

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the 2026–27 Budget Estimates

Melbourne – Wednesday 20 May 2026

MEMBERS

Sarah Connolly – Chair

John Pesutto – Deputy Chair

Jade Benham

Michael Galea

Mathew Hilakari

Lauren Kathage

Aiv Puglielli

Richard Riordan

Meng Heang Tak

WITNESSES

Nick Staikos MP, Minister for Housing and Building;

Peta McCammon, Secretary,

Simon Newport, Chief Executive Officer, Homes Victoria,

Danny O’Kelly, Deputy Secretary, Community Operations and Practice Leadership, and

Mark Stracey, Executive Director, Homelessness and Housing Support, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing;

Jeroen Weimar, Secretary,

Stuart Moseley, Deputy Secretary, Housing, Building and Land Delivery, and

Megan Peacock, Executive Director, Building Policy and Reform, Department of Transport and Planning; and

Anna Cronin, Chief Executive Officer, Building and Plumbing Commission.

The CHAIR: I declare open this hearing of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I ask that mobile telephones please be turned to silent.

On behalf of the Parliament, the committee is conducting this Inquiry into the 2026–27 Budget Estimates. The committee’s aim is to scrutinise public administration and finance to improve outcomes for the Victorian community.

I advise that all evidence taken by the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. However, comments repeated outside of this hearing may not be protected by this privilege.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and is broadcast live on the Parliament’s website. The broadcast includes automated captioning, so members and witnesses should be aware that all microphones are live during hearings and anything you say may be picked up and captioned, even if you say it quietly.

As Chair I expect that committee members will be respectful towards witnesses, the Victorian community joining the hearing via the live stream today and other committee members.

Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to check. Verified transcripts, presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee’s website.

I welcome the Minister for Housing and Building, the Honourable Nick Staikos, as well as officials from DFFH and DTP. Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement or presentation of no more than 10 minutes, after which time the committee will ask you questions. Your time starts now.

Visual presentation.

Nick STAIKOS: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, members. We might go to the next slide. The Victorian government is focused on growing housing supply across Victoria. We are doing this in several ways: equipping the Building and Plumbing Commission with tough new powers to hold builders to account; fighting for more consumer protections in the building and plumbing industries to deliver the safe, high-quality and affordable homes Victorians deserve; growing social and affordable housing; improving social homes so that they are great places to live; enabling Aboriginal self-determination by providing more First Peoples dedicated housing; and continuing to work with the specialist homelessness services sector and all levels of government to address homelessness.

Next slide, please. Chair, the 2026–27 Victorian budget continues to keep Victorians safe in their homes and protect consumers from the serious costs of fixing defective building work. The budget invests more than \$80 million over four years to continue protecting consumers through regulatory and legislative reform, keeping practitioners accountable and reinforcing confidence in Victoria’s building and plumbing industries.

Funding for trades registration and licensing of carpenters, welders and waterproofers, as well as updates to the regulation of complex plumbing work, ensures that only properly qualified practitioners are working on our homes. Support for the building monitor strengthens independent oversight and accountability. Together these measures reinforce safe building practices, restore confidence in the system and deliver safe, high-quality and affordable housing across Victoria.

The next slide. This year's budget invests in boosting and improving housing supply and providing housing support to address chronic and acute homelessness. Key initiatives in this year's budget include \$860 million through our Social Housing Growth Fund to build more than 7000 social homes over the next 10 years for Victorians who need them most and advance the high-rise redevelopment program to deliver more modern, accessible and energy-efficient homes; \$41 million to address homelessness through proven interventions, including \$25.8 million to expand rough sleeping assertive outreach and emergency accommodation services; \$15.1 million for continued supportive housing for rough sleepers using a Housing First model; and \$6.1 million to support renters to establish, strengthen or maintain their tenancies. This year's budget brings new investment in social housing and homelessness since 2015 to over \$10 billion, including the \$6.3 billion Big Housing Build and the Regional Housing Fund.

Next slide. Chair, renter safety and wellbeing remain the Allan Labor government's priority. We know communities get the best outcomes when residents are involved in the decisions that affect them and when we invest in stronger local connections, safety and amenity. We have seen this already with resident engagement and support for major projects, including our high-rise redevelopment as well as local area capacity-building initiatives. We are also investing \$6.1 million to help our residents to maintain their tenancies through our successful Tenancy Plus support and advocacy program. This program provides case management support and information. The aim of the program is to prevent homelessness and support renters to stay in social housing. Tenancy Plus supports providers to work with residents living in public and community housing to create support plans tailored to resident needs and goals.

Next slide, please. The budget continues our work in redeveloping high-rise public housing towers in North Melbourne, Flemington, Carlton, Richmond, South Yarra and South Melbourne. We are on track to deliver Australia's biggest ever urban renewal program so more Victorians who need housing have a great place to live. We know that residents have a strong sense of community and pride of place, which is why we are continuing to work respectfully with them to provide information and relocation support every step of the way. In January 2026 the state government announced that seven older persons towers across six sites in Prahran, Albert Park, Flemington, St Kilda and Kensington would be the next sites to be redeveloped as part of the program. Older renters in these towers will be supported to relocate and will be offered the opportunity to move to brand new homes built by Homes Victoria under the ground lease model.

Next slide. The Allan Labor government's building reforms deliver the strongest consumer protections in the history of Victoria's building and plumbing industries through a single integrated Building and Plumbing Commission. The BPC is a one-stop shop for regulation, insurance and dispute resolution, supported by stronger compliance powers to provide greater consumer protections and ensure quality homes are built by registered practitioners. Our landmark buyer protection reforms include first-resort domestic building insurance, a mandatory developer bond scheme for high-rise apartments and new rectification powers, including post-occupancy orders from 1 July, to ensure timely fixes backed by strong penalties. The *Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act* will further strengthen the BPC's powers to protect consumers by creating earlier intervention tools, broader infringement powers and higher penalties for serious breaches.

Next slide. This Labor budget reinforces Victoria's nation-leading work in homelessness support. In the 2024–25 financial year we delivered over 30 per cent of the nation's homelessness services funding, including family violence funding; that is more than any other state or territory. This budget continues to invest in programs that deliver the responses we know work best. This includes funding of \$26 million more to address homelessness through emergency accommodation and the expansion of assertive outreach services and \$15.1 million to provide rough sleepers with supportive housing using a Housing First model. We will also continue to invest \$80 million in 2026–27 to address youth homelessness. Thanks to the work of the Victorian government, we have seen an encouraging reduction of 34 per cent since 2012–13 in the number of young people aged 16 to 24 years presenting to services. We are investing in more beds, including 360 dedicated supportive housing beds as well as over 130 beds for young people.

Next slide. I want to move now to talking about some really encouraging developments in social housing. The number of people allocated to long-term social housing has grown by 51 per cent between 2020–21 and 2024–25. Over 7000 people were allocated to social housing in each of the past three financial years. This happened because we built more homes, and we continue to build more homes, and I look forward to this trend continuing. However, I am also conscious that demand for social housing remains high and may grow at a faster rate than available housing, which is why we are continuing to use all of the levers within our control to grow the supply of housing.

