

Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee  
Inquiry into the Redevelopment of Melbourne's Public  
Housing Towers  
Parliament House, Spring St  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Submitted by Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero

March 2025



The Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero Executive Governance Group submits the recommendations below to the Inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne's public housing towers for consideration.

1. The model of housing management matters - The model of housing management employed in the tower redevelopments must be appropriate to address the needs of complex clients and very low-income tenants. There is significant impact for current public housing tenants potentially becoming community housing tenants and paying up to 75% of market rents or potential new social housing tenants who are homeless and on income support payments like Jobseeker or Youth Allowance being unable to afford social housing in the long term.
2. Community housing needs greater support and tenant's greater protection - An increase in financial support for Community Housing providers to incentivise access for people with high and complex needs, in particular maintenance and tenancy transitions and support.
3. The increase in social housing proposed is insufficient - a 10% increase in social housing represents a missed opportunity, with stated objectives to increase the stock of social housing in Victoria well above the current 2.8%.
4. The relocation process needs genuine consultation and support connections - Homes Victoria must provide personalised supports required on the journey for each individual being relocated, moving from a community they feel connected, safe and secure to restart in another community, which may or may not be their last move if they are going to move back into a redeveloped space. Services in these local areas such as Community Health, Mental Health, Aged Care and Migrant support need to be engaged throughout these processes and resourced to enable people being successfully relocated.

## Our Vision

Everyone deserves a home. The Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero collective has a vision that all people who need housing can access timely, safe, appropriate and affordable housing in our two municipalities. We have a particular focus on people experiencing one of the most extreme forms of homelessness, rough sleeping. It is the goal of Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero to achieve Functional Zero homelessness for people sleeping rough in these two Local Government Areas.

*Functional Zero homelessness will be reached when the number of people entering and experiencing rough sleeping homelessness within a month is less than the average 6-monthly placement rate into long-term housing or the number of people recorded as actively homeless on our By Name Lists is 3, whichever is the lesser.*

Once achieved, Functional Zero must be sustained and any future experiences of rough sleeping homelessness be brief, rare and non-reoccurring.

## Introduction to Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero

[Port Phillip Zero](#) was the first Advance to Zero project in Victoria when it was launched in July 2019. It was followed soon after by [Stonnington Zero](#) in November 2021, building on the demonstrated success of this data driven, outcomes focused, collective impact approach<sup>1</sup>. These two projects have since come together in a regional partnership that recognises the overlap in services and people experiencing homelessness across these areas. There are now ten Advance to Zero projects across Greater Melbourne and regional Victoria.

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<sup>1</sup> Bortz, M & Robbie, K 2023, *Advance to Zero: Formative Evaluation*. Think Impact.

Within each project, local housing and support services working with people sleeping rough focus on knowing and engaging with each person experiencing this form of homelessness in their area and adding their information to their local 'By-Name List'. This list is then used to enable a focused, client-centred service response.

*Knowing everyone by name, understanding their needs and providing an integrated service response helps people find and sustain housing, minimizes duplication, increases efficiency and ensures no-one falls between the cracks.*

Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero is enabled by two separate Service Coordination groups which meet regularly to 'work their list'. That is, to focus on each individual one at a time, allocate responsibility to partner agencies and hold each other accountable for each step on the pathway out of homelessness and into housing. Monthly analysis of the data gathered through the By-Name List occurs ensuring there is a current picture of rough sleeping and housing outcomes in the area and a clear understanding of the system gaps and barriers which are then resolved at local level in Service Coordination, at a regional level in the Metro wide Improvement Group, and at local and Victorian Executive Governance levels where required.

## Our Achievements

- **A client-centred response is working:** Across the life of these two projects to date (July 2019 – February 2025) 161 people from the Port Phillip and Stonnington By-Name Lists have been supported into stable housing. At 45% and 33% of all outflows, these are two of the most successful projects in Melbourne at securing long-term, sustainable housing outcomes for people sleeping rough, behind only the City of Yarra at 63%.
- **Social housing is the destination for over 8 of 10 people added to these BNL's:** With 53% of all people housed finding their long-term home in a public housing dwelling, where rents are set at a percentage of household income, typically 25-30%. The second most common placement type, nearly 30% is in Community Housing, managed under the community housing regulatory system established by the Housing Act. All community housing is managed in line with the Residential Tenancies Act and are eligible for Commonwealth Rent assistance and may pay up to 75% of market. People housed through the project so far include almost 57% of all First National people added to the list and 56% of all people over 55 years old added to the list. For both these priority cohorts, Stonnington has achieved 'Functional Zero' and Port Phillip is on the cusp for Over 55's. In Port Phillip with First Nations people this may be achieved later in 2025 with the addition of 26 beds of permanent supportive housing at Wellington Street Common Ground in July 2025.

**Community Housing** is subsidised rental housing managed and sometimes owned by not for-profit community housing organisations. Most of Victoria's community housing is managed under the community housing regulatory system established by the Housing Act. All community housing is managed in line with the Residential Tenancies Act and its associated regulations.

