everything. Apparently, the repair people have told each of them separately to fix their problems like leaking tap with chewing gum. I am not joking.
5. None of the bathrooms have a window. The bathroom is very small as well and this has already led to mould issues and respiratory problems for tenants (see <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-28/victorian-government-affordable-housing-scheme-shangri-la/103840856>).
6. The homes are not as secure as public housing. There is no security door and only one wooden door. This wooden door does not have an eye hole so you cannot see who is knocking at your door before you open it. Security issues really scare me and my friends.

I've been feeling let down by the relocation process so far. We haven't been given any appropriate options even though they said that they would provide us good options when they made us sign the

relocation form last year. The staff from Homes Victoria have been very forceful and rude with us. They really pressured us to sign the relocation form and said that we had to move on. They always rush us and never give us enough information, especially about the differences between the new community housing arrangements and public housing.

A lot of people from my building agreed to move because they thought it was just a temporary move to a new building while they renovate our building. They didn't know they were actually moving to a new system called community housing. Most people don't know that rent will go up from 25% to 30% of their income, and when that will happen. It feels like a lot of information was deliberately kept hidden to keep us in the dark.

From the very beginning, Homes Victoria have not provided us with enough information about what was happening and so it has been very hard for us to trust them.

I and all of the other residents I have spoken to would love to keep the current buildings we live in. We have called these buildings home for most of our lives. They are well-designed buildings and have enough space and light and good density limits. It is much easier and cheaper to maintain and renovate our buildings (see Attachment 3 link to 'Retain, Repair, Reinvest: Flemington Estate: Feasibility Study and Alternative Design Proposal, 2024'). The Government's proposed redevelopment will also add more housing density to the area, and unless they also invest in more infrastructure, it will cause a lot of traffic problems, social issues, health problems, and education problems for our current residents.

If public housing is mixed or replaced with community housing and affordable housing, it will give private companies more control over housing. Our already disadvantaged residents will be exploited even more, and the private operators will only care about making money.

The Government will have less and less control if we move to community or affordable housing, especially in relation to rent rates and the amount of housing available. This will put public housing at risk, and future generations won't be able to rely on it like we have been able to.

It is clear that the Government wants to absolve itself of all responsibility to public housing tenants but this is very short-sighted and will result in some of the most marginalised people in our community becoming more and more disadvantaged. This will certainly lead to an increase in homelessness and a lot of other related problems that will cost the community and the government much more. For me and my daughter, we might not be able to continue our work in the area if we have to relocate further out. This thought causes us so much stress and anxiety.

I would like to thank the Parliament again for providing us with this opportunity to provide our thoughts. A process like this, where submissions can be submitted, is how the government should have approached this subject of redevelopment.

I hope that the Parliamentary Committee members will consider what I have written and that this will help to inform recommendations made to the government.

I would like to be invited to speak at the public hearing.

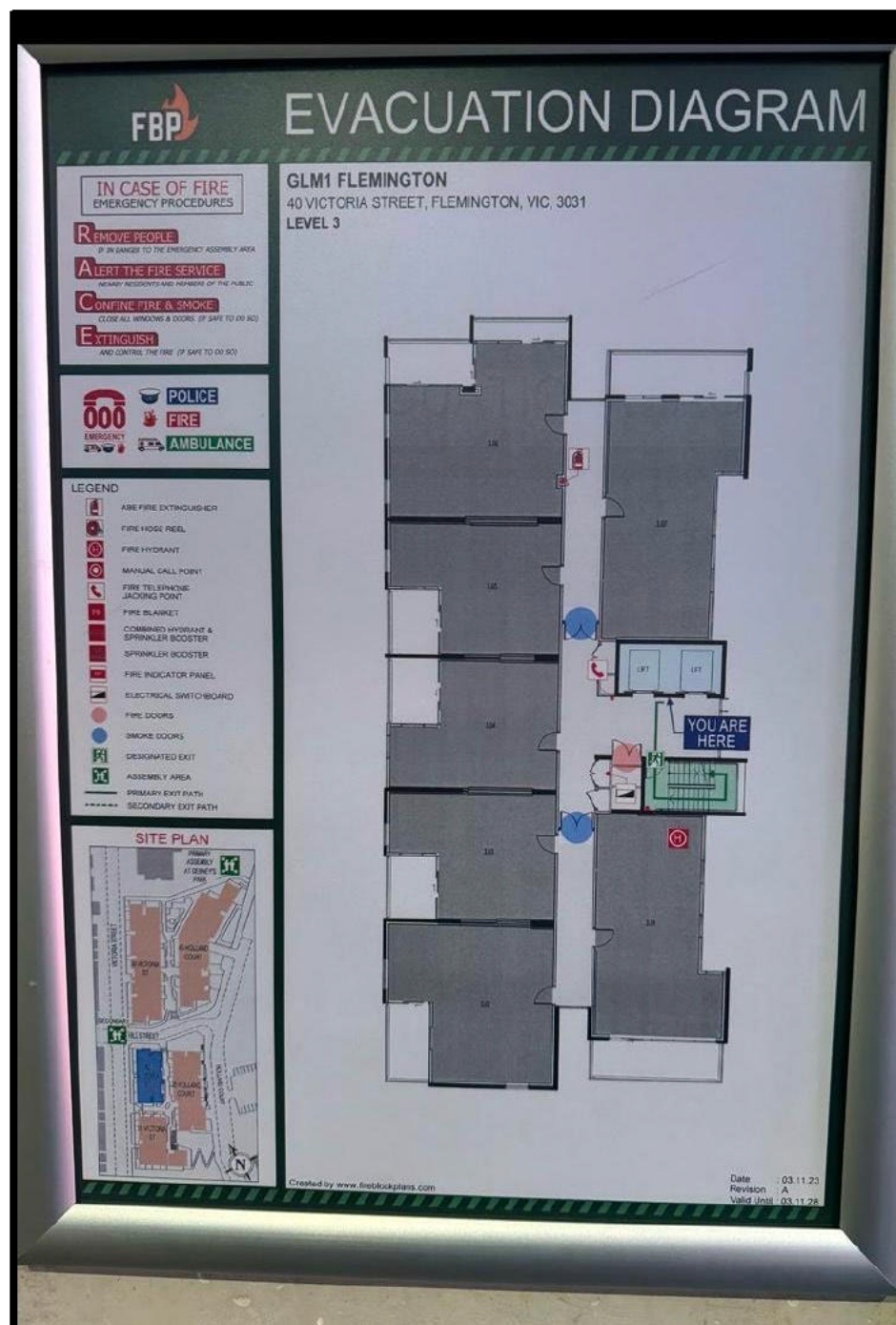
Yours sincerely,

Ka Wah

## Attachment 1. Inadequate fire escapes in existing community housing buildings

I took this photo at 40 Victoria Street, Flemington – a new community housing building that many of my neighbours in my building were moved into.

If a fire broke out at either one of these blue dots that I have circled, there would not be an accessible fire escape for residents in the far ends of the building and they will be stuck in the building. This is very dangerous. Our current building has fire exits on both ends to prevent this from happening and are much safer.



## **Attachment 2. Photographs taken outside my building**

I took these photos of good quality furniture that my neighbours had to discard because they did not fit into the community housing units



**Attachment 3. Link to the ‘Retain, Repair, Reinvest’ report by OFFICE architects**

[https://office.org.au/api/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Retain-Repair-Reinvest-Flemington-Estate\\_OFFICE\\_Full-Report.pdf](https://office.org.au/api/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Retain-Repair-Reinvest-Flemington-Estate_OFFICE_Full-Report.pdf)