Next slide, please. I want to highlight to the committee how well Victoria performs nationally from a housing perspective. In 2025 we built over 55,000 homes, which is around 9000 more homes than New South Wales, 21,000 more than Queensland and the most in Australia. We also had the most residential approvals in Australia in 2025 at over 54,000. Nationally, we also built the most social homes in 2024–25. All of this has occurred under the Allan Labor government.

Next slide, please. I would like to briefly highlight the scale and progress of our housing delivery program. Between the Big Housing Build and the Regional Housing Fund, we now have more than 12,300 homes commenced – an unprecedented achievement – with more than 7000 homes already completed. This financial year alone we are on track to deliver over 2000 new social and affordable homes, and in the coming financial year we will be welcoming more Victorians than ever before into new homes, thanks to the completion of several regional and inner-city developments through our ground lease model and Social Housing Growth Fund. This momentum reflects the maturity of the pipeline, and it is a tangible outcome of sustained investment and delivery focus.

Chair, I am proud of the work of our Labor government and the work we will continue to do. This is a government that has always stood with vulnerable Victorians, and we will continue to stand with them. I thank you for your time, and I look forward to hopefully answering your questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We are going to go to Mr Riordan first.

Richard RIORDAN: Thanks, Chair. Minister, the front page of the *Age* today: is that representative of the complete and utter failure of your management of the Big Housing Build, particularly as it relates to social housing and Victoria's most vulnerable? What is your comment on the fact that you have left vulnerable people to fend for themselves in the private market because you have failed to get your headleasing right?

Nick STAIKOS: Well, that circumstance, as described in the *Age*, is obviously not acceptable to me, and perhaps I will throw to a departmental official in a moment. What I would say, though, more generally about headleasing is headleasing is an important part of the mix when it comes to relocating people, especially when you consider large-scale urban renewal projects like our high-rise tower redevelopment project. Headleasing has to be part of the mix. It has to be part of the mix because we need to be able to work –

Richard RIORDAN: Minister, I do not need an explanation of headleasing. I get that headleasing is where you are trying to fill the gaps because you do not have enough social homes. I draw your attention to the fact that in 2018, before you started the Big Build, you had some 86,813 social homes available. Today, on your budget figures, you are at 92,299. So basically, Minister, seven or eight years ago you had some 13.4 social homes per thousand, and midway through your Big Build we have dropped down to 12.8 social homes. You are just not keeping up with population, you are not keeping up with demand, and you are not keeping up with the needs of Victoria in this housing space.

Nick STAIKOS: Mr Riordan, since we announced the Big Housing Build, we have completed –

Richard RIORDAN: You have gone backwards.

Nick STAIKOS: more than 13,000 new homes, and the net uplift in social housing –

Richard RIORDAN: Minister, sorry, I am not going to allow you to use that figure, because it is net homes. You have done it in the budget papers as well. You talk about gross builds.

Nick STAIKOS: I am about to go to that, Mr Riordan.

Richard RIORDAN: You cannot live in nothing. The net volume of homes is the important figure.

The CHAIR: Excuse me, members. Just pause a moment. Mr Riordan, the minister will answer your question. Just allow him to answer instead of talking over the top of him. The minister to proceed.

Nick STAIKOS: Mr Riordan, since we announced the Big Housing Build in 2020, more than 13,000 brand new homes have been built.

Richard RIORDAN: But only 6000 extra.

Nick STAIKOS: That represents an uplift in net homes of 8 per cent. That is over 7000 homes. We are well on track to meet our commitment that by 2028 we will have an uplift in the number of social homes by 10 per cent. But, Mr Riordan, given you are so interested in this topic, can I just put to you –

Richard RIORDAN: Just to finish on that point, at the same time the waiting lists have just continued to balloon. We have now got 67,950 families. It is nearly 2000 more than what it was last time you reported at Christmas.

Nick STAIKOS: Mr Riordan, imagine what the waiting list would be like if we continued the level of investment under the previous Liberal government. When you came to government, in your first budget – I have got the figures here –

Richard RIORDAN: Funny you should talk about that. There was only 45,000 people on the list, and that was bad enough. You guys have added 50 per cent to the waiting list in your time.

Nick STAIKOS: In your very first budget when you came to government, your total state government investment in new social housing was \$4.6 million – a meagre \$4.6 million. In the life of our government –

Richard RIORDAN: Minister, it is irrelevant talking about the investment. We are talking about the outcomes. The people on the streets of Melbourne do not care how much you are spending; they want a roof.

Nick STAIKOS: And imagine what that situation would be like if we continued the level of investment that you had when you were in government. In the life of our government we have a yearly average investment of \$832.7 million –

Richard RIORDAN: Clearly, with \$15 billion going to your mates in the CFMEU and bikies and corruption, you are hardly setting a high benchmark on spending money.

The CHAIR: Excuse me. The minister and Mr Riordan are to cease talking over the top of each other. There is a point of order. Mr Galea.

Michael GALEA: The minister is clearly trying to answer the question, which I cannot actually even hear because of the interjections of Mr Riordan.

Richard RIORDAN: He is going back 12 years ago to try and answer the question. I want to know what he is doing today.

The CHAIR: Mr Riordan, could you please, as a courtesy to the committee, ask your question again to the Minister. I am sure you have a question.

Richard RIORDAN: Minister, without a long explanation, how many homes do you currently have on headlease? Question 1. Question 2 is: how much above the current market rate are you having to pay to attract people to your headlease?

Nick STAIKOS: I will have to refer that to a departmental official.

Simon NEWPORT: All right. Thanks. In terms of headleasing, I think it is important to understand the size or perhaps lack thereof of the overall headleasing program. I have only got the last 10 years, but I will give you an example of, say, the activity this year. Across the entire portfolio we added 39, in gross terms. We handed back 95 homes. It represents a very small fraction of what we do. It is –

Richard RIORDAN: So how does it get so badly mismanaged?

Simon NEWPORT: Well, I think there is an element we can answer to your question, but we –

Richard RIORDAN: 39 – that is like, one caseworker should be able to manage that.

The CHAIR: Mr Riordan, look at me. Stop it. Allow Mr Newport to answer the question.

Simon NEWPORT: In terms of the second part of your question which you were talking about, the value that we pay, every single deal we do, whether it is to build a house or buy a house or lease a house, has to be done through the valuer-general. We do not – we cannot – pay above market. That is just not possible.

Richard RIORDAN: How come I have got emails that you have sent to people asking to rent homes, and you are prepared to pay 5 per cent to 10 per cent above market rate to secure those for long-term rentals?

Simon NEWPORT: Look, I am sorry, I believe last time in the hearings that that point was put to me. In this particular case we are talking about, which is the article, or just generally speaking, we are definitely pursuing longer-term lease arrangements to avoid those circumstances happening. We are very interested in maintaining tenure for people whilst they are being relocated, and if we can offer longer tenure for landlords, it makes it more likely that we will be able to secure that. I will say it again: we cannot offer above market rates, according to the valuer-general. That is not allowed to happen.