**Social Housing** is long-term subsidised rental housing provided to households that meet the eligibility criteria set by the Victorian government. Rents are set at a percentage of household income, typically 25-30%. Social housing can be managed by either the state government as public housing, or by community housing organisations as community housing.

- With sufficient social housing continuing to be available we are confident we can achieve and sustain Functional Zero rough sleeping homelessness in both these localities.
- **The coordination function supports access to housing:** Approximately 50% of people active on these two BNL's are either approved or in progress for an application on the Victorian Housing Register (VHR). This figure fluctuates as new people are added to the list, but we know that the housing application process is enabled by our Service Coordination group and the status of these applications is a key indicator of movement on a pathway out of homelessness. What we also know is that many people sleeping rough require time and support to persist with the VHR application process and to maintain hope while waiting, and then to manage the transition into the affordable social housing that is critical to maintaining their long-term tenancy.

## Impact of the Public Housing Tower Redevelopment Program

Unfortunately, the proposed Tower redevelopment process endangers what is a positive trajectory for people sleeping rough in the Cities of Port Phillip and Stonnington.

The Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero Executive welcomes the addition of new stock and upgrade of housing amenity as part of the Big Housing Build by Homes Victoria. Modern, well-designed dwellings with appropriate facilities fit for a changing climate are essential for supporting the transition out of homelessness and into a new life. However, concerns remain that the new stock generated by the Big Housing Build will not be available for priority clients on the By-Name List because the rebuild **prioritises people displaced by each progressive Tower rebuild**. With each rebuild expected to take 6 to 8 years any new stock will be unavailable for people currently homeless for a significant period.

Furthermore, ample state-government-managed public housing in Port Phillip and Stonnington is essential to cater for complex clients who need to be suitably housed over the relocation and build period and into the future.

- **The model of housing management employed in future dwellings matters**

It is noted that in the Victorian Government's Housing Statement there will be a 10% increase of social housing resulting from the redevelopment of the public housing towers which may be public or community housing.

Notwithstanding the excellent relationships the Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero projects have with local Community Housing Providers, evidenced by a very high housing placement into these housing types already secured at almost 30%, disincentives exist in the funding model for community housing that make it more difficult and ultimately less financially sustainable for these providers to house people with traumatic backgrounds and significantly greater personal complexities and in particular those people on the lowest amounts of income support. That is, many of the people on the By Name Lists. The collective efforts of local partners serve to overcome some of these support difficulties but here resources are currently insufficient, and gaps remain. These will be magnified if management of the newly redeveloped tower stock were to follow that proposed in North Melbourne and Flemington and transfer to community housing organisations<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Victorian Government (2025), *Landmark Renewal Project Delivering Hundreds of Homes*  
<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-03/250311-Landmark-Renewal-Project-Delivering-Hundreds-Of-Homes.pdf>

In particular, the payment model differences between Public and Community Housing which are both a significant impost for current public housing tenants potentially becoming community housing or are homeless and on income support payments like JobSeeker or Youth Allowance.

Consequently, the Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero Executive Governance Group supports maintaining and significantly increasing the current level of public housing stock and wherever possible public land should remain to be managed by public authorities. Where Community housing providers are introduced, we request that they are supported by the Victorian Government to best service all people in need of suitable housing, including (where required) supporting clients into local Community Housing at the same rebated public housing rental rates and with commensurate tenancy rights.

- **Community housing providers need greater support and tenant's greater legal protection**

People with lower income support payments impact the operating surplus of community housing providers acting as a disincentive to access for this cohort which is a significant proportion of each of our By Name Lists. An increase in financial support for Community Housing providers to incentivise access for people with high and complex needs, in particular maintenance and tenancy transitions and support, would be welcomed and allow us to build upon our existing excellent relationships.

Greater clarity in terms of legal protections for people residing in community housing is also sought, in particular with respect to the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006) and Freedom of Information legislation (1982) and in this matter we draw the Committee's attention to the submissions made by the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

- **The increase in social housing proposed is insufficient and needs to match the need**

Compounding any potential changes in housing management is the lack of ambition with respect to the stock of social housing situated on extremely valuable public land well located with respect to services, including transport, education and employment opportunities and, in particular, the health services so critical to recovery for the cohort sleeping rough. With a 10% increase in social housing described, we feel this represents a missed opportunity at odds with stated objectives to increase the stock of social housing in Victoria well above the current 2.8%. Not only is the redevelopment adequate to address the number of people waiting for housing through the VHR, but it may also result in significant barriers of access for complex cohorts, depending on the eventual proportion of housing under public management.

Furthermore, it is equally important to match the type of housing stock to housing need. Data captured through the By-Name List shows that most people experiencing rough sleeping homelessness in Port Phillip and Stonnington require a 1-bedroom apartment and 20-30% require significant on-site support, both of which are strongly recommended be factored into redevelopment plans. Housing First models of Permanent Support Housing (e.g. Elizabeth Street Common Ground and Viv's Place) with integrated health and support on-site and well connected to the service-rich environment of Port Phillip and Stonnington have a strong evidence base<sup>3</sup> and are notably missing from the proposals described thus far

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. Mackie, P Johnsen, S and Wood, J 2017, Ending rough sleeping: what works? Crisis UK., Padgett, DK Henwood, BF & Tsemberis SJ 2016, Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems, and Changing Lives. Oxford University

with the noted exception of Wellington Street Common Ground a redevelopment of an existing site constrained somewhat by size.