Richard RIORDAN: Even though you do do it.

Simon NEWPORT: No, I am sorry, we do not do it. It is prohibited from being done, and we cannot do it.

Richard RIORDAN: All right, we will take that on notice.

Simon NEWPORT: Thank you.

Richard RIORDAN: Okay, so the next question then is you have 10,000 people roughly to rehouse during the public housing tower redevelopment. You currently have, on your own figures, increased housing stock by only 7000 while at the same time the waiting list continues to grow. I would put it to you: the sums simply do not add up. You are going to be pulling down houses without houses to put people in. It is simple: 7000 with 10,000 plus a waiting list that continues to grow in excess of 1000 to 2000 families per annum. How does that add up, Minister?

Nick STAIKOS: We are already relocating public housing tenants. In fact when I –

Richard RIORDAN: Pretty badly, by reading the front page of the *Age*.

Nick STAIKOS: When I took on this portfolio a month ago one of the first things I did was visit the public housing towers, I think it was in my first week in this role, and I actually met tenants who have been relocated to beautiful, comfortable, modern, redeveloped walk-up sites – beautiful, spacious homes. But in terms of how we relocate in Homes Victoria: we work with the tenants. We work with the tenants, taking into consideration each tenant's complex needs.

Richard RIORDAN: No, I am not talking about physically how you move them, Minister. I am talking about the sheer number of homes. You simply do not have enough homes available.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Riordan. We are going to Mr Galea.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Minister, secretaries, other officials. Minister, I would like to talk to you about homelessness. Budget paper 3, page 37, outlines output initiative funding towards addressing homelessness in Victoria. Minister, what are you doing to reduce homelessness?

Nick STAIKOS: I thank you very much for the question, Mr Galea. What we are doing to reduce homelessness is continuing the strong investment of this government. We invest the most public funds of any jurisdiction in Australia to tackle homelessness, and we do that because the government is committed to ensuring that homelessness in our state is brief, it is rare and it is non-recurring. We are playing our part and using all of the levers that are in our control to house and support as many people as quickly as possible. In 2024–25 Victorian homelessness services assisted more than 105,000 clients, and that is the most of any state.

By way of example, New South Wales assisted the second-highest number, with 67,824 clients. Victorian homelessness services also provide a broader range of services than other states, with a great focus on early intervention and prevention programs along with a unique, high-volume intake system that can triage people to the responses that they need. I will also say that over \$300 million is invested into specialist homelessness services every year, assisting around 100,000 Victorians at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Victoria has the highest total recurrent expenditure on homelessness services across all jurisdictions. As I said in my presentation, that represents over 30 per cent of the national spend. This year's budget delivers \$47 million to help leave homelessness behind, and that includes \$26 million towards assertive outreach and funding emergency accommodation, so rather than people who need support having to go find the support themselves, the support goes to the people who need the support. We have also provided \$15 million to ensure supportive housing sites in Seddon, Melbourne, St Kilda, Shepparton and Mildura can continue to provide accommodation and wraparound supports to help exit homelessness. The supportive housing service model combines access to long-term, stable housing with onsite support services, and I am looking forward to visiting Madden House tomorrow.

Jade BENHAM: You could come to MASP in Mildura.

Nick STAIKOS: And I might even come to Mildura, maybe not tomorrow but soon. We are also providing \$6.1 million to expand Tenancy Plus, ensuring that when we are able to transition people from homelessness into social housing, we work hard to support them to stay there for as long as they need it. This is on top of the \$10.1 million we are spending on the program this year, and this is further to the \$61 million invested over three years in last year's budget to break the cycle of homelessness. Together, this funding enables homelessness agencies to provide a range of services, including over 70 entry points to provide initial assessment and planning to over 44,000 people each year, many with multiple presentations; case management and outreach support; youth-specific services like foyers and refuges to support over 16,000 people annually – within my first week or two of taking on this portfolio, I visited Melbourne City Mission's Frontyard service over on King Street; that is exactly what we are talking about here – as well as support to maintain social housing tenancies through Tenancy Plus and the Aboriginal Tenants at Risk program to around 3700 households.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Minister. I would just like to pick up on something that you mentioned earlier, which is the assertive outreach program. Could you talk to me a little bit more about this? Is this a shift from how you described it, sort of going from a reactive model to a proactive model?

Nick STAIKOS: Yes. Look, what I would say about that is – well, firstly, as many know, I grew up in East Bentleigh; I have lived in East Bentleigh all my life. You know, growing up in East Bentleigh, you did not see as many rough sleepers in East Bentleigh back then as you do now. So clearly our suburbs are having more and more people present as rough sleepers, and assertive outreach is something that directly deals with that issue, because as I said, it is about getting the services to the client as opposed to the client having to go and find those services themselves. Assertive outreach is an active and persistent approach by workers to find and engage with rough sleepers or homeless people where they sleep or frequent. I say 'persistent' because often assertive outreach teams are going back to the clients, people who are rough sleeping, multiple times. That is why it is assertive. It is about ensuring that the clients access these services, the secure housing and any wraparound services that they need. These workers establish a relationship of trust and provide the information and practical support necessary for homeless people to transition from homelessness to stable housing and to social reconnection.

Assertive outreach is a street-based model. It has its genesis in the United States, but it has been adapted to an Australian context. It is a person-centred approach intended to empower the homeless person as they are encouraged to make the decisions affecting their lives. The workers are experts in building rapport. They go to the parks, they go to the tents, they go to the squats and the cars to engage with people with the aim of, firstly, assisting with housing, but also linking them with culturally appropriate care. They are also supported to fill in forms such as the application for the Victorian housing register and other federal and state government forms. They are supported and linked up with health services as well, and what our funding in the budget does is that at the moment we have assertive outreach teams in eight DFFH areas. This funding extends assertive outreach teams to all 17 DFFH areas. It is certainly an important step in dealing with homelessness. We already do a lot, but we are going to go a significant step further.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Minister. And indeed, as you spoke about, it is not just an issue in the city, it is something that is happening across our state and across our suburbs. And there are terrific groups such as Wayss in my electorate in the Dandenong–Casey–Cardinia corridor that do a lot of this work too. How do the assertive outreach teams work with these other service providers? You touched on the expansion of coverage as well, so this will apply statewide. Is that what you are saying?

Nick STAIKOS: That is correct. Teams are established across a range of disciplines, and they are often part of larger homelessness services and can leverage both their internal resources and those across the sector. You mentioned Wayss in your electorate, and I am very familiar with Wayss, but there are other organisations too – organisations like Launch Housing, Orange Door, Wintringham, Better Health Network, Salvation Army and VincentCare, to name just a few. They are engaged in assertive outreach, and these teams are highly collaborative, and they often include a mix of specialist homelessness caseworkers.

Michael GALEA: So it is not just one issue, it is taking a holistic approach. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We are going to Mr Riordan.

Richard RIORDAN: Thank you. Minister, what is the total cost of housing former residents of the social housing towers in private or hotel accommodation to date, and how many more families are you currently working with, with the towers that you have already identified for relocation? How many are yet to relocate?

Nick STAIKOS: I am going to have to pass that on to an official.

Simon NEWPORT: Can you just please repeat the first part of the question?

Richard RIORDAN: How much have you spent on hotel accommodation for the people that you are relocating from the public housing towers that you have currently identified for demolition, and how many more families are yet to be moved out of the identified towers?

Simon NEWPORT: The first question is we are not using hotels to house people from the tower relocations.

Richard RIORDAN: Okay. And the second thing: how many families are left to relocate?

Simon NEWPORT: Well, obviously, it is –

Richard RIORDAN: Currently identified.

Simon NEWPORT: Well, it is a 28-year program.

Richard RIORDAN: But the few towers that you have identified: Flemington, North Melbourne –

Simon NEWPORT: I will rattle off the first few. In 12 Holland Court there are five families left in Flemington.

Richard RIORDAN: Yes.

Simon NEWPORT: At 120 Racecourse there are five. I will not guess on Alfred Street, but I believe it is 18. I have got that number at hand.

Richard RIORDAN: You can clarify that later.

Simon NEWPORT: But a very small number – there is one left in Richmond, in Highett, and I think there are about half a dozen left in South Yarra, and that is the first and second tranches.

Richard RIORDAN: And of the 67,000-odd families on the VHR, how many of those are currently being housed in hotel or short-term rooming house accommodation?

Simon NEWPORT: I do not have those statistics in front of me. Obviously people access –

Richard RIORDAN: Could you take that on notice?

Simon NEWPORT: Of course. People access the homelessness system, and so obviously they get emergency response. They may well find themselves on a pathway to public housing, but it is not the only choice and only alternative. I would also point out that I know you have referenced the VHR, the waitlist, a few times. You are including transfers of over 10,000.

Richard RIORDAN: I am including transfers because it used to be on the list and it keeps it constant.

Simon NEWPORT: We have always published them both separately and combined.

Richard RIORDAN: Not always.

Simon NEWPORT: My point would be that 10,000 of those that you are referring to are people that are housed within the system.

Richard RIORDAN: Yes. But admit, though, there are people that are housed inadequately.

Simon NEWPORT: No, I do not believe we could admit that. There are a number of reasons –

Richard RIORDAN: So why would they be wanting to transfer if they were not inadequately housed?

Simon NEWPORT: One of the biggest drivers of transfer requests recently has literally been in the towers by people seeing the beautiful new properties at Richmond built across the road and saying, ‘We want to live across the road.’

Richard RIORDAN: Mr Newport, I am sorry, the list of approximately 10,000 has been stuck on the 10,000 figure well before you started relocating people from the public housing towers.

Simon NEWPORT: Yes, I agree.

Richard RIORDAN: Right. And one of the main causes is it could include a disabled person on the second floor of a building who cannot access the ground floor, couldn’t it?

Simon NEWPORT: Yes, absolutely.

Richard RIORDAN: Excellent. Thank you. The housing statement, Minister – your government still stands by its 800,000 homes over 10 years claim?

Nick STAIKOS: We do; we stand by our housing statement. And proudly, Mr Riordan, Victoria remains the jurisdiction that approves the most homes, commences the most homes and builds the most homes. I would also point out –

Richard RIORDAN: Has the most permits approved that have not been built.

Nick STAIKOS: We have the most completions, Mr Riordan.

Richard RIORDAN: We also have the highest population.

Nick STAIKOS: In terms of homes completed last year, 2025, 54,221 homes were completed. That compares to 45,145 in New South Wales.

Richard RIORDAN: But Minister, sorry, I can access that through the ABS. My question to you quite simply is: you stand by the 80,000 homes, you are 48,000 homes short since you have made that claim – do you concede, as a matter of basic maths, that to hit your 800,000 homes target, you would now need to complete more than 86,000 homes a year to get anywhere near the target that you say, yourself, you continue to stand by?

Nick STAIKOS: We stand by the housing statement. The housing statement said 800,000 homes. We are building as many homes as is possible in Victoria. We are building more homes than any other jurisdiction, in the private market, in social homes. We are the build-to-rent capital of Australia: 65 per cent of build-to-rent developments are in Melbourne.

Richard RIORDAN: Minister, we have a problem. In the time that you have had the big build, since you announced it in 2022, you have added, by your own admission, just 7000 extra homes, but you have less bedrooms. And then on top of that you have made a big claim for 80,000 extra homes per year in the private sector, and you are falling well short, with not just a little bit missing – you are missing a lot.

Nick STAIKOS: I take issue with your commentary around the big build. I know you do not like me to raise just how much you invested in social housing under the former government, but it was a woeful investment, Mr Riordan –

Richard RIORDAN: But, mate, we had 47,000 families on the list –

Nick STAIKOS: and had we continued –

Richard RIORDAN: you have got 67,000. It is a massive difference. It is out of control under your government.

The CHAIR: Excuse me, the interjection –

Nick STAIKOS: that investment, things would be far, far worse. Now imagine the social housing waiting list –

Richard RIORDAN: Minister, you cannot make that claim –

Nick STAIKOS: had we continued that level of investment.

Richard RIORDAN: when you cannot account for \$15 billion disappearing under your Big Build.

Nick STAIKOS: There you go. He does not want to talk about the former government's woeful investment in social housing.

The CHAIR: Excuse me, Minister. Mr Riordan, please control your temper. If you have a question, afford the minister –

Richard Riordan interjected.

The CHAIR: Mr Riordan, that is not an invitation to talk over me as Chair. If you have a question, put it to the minister, and Minister, Mr Riordan will afford you the courtesy of responding.

Richard RIORDAN: Minister, the 2026–27 budget allocates approximately \$16 million across the forward estimates under 'Trades registration and licensing'. Of that \$16 million, how many dollars go to external training, assessment or accreditation providers?

Nick STAIKOS: I will throw this over to an official in a moment, but the reason why we –

Richard RIORDAN: Budget paper 3, page 83.

Nick STAIKOS: Yes. But I will say, the reason why we are going down this path of trades licensing and registration is because Victorians quite rightly expect that tradespersons who arrive at their homes to complete crucial work, whether it is carpenters or waterproofers, they should be properly qualified and licensed.

Richard RIORDAN: I just want to know what percentage of that \$16 million –

Nick STAIKOS: And I will throw over to Mr Moseley.

Stuart MOSELEY: Through you, there is at this stage no plan to give any money to RTOs. However, having said that, we are in the process now of drawing up a detailed project plan to acquit the forward path on that funding. But there is no money intended to go to RTOs.

Richard RIORDAN: Where would the money go?

Stuart MOSELEY: The money will be split between our role advising the minister on the establishment of the registration system, in terms of policy, regulation and any statutory changes; and the Building and Plumbing Commission, who will implement that system. There is a lot of work for them to do in establishing the systems that go around registering and licensing.

Richard RIORDAN: So this \$16 million is just for bureaucratic management?

Stuart MOSELEY: Not at all. The bulk of the \$16 million, we envisage, will go to the BPC to actually deliver. I am very happy if Ms Cronin wants to talk about the actual work involved in setting up a system that works. It is not something that can be quickly or easily done. It needs to be done properly.