- **The relocation process needs genuine consultation and support**

As described briefly by a person with lived experience of the current redevelopment process, residents of affected towers describe a lack of transparency, poor communication, a lack of support and unforeseen issues which have yet to be resolved by the process undertaken so far. Furthermore, the Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero Executive group is concerned about the potential for re-traumatisation of people recently housed from each By-Name List through the relocation and build period, given their past experiences of homelessness and long-term housing insecurity.

The Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero Executive seeks assurance that Homes Victoria will provide personalised support required on the journey for each individual being relocated, moving from a community they feel connected, safe and secure to restart in another community, which may or even may not be their last move if they are going to move back into a redeveloped space. Services in these local areas such as Community Health, Mental Health, Aged Care and Migrant support need to be engaged throughout these processes and resourced to enable people being successfully relocated.

Adequate communication post consultation and a revised plan must be provided for people housed not only through Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero, but also those housed on any of the 44 estates within other Advance to Zero projects across Melbourne. These provisions should extend over the relocation and build period.

## Summary

Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero Executive:

- Supports the upgrade of public housing dwellings which may have reached the end of their useful life into those fit for purpose in a modern context and within a changing climate, however wherever possible also supports the notion that public land remains in the ownership and under the management of public authorities.
- is deeply concerned about the impact upon people currently homeless, many of whom have endured long periods of homelessness stretching into the decades.
- Urges Homes Victoria to ensure adequate planning and provision is made for people housed through the Port Phillip and Stonnington Zero By-Name Lists and currently homeless during the relocation and rebuild period of the high-rise redevelopment to ensure ongoing and stable access to suitable, affordable permanent housing. This could include minimising local area impacts by not relocating too many people in one area at once, connecting each rebuild to the wait list in that area, and ensuring a sufficient pipeline of new build stock is available for people on the By-Name List.
- Requests genuine community consultation by Homes Victoria, and provision of support to manage the re-traumatizing effects of the relocation process for highly vulnerable members of our community.

- Seeks an increase in social housing from an inadequate 10% target and for the vast majority to remain as Public Housing managed by the Victorian Government. We believe this offers people transitioning from rough sleeping homelessness the most suitable, affordable housing they need to start rebuilding their lives. It is essential that public housing is increased, and that Victoria does not transition solely to a community housing model. If this is the trajectory then greater work must be done to improve legal protection for tenants to a level enjoyed by their public housing counterparts, secure equivalent affordability levels, and increase the sustainability of the community housing funding model in ways that do not act to disincentivise access for people sleeping rough.

Finally, the Phillip and Stonnington Executive Governance Group welcomes the opportunity to provide additional data and information to the Committee if requested.

### Phillip and Stonnington Zero Executive Governance Group:

City of Port Phillip	City of Stonnington
Southern Homelessness Service Network	Sacred Heart Mission
St Kilda Community Housing	South Port Community Housing
Uniting Victoria and Tasmania	Victoria Police
First Step	Launch Housing
Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation	Port Phillip Community Group



## Attachment A: Formerly homeless person living in an affected tower

I believe that the priority should be to house those with nowhere to go first.

We were first notified by Homes Victoria with a flyer put under the doors of residents. It said that our OPHR was going to be demolished with no time frame given and that we should look for alternative accommodation.

When residents went to the support workers in our building to ask what this was about, they knew nothing about why we had received them. Support workers contacted local DFFH office, and they were unaware of flyers or why Homes Victoria would put them under our doors. This caused a lot of stress as many residents are disabled and have chronic illness. The idea of moving was and is overwhelming because right now, support services for residents are within walking distance, a tram or short taxi ride, what will that be like after we are relocated? The support workers in the OPHR have been crucial in the wellbeing of many residents. They provide vital networking help for everyone, i.e. Medical (both physical and mental) and translation services

We've also been told that residents will have to purchase washing machine and dryer or find a laundromat nearby. The idea of the elderly or disabled trying to walk to the laundry is ridiculous. The new residences have embedded electricity and internet which means that new residents will have to cancel their own services before moving. This will also be an added cost. We will also have water rates added to our rent. There is no guarantee that there will be supportive community service available for residents and we have been told that no office space is provided in new buildings.

Homes Victoria in conjunction with DFFH have held meeting 2 after we got those flyers where we workshopped our concerns, but we have never been notified on any outcomes despite being promised.

For me, alternative accommodation was suggested in a move to Bangs Street which is run by CHL, but the forms are long and complicated requiring help to understand and fill out and there is no financial aid offered to move before being evicted, and this is what it feels like, we are being evicted.

In short, there has been no transparency from government. This has caused stress and a feeling of hopelessness. Many people I have spoken to have expressed that they hope they will die before they are forced to leave. People know that this will be their 'last' move.