Anna CRONIN: Thanks, Mr Moseley. The trades registration allocation –

Nick STAIKOS: Perhaps we will come back to that.

The CHAIR: Apologies, Ms Cronin, I am going to stop you there and keep to time. We are going to Ms Kathage.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you, Chair, Minister and officials. In your presentation, Minister, you spoke about the high-rise development program, and I understand it to be the largest urban housing renewal program, delivering thousands of new social homes across the 44 sites. In the budget papers, on page 14, with the information there, can you explain how the program is resulting – I guess we are not looking just at quantity but at quality as well, at how the quality homes will be delivered.

Nick STAIKOS: Thank you for the question. As I said a bit earlier during this hearing, one of the very first things I did when I took on the portfolio about a month ago was to visit some of the towers; I visited Flemington and I visited Richmond. I know there are some people who take issue with the government's high-rise redevelopment program because they believe that these high-rise buildings represent equity, but when I visited what I saw, frankly, was inequity. These are buildings that have reached the end of their useful life. I went into some towers in Flemington and Richmond – the apartments were small, they were dated, they did not have balconies, they did not have their own laundry facilities.

There are all sorts of issues with these buildings. It is clear they have reached the end of their useful life. Then I walked about a couple of hundred metres to a redeveloped bedsit site in Richmond and I actually got to see the modern, comfortable homes that a lot of the public housing tower residents have actually moved into and met some of the residents who were very pleased to have moved into those developments. Indeed those apartments were spacious, those apartments had their own balconies, they had their own laundry facilities. They were homes that you would be proud to raise children in, proud to live in, proud to have friends over to. That is why we are going down the high-rise redevelopment program, because it is about equity. It is about treating Victorians with respect. It is about recognising that Victorian social housing tenants are not second-class citizens.

It is our biggest program of urban renewal in Australia. As our capital city grows, as the state grows, now is the time to plan for and deliver the homes that we will need over the coming decades. With Melbourne's population expected to reach the population that London has today, this work could not come at a more critical time. It is exactly what this multidecade programme of work will accomplish – it will triple the capacity of the existing 44 sites, allowing over 30,000 people to live across these neighbourhoods. For example, the redevelopment at Flemington will deliver 700 new dwellings, including 400 social homes, and across the whole program we will see an uplift of at least 10 per cent to social housing.

But this program is not just about delivering more homes. As you mentioned in your question, it is about delivering better homes as well. It is about delivering beautiful, modern and energy-efficient homes, might I say. Homes Victoria completes an energy efficiency upgrade every 3 minutes. These redevelopments will replace ageing housing stock with homes designed for modern living, with better amenity, greater accessibility and improved sustainability. They will create safer, more connected communities close to transport, jobs and services in the heart of the city, in inner-city suburbs, while giving residents access to high-quality public spaces and neighbourhood infrastructure. I was very pleased, visiting some of these sites, to see that every care is taken to preserve public open space at these sites, because a lot of children live on these sites as well. We are

preserving public open space. But this program will not only help accommodate Melbourne's growing population, it will ensure that Victorians can live in high-quality homes in these vibrant inner-city suburbs.

Lauren KATHAGE: BP4 describes the Elgin Towers site as being redeveloped in partnership with the Commonwealth. I understand it is the first under that partnership. How is that progressing?

Nick STAIKOS: It is progressing exceptionally well, Ms Kathage. The redevelopment of the vacant Elgin Towers site commenced on 20 September 2023 and it is on track for delivery by 2028. This is the first site being redeveloped as part of the high-rise redevelopment program, and as you point out, it is being delivered in partnership with the Albanese government. Demolition was completed in March this year and work on the 248 new homes commences this month. When complete, the redevelopment will replace 196 outdated homes built in the 1960s with 248 modern, accessible and energy-efficient public housing homes. It will deliver a greater mix of studio apartments to multi-bedroom homes to better meet the needs of individuals and large families. Overall the redevelopment represents a significant uplift in both the quality and quantity of housing on that site.

Lauren KATHAGE: There is a North Melbourne site described in the same section. How is that one progressing?

Nick STAIKOS: Yes, the North Melbourne site is actually particularly exciting. The first stage in redeveloping the North Melbourne precinct will replace 143 dwellings at 33 Alfred Street, so 143 dwellings replaced with 800 social, affordable and market homes in an integrated community which includes at least 300 social homes. It is a project that will be delivered by 2031. Relocations for those renters at 33 Alfred Street, North Melbourne, is almost complete, with 20 households remaining – that represents 14 per cent remaining as at 27 April – and Homes Victoria has undertaken a market process to select a partner to design, build and operate the redeveloped housing. The request for proposals has closed and responses are currently being assessed. The housing will be managed by a not-for-profit community housing organisation. Relocations for renters in the older persons tower at 159 Melrose Street, North Melbourne, will commence on 1 July 2026, and it is expected that they will be complete by February 2028.

Lauren KATHAGE: You spoke about meeting with residents who have been relocated. What are the sorts of things they are saying to you, and can you describe the accommodation they have moved into?

Nick STAIKOS: Yes, I did meet with some residents who have been relocated from the towers to new homes developed on former walk-up sites, including a resident over in Richmond. He is so pleased with his new home that he has been assuring other tower residents about the homes that they will be accommodated in. Every step of the way Homes Victoria has aimed for a culturally sensitive and respectful process that provides residents with information and support. When residents have the information and the support, they can make decisions that are right for them before, during and after the relocation process. Homes Victoria throughout many of the –

The CHAIR: Apologies, Minister. We are going to Ms Benham.

Jade BENHAM: Thank you, Chair. Minister, I just want to go back to the question that Mr Riordan was asking earlier with regard to the trades registration and licensing scheme. Can you confirm or deny if your department has met with the CFMEU, its administrators or any CFMEU-affiliated RTOs about the scheme?

Nick STAIKOS: That is a question for the department.

Stuart MOSELEY: No, we have not met with the CFMEU or the RTOs.

Jade BENHAM: In any way?

Stuart MOSELEY: No.

Jade BENHAM: Great. Thank you. I do not think there are any follow-up questions there if the answer is no. I want to go to and talk about the 'Family Violence – refuge redevelopment', budget paper 4, page 121. Minister, in the 2022–23 budget there was \$47.9 million that was allocated for family violence refuge redevelopment, with an estimated completion date of quarter 4, 2022–23. In this budget that project is still to be delivered, with the new completion date quarter 3, 2026–27. Why has this project still not been completed?

Nick STAIKOS: I am going to have to throw to a departmental representative on the detail of this one. However, I do want to just say more broadly on this matter we take it seriously. That is why we established the Royal Commission into Family Violence and we adopted each and every one of the recommendations. The vast majority of our priority housing allocations are to victim-survivors of family violence. But specifically on this question, if I can –

Jade BENHAM: Great. We should get this finished then.

Simon NEWPORT: As you would be aware, there was a commitment made to delivering I think 22 refuges. Seventeen have been delivered, and you are right, we have still got five to go. There are two at Warrnambool. One is being delivered with an Aboriginal community controlled organisation; the other is mainstream. We then have Horsham – I am sure you are familiar with that one – which is being delivered with Goolum Goolum. And then of course we have South Melbourne and West Melbourne. I am happy to walk through each development if you like.

Jade BENHAM: I am just looking to why there is a hold-up. It is a big delay.

Simon NEWPORT: I am happy to go through each one, because each one is site-specific.

Nick STAIKOS: Do you want the forecast completion for each one?

Jade BENHAM: The forecast completion now is in the budget papers. Is that still correct as being quarter 3, 2026–27, or has it moved again?

Simon NEWPORT: No, that is still the case.

Jade BENHAM: That is still accurate?

Simon NEWPORT: Yes.

Jade BENHAM: On average it takes a victim-survivor of domestic violence about seven attempts to leave for good. With that stat in mind, do you think it is appropriate that we still have not completed this project given that it was a forecast –

Lauren KATHAGE: There are many pathways.

Jade BENHAM: Thank you, Ms Kathage.

Nick STAIKOS: I would like these projects completed as soon as possible. I can only advise you of the current completion date forecasts for each of these projects. We have already delivered 17 refuges in Morwell, in Mildura, in Werribee, in Mentone, in Rowville, in Broadmeadows, in Preston, in Whittlesea, in Ashwood, in Leopold, in Wodonga, in Melton South, in Bairnsdale, in Shepparton, in Frankston, in Reservoir and in Ardeer. There are five remaining sites.

Jade BENHAM: Warrnambool and Horsham in particular desperately need it.

Nick STAIKOS: I can understand that, Ms Benham, absolutely, and I have great empathy for this. Every care is taken to deliver these projects as soon as possible. As I have said, we have already delivered 17. Warrnambool is forecast to be complete in quarter 1, financial year 2027–28. If you like, I can go through –

Jade BENHAM: So the figures in the budget paper are wrong then, because those forecast figures are quarter 3, 2026–27, not quarter 1, 2027–28.

Simon NEWPORT: Sorry, that is Warrnambool you are talking about. Each one has a separate date.

Jade BENHAM: Are you able to supply to the committee why the delay on these last five in particular that have been pushed out?

Nick STAIKOS: I have got the information in front of me, if you want me to read it now.

Jade BENHAM: I have got a couple of other questions with only 3½ minutes remaining.

Nick STAIKOS: Ms Benham, I was referring to the Warrnambool Aboriginal community controlled organisation. In terms of the other Warrnambool project, practical completion is expected quarter 3, 2026–27.

Jade BENHAM: Practical completion – does that mean it is ready for someone to use?

Nick STAIKOS: Yes.

Simon NEWPORT: The build is finished. It takes a little bit of time after that, but you are only talking a matter of weeks.

Jade BENHAM: Okay. I do want to talk about the BPC for a moment, and if I have time, I will come back to the family violence refugees. What is the average wait time now for a complaint to the BPC?

Nick STAIKOS: I will throw to the CEO of the Building and Plumbing Commission in a moment, but I think it is really important to understand why we have established the Building and Plumbing Commission.

Jade BENHAM: We understand all that. We have been through, very recently, the legislation.

Nick STAIKOS: If you understand it, why did you vote against it? But sure.

Jade BENHAM: For very obvious reasons that will become apparent to this government, hopefully.

Anna CRONIN: Thank you, Ms Benham. In terms of complaints received, the data I have in front of me says that building complaints received in 2024–25 were 1799, building complaints received so far this financial year are 1095, plumbing complaints received in 2024–25 were 1569 and plumbing complaints received in the three quarters we have had so far this year are 1035.

Jade BENHAM: What is the average wait time for those complaints to be satisfactorily resolved?

Anna CRONIN: I have not got figures in front of me on the average wait times, but I can certainly get them for you.

Jade BENHAM: That would be fantastic. Of those numbers that you just gave me, could we also get a list of how many have been satisfactorily resolved?

Anna CRONIN: Sure. One of the avenues that complaints often come into the BPC through is dispute resolution, and 66 per cent of them are resolved within about 90 days, which is pretty good.

Jade BENHAM: Ninety days.

Anna CRONIN: We have improved that quite considerably. But I can get you the figures on the more general complaint numbers.

Jade BENHAM: Thank you. That is much appreciated. We are looking also to understand the reasons why we are now seeking to scrap the minimum financial requirements, Minister.

Nick STAIKOS: Thank you for that question, Ms Benham. The draft regulations of the minimum financial requirements were released earlier in the year, but they were released before Donald Trump started his war in Iran, and there have been significant inflationary impacts to the industry. I sat down with the Housing Industry Association and with Master Builders upon taking this portfolio to look at how we can revise the minimum financial requirements to ensure that we are still maintaining the spirit of the MFRs, the reason why we needed them in the first place, but at the same time implementing some more reasonable and longer transitional arrangements for industry to be able to transition to the MFRs.

Jade BENHAM: Do you accept that this is going to put some small builders out of business?

Nick STAIKOS: Well, we have worked closely with industry to revise them. That is what we have done. That is what I did as soon as I took over this portfolio.

Jade BENHAM: So you do not accept that that is the case at all?

Nick STAIKOS: Well, we have worked closely with industry and I believe to industry's satisfaction.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We are going to Mr Tak.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister and officials. Minister, you referenced in your presentation the Social Housing Growth Fund investment of an additional \$860 million. Could you please share some further information about how the investment in this plan will support the building of more social housing and in particular also how it will support the delivery of existing programs?

Nick STAIKOS: I thank you very much for that question, Mr Tak. It is a significant investment to help vulnerable Victorians find secure and affordable housing, and through this commitment an estimated \$860 million will be invested into the Social Housing Growth Fund over the five years to 2029–30. The Social Housing Growth Fund is a fund that provides a dedicated investment stream to deliver more social housing in partnership with the community housing sector. The power of the fund is demonstrated by its long-term outcomes. This investment in this budget will support the delivery of more than 7000 homes over the next decade and more than 22,000 over the next 30 years – just from this investment. Ten per cent of the new homes will be allocated to Aboriginal community housing providers, and at least 600 homes are expected to be delivered in 2026–27. It is a long-term investment that creates a pipeline of construction jobs and economic activity, and it allows our community housing sector, which our government works very, very closely with and in partnership with, and any partners that they have in the private, not-for-profit or local government sectors to plan accordingly. Most importantly, this investment provides safe, secure and modern long-term homes for Victorians.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Minister. Building more social housing is important to support vulnerable Victorians that are facing homelessness. In your presentation you also said you were born and bred in Bentleigh and that you now see a few more people in that suburb. The government's investment of \$6.3 billion through the Big Housing Build, highlighted in budget paper 4, page 14, demonstrates a strong commitment to growing social housing. Minister, can you discuss some of the major projects that the Big Housing Build has funded and the number of homes delivered to date?

Nick STAIKOS: I can. The government's record \$6.3 billion investment in both the Big Housing Build and the Regional Housing Fund is delivering 13,300 homes across Victoria, and this is on top of housing delivered under other programs like the Social Housing Growth Fund and like the ground lease model and others. These are on track to be fully delivered by the middle of 2028, and once completed these programs will achieve an uplift of 10 per cent in Victoria's social housing stock. The Big Housing Build is delivering more and better homes so that more Victorians have a great place to live.

Residents have now moved into new homes in Elizabeth Street, North Richmond, where we have built more than 140 quality homes, and I visited these homes very recently. Jointly through the Big Housing Build and the social housing accelerator, construction has commenced on delivering 100 new homes at Bell-Bardia, Heidelberg West, and a further 120 homes at Banksia Gardens in Broadmeadows. At Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, we are delivering in partnership with the Commonwealth government through the Housing Australia Future Fund. Recent engagement with residents and the South Melbourne community is going to guide the vision for the site, including for 131 new social homes.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Minister. On the same budget paper, page 20 talks more about the Homes Victoria ground lease model projects. According to this, the ground lease model project 2 is set to be completed within the year. Could you please go into some more detail about how this model is delivering social housing and what it will deliver?

Nick STAIKOS: Ground lease models are about partnerships, and they are about partnerships that work, partnerships that work for social housing tenants. Under ground lease model arrangements, Homes Victoria leases the land to project partners who design, build, finance, manage and maintain the housing for 40 years, enabling all of the land to remain in public ownership, and at the end of the 40-year concession period all dwellings return to Homes Victoria's management.

Ground lease model 2 will deliver 1370 brand new homes across four sites at South Yarra, Prahran, Port Melbourne and Hampton East. Prior to the last redistribution, Hampton East was in my electorate and I got to go over to Hampton East to have a look at the site that is nearing completion. When I compare what we have

built at Hampton East with what used to be at that site, a 1950s walk-up site, it is chalk and cheese. We have been able to increase capacity on that site with a mix of social, affordable and some market rentals as well – a mixed community. We have been able to establish more parkland on that site for the broader community, and we have been able to also establish, for the first time ever on that site, community facilities. I think that does demonstrate how the ground lease model can work for everyone. And I can confirm that the new homes are on track to welcome renters from 2026, and they are providing more safe, secure and affordable rental opportunities within communities that are diverse and vibrant.

In terms of the broader community, the ground lease model allows us to leverage partnerships with consortia to deliver more homes for the same investment while still ensuring that the social homes are managed by not-for-profit community housing providers that the government is proud to partner with. The projects are exceeding the project objective, the 10 per cent increase in social housing. I should also mention that the homes are all-electric, saving tenants money to run them as well.

The ground lease model program helps facilitate that mixed-tenure approach that I alluded to before. The option is available for a mix of social, affordable and rental housing to be delivered, and there is strong evidence to suggest that mixed-tenure developments do help to promote community cohesion. Crucially, they reduce stigma and discrimination against people living in social housing as well. By fostering this community cohesion we are helping to create a more welcoming environment for vulnerable people coming off the Victorian housing waiting list, which is no less than they deserve.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Minister. In the remaining time –

The CHAIR: We are out of time, Mr Tak. We are going straight to Mr Puglielli.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon. I am starting off on the budget page we were on before, budget paper 4, page 14, looking at the high-rise redevelopment program. The budget allocated an additional \$344 million towards this program. I understand that takes the total estimated investment for the project to over \$1.2 billion. One tower, Elgin Street, Carlton, has so far been demolished. Can I ask how much has been spent on the Carlton project in total?

Nick STAIKOS: Before I throw to a departmental official, this high-rise redevelopment program is about giving tenants new homes but also creating a significant uplift on those sites. I understand that Homes Victoria has taken you through those sites as well, Mr Puglielli, but I will throw to, I think, Mr Newport.

Simon NEWPORT: Yes. The two towers at Elgin have both been demolished, and they will start next month with Lendlease taking over the site. For Elgin, capital expenditure to date is, according to these statistics, \$36.4 million. That is through to the end of last month.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. That is total expenditure in relation to that site, is that correct?

Simon NEWPORT: Yes.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Can I ask: how much has been spent on relocation of residents at North Melbourne and Flemington?

Simon NEWPORT: Let us see if I can get my eyes to work here. Obviously there is a capital component and there is an operational component as well, because we have got some staff costs. In terms of relocations, the capital expenditure to date to the end of April is \$132.2 million. That is the capital component, and that has been acquisition of properties.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay.

Simon NEWPORT: The staff cost that I have got here in front of me for relocations is – sorry, I beg your pardon, I do not have that. I have only got the capital expenditure.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Are you able to come back to us with that if that is something you have?

Simon NEWPORT: Yes, we can come back.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: And would there be any other costs in relation to those relocations you would be able to provide the committee?

Simon NEWPORT: We can provide you with a breakdown. Effectively most of it is the capital expenditure for acquiring properties. As we have talked about earlier, there is a small headlease component, and then there would be staff and communication costs.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Can you come back to us on those? Is that all right?

Simon NEWPORT: We can take that on notice, yes.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. That \$344 million that I mentioned at the start of the question, what specifically is that going towards?

Simon NEWPORT: Are you talking about the increase?

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Yes, to the redevelopment.

Simon NEWPORT: Okay. That is tranche 3. That is the additional seven towers that have been announced, so I think the total is now \$1.2 billion that has been announced. Obviously nowhere near all of that has been spent yet, but when we added an additional seven towers that was the next allotment of funds to continue that project. Again, at that stage it is mostly to do with assisting in acquiring additional stock or building additional stock to assist with the relocations.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Can I ask: are the redevelopment costs for 120 Racecourse Road and 12 Holland Court, Flemington, included in the high-rise redevelopment program's \$1.2 billion TEI, or are they being accounted for?

Simon NEWPORT: Sorry, can you just repeat the first part of that, just to make sure I –

Aiv PUGLIELLI: The redevelopment costs for 120 Racecourse Road and 12 Holland Court, are they included in the high-rise program's TEI or are they being accounted for separately under the ground lease model budget lines?

Simon NEWPORT: Good question. There is a capital component that will have been announced. At the moment we are dealing mostly with relocations and demolition. I will point out obviously they have been announced as ground lease models, so typically there will be what is called a quarterly service payment. I would have to get back to you. In fact because we are only early on in the project I do not believe we have been allocated a quarterly service payment. I may be wrong. I might have to come back to you. But at the moment most of the money is going into demolition, relocation and all of the technical work you can imagine that has to be done for probably a \$12 billion or \$13 billion – that is not the cost to government, but if you add up all of the cost over 30 years, it is probably a \$12 billion or \$13 billion redevelopment of all the sites.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. If there is further information there, could you get back –

Simon NEWPORT: We can provide that on notice, yes.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: That would be great. Thank you. I will move on. In relation to relocation of residents for Flemington and North Melbourne estates, has Homes Victoria purchased any apartments at Quest Flemington Central to house any of these residents?

Simon NEWPORT: Yes.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: You have?

Simon NEWPORT: Flemington, yes.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: How many?

Simon NEWPORT: I would have to come back to you with the exact numbers.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: That is all right.

Simon NEWPORT: Okay.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Can I ask how many properties has Homes Victoria purchased to relocate residents at Flemington and North Melbourne estates in total?

Simon NEWPORT: I do have that number. There have been 159 dwellings purchased. There were about 484 – from memory – families that had to be relocated, and 159 dwellings have been acquired.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. Looking at North Melbourne, looking at the capital program, page 19, the high-rise redevelopment program redevelopment for 33 Alfred Street, North Melbourne, delivered on a ground lease model. We were just speaking earlier about the tender process closing last month. That is the successful consortium responsible for designing, constructing, financing, operating and maintaining those dwellings for a period of 40 years. Can I confirm you are not in a position to disclose who has been awarded that tender today?

Simon NEWPORT: Correct. It is right in the middle of procurement and evaluation, so no, I cannot discuss that.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Are you able to give a timeline of when that information will be available publicly?

Simon NEWPORT: Yes. I believe it will be between now and September.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. I will move on. Looking at the ‘Department Performance Statement’, page 51, the ‘Housing assistance’ output, there are currently 66,963 applications, both new and transfer, on the housing waitlist. Noting that many applications will be for families, if we are measuring the total number of people in need, that figure does not necessarily give the best indication. Can you provide a figure for the total number of people, both new and transfer, on the housing waitlist?

Simon NEWPORT: We will take that on notice. We certainly do not have that number at hand.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: That is all right. On notice is fine. Are you able to disaggregate that for each of the housing register categories?

Simon NEWPORT: I will take that on notice. If it is available, of course we can provide it.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. As was covered earlier – just moving on – and also from the slides information, you said 248 new public homes in Carlton are going to be delivered at that site. Can I ask: how many new public homes will be added to our housing stock over the forward estimates? Is it 248?

Simon NEWPORT: Look, I would have to provide that. There will be a significant number of public homes, and the number has grown. I would point out that around 65 to 70 per cent of the Regional Housing Fund are public homes. Clearly ground lease models will be run by community housing operators, which is why the first towers were nominated as public.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Can you come back to us with a figure and some locations?

Simon NEWPORT: We can give you the projection on what we have got in the pipeline, yes.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We are going to go to Mr Hilakari.

Mathew HILAKARI: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, officials, for attendance this afternoon. We started in the morning but now we have gone into the afternoon. I will continue on social housing growth, Minister, and refer to budget paper 4, page 122. That section particularly relates to the Regional Housing Fund, which is an important matter to many members on this committee. I am just hoping you can update the committee on how the government is delivering in this area, and particularly to regional communities through that fund.

Nick STAIKOS: Thank you very, very much for that question, Mr Hilakari. What I would say is that since the Big Housing Build and the Regional Housing Fund were announced we have grown social housing stock numbers in this state by 8 per cent and we are on track by 2028 to grow stock numbers to 10 per cent. That does include our Regional Housing Fund. The Regional Housing Fund was established back in 2023, and by June 2028 the \$1 billion investment will deliver over 1300 social and affordable homes across regional and rural Victoria. The Regional Housing Fund will provide homes for Victorians most in need, including priority social housing applicants, as well as First Nations Victorians, women and children escaping family violence, young people at risk of experiencing homelessness and key workers as well as displaced communities dealing with the ongoing impacts of flood.

Homes Victoria is using a range of methods to deliver brand new and upgraded homes, and this includes purchasing homes in new developments; building new homes, including using modern methods of construction so we can build those homes in a quicker fashion; partnerships with the community housing sector; and refurbishing old stock to bring it back online for new renters. To date, 678 homes have commenced as part of the Regional Housing Fund, of which around 400 homes have been completed. That includes 105 homes that have been completed as part of the redevelopment of existing housing stock, including 28 homes that have been delivered across 2022 flood-affected areas. Eighty-five new transitional housing homes that are dedicated to reducing homelessness have been acquired, and a further three new homes have been purchased for Aboriginal Victorians to address homelessness. Twenty new homes have been delivered in partnership with the community housing sector for people affected by the 2022 floods, and 188 public housing homes have been refurbished and are now available for use.

Mr Hilakari, I mentioned modern methods of construction earlier because the Regional Housing Fund work is progressing using modern methods of construction, which will deliver around 250 new public dwellings. Construction has commenced on the first 61 modular homes. The remaining homes are in various stages of planning, and we will continue using modern methods of construction to deliver these homes in a quicker fashion.

In partnership with the community housing sector, the Regional Housing Fund will support around 270 affordable housing homes to be delivered across regional Victoria. In addition, that fund will also deliver up to 65 homes for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. This does demonstrate, I think, Mr Hilakari, that we are building more social homes right across the state, not just in inner Melbourne, and we have spent a lot of time at this hearing talking about homes that we are building on old walk-up sites and high-rise tower sites in the inner suburbs. But remembering back to when I was Minister for Local Government, which was only a month ago, I spent in my 16 months in that role a lot of time visiting regional and rural Victoria. Every time I sat down with a mayor or a CEO, they would always say to me, 'We need you to build more social housing in our municipalities.' And it is something that we are doing. It is indeed something that is very important – that we are not just increasing social housing stock in the city, in the inner suburbs, but that we are expanding social housing stock right around the state in regional and rural Victoria.

It is not just building houses. In many cases it is building houses with wraparound supports around them as well. In many cases it is investment in tackling homelessness. I spoke earlier about the fact that we are expanding assertive outreach from eight DFFH areas to 17 DFFH areas, because there are rough sleepers not just here in the city, there are rough sleepers in regional and rural Victoria as well. That is why we are expanding assertive outreach to cover the entire state. There is a lot of work to do in this space, but our government has the runs on the board to be able to deliver this housing and also to deliver the services that need to accompany housing in a Housing First model. Because if we get people into housing, we can then tackle the other issues and the other complex needs that clients have. That is as true in regional and rural Victoria as it is in the inner city.

Mathew HILAKARI: Thank you, Minister, and you touch on some of the really critical points about that support to people as well in their new homes. Minister, I might just take you to the Building and Plumbing Commission, which featured heavily in your presentation but also on page 141 of the 'Department Performance Statement'. I have dealt a little bit with the Building and Plumbing Commission, and the main feedback I get from the community that I represent is they wished these laws were in place when those projects which they are having trouble with started. We are really pleased in my community to have the Building and Plumbing Commission there. But could you talk about some of the importance of this for Victorian home buyers across our communities?

Nick STAIKOS: In the 20 seconds I have remaining, from 1 July the first-resort home warranty scheme will be starting. It is part of a broader suite of reforms. Currently domestic building insurance only kicks in as a last resort. If your builder dies or disappears or goes insolvent, first-resort home warranty insurance will be just that. It will kick in as a first resort.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Minister, officials, thank you for appearing before the committee today. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses are required within five working days of the committee's request.

The committee will take a break before beginning its consideration of the Suburban Rail Loop portfolio at 12:55 pm. I declare this hearing adjourned.

Witnesses withdrew.