

Kai NG
Resident

[REDACTED]

16/03/2025

To:

Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee
Inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne public housing towers
Parliament House, Spring St EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Subject: Submission to Inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne's public housing towers

Introduction:

- **Brief Introduction:**

My name is Kai. I have lived in public housing for 25 years. This is more than just a place to live—it is my home and my community that is being directly impacted and threatened by this course of action. I am making this submission to share my personal experience and highlight the devastating impact that the proposed demolition and redevelopment will have on residents like me.

Relevance:

This submission addresses key aspects of the inquiry:

- **Demolition vs. Refurbishment:** I believe the buildings could be maintained and refurbished rather than demolished, preserving both housing and community stability.
- **Impact on Residents:** The forced relocation is financially and emotionally distressing, particularly for older residents like me, who rely on nearby healthcare and services.
- **Consultation Adequacy:** I was never consulted about the redevelopment. No interpreter was provided, and many residents felt pressured to sign relocation agreements without full understanding.

- **Housing and Homelessness:** The Relocation increases financial burdens, including new utility costs. Many of us fear we will be placed in unfamiliar areas, far from essential services and support networks, worsening housing insecurity.

I urge the inquiry to reconsider the demolition and prioritise the real people, families and vulnerable who rely on Public Housing and our well-being through a fair, transparent, and community-focused approach.

Key Points:

How am I linked to this Public Housing Community?

My name is Kai, and I'm 70 years old. I've lived here [REDACTED] for the past 25 years. Public Housing: [REDACTED] isn't just where I live—it's my home. Over the past few decades, I've built friendships with my neighbors, and this community has become my family. I love living here because everything I need is close by—my doctor, healthcare facilities, and [REDACTED], where I receive treatment and medication for my health conditions.

As I've gotten older, I don't drive anymore. Walking short distances is not just easier, but safer for me. That's why staying here matters so much. Everything is within reach, and I don't have to worry about long journeys or relying on others to get by.

More than anything, this is a place where people help each other. For 25 years, I've been part of a community that looks out for one another. I try to give back whenever I can—sometimes by cooking meals and bringing food to community meetings.

Cooking and food have always been a big part of my life. I worked in hospitality my entire career—waiting tables, managing restaurants, bartending, cooking. I spent 15 years as a restaurant manager and even had the honor of cooking for the Mayor. For many years, I worked at Dragon Boat Restaurant in Chinatown, a beloved establishment that has been serving food for over 40 years. I came to Australia from Hong Kong in 1980, nearly 50 years ago, looking for a better life and a sense of purpose. I worked hard—long hours, many jobs—but I built a life here. And this community became my home. My neighbors have been here for over 10 years, many of them families, and we all look after the space. They're quiet, respectful, and kind. Like me, most of them want to stay.

Was I consulted on the redevelopment?

No. No one asked for my opinion. There was no discussion, no effort to hear what we thought. I wasn't given any clear information, no reasonable explanation. I was simply told that I had to

move because the government was going to demolish the building, and I needed to leave before February 2026.

It wasn't a conversation—it was a decision made for us. There was no interpreter to make sure I understood everything. No resources to help me navigate what was happening. Just a statement: *You have to move.*

What impact will this have on me and my community?

Moving at this stage in life is not simple. It's expensive. I've lived here for 25 years—everything I have is here. If I'm forced to move, I'll have to replace so many things. New furniture, new appliances, new essentials. I'm retired. I don't have an income to afford all this.

For older people like me, there's no financial support to help with these sudden costs. Many of us have been retired for over a decade—we rely on the government, and yet they don't seem to understand what this means for us.

On top of that, moving means more bills—water, electricity, gas, removalists—things we didn't have to pay separately before. And what about the waste? People will be forced to throw away furniture and belongings that don't fit in the new place. It's not just a financial burden, it's a complete disruption of our lives.

And worst of all—our community isn't guaranteed. We don't know where we'll end up, or if we'll be near the people we've spent years building relationships with. There's no certainty. No security.

I've gone to community meetings to try to understand what's happening, but it's hard. There's a lot of talking, a lot of different opinions, and I only understand part of it. I do my best to keep up, to help where I can, but I still don't know what the future holds for us.

What do I want to see happen?

I don't ask for much. I just want a safe, secure place to live—somewhere close to my doctor, my grocery store, the places I walk to every day. Somewhere familiar, where I can continue to live independently.

I don't believe this building is too old to be saved. With some refurbishment and proper maintenance, it could last another 20 or even 40 years.

When they made me sign the relocation document, they didn't tell me about all the extra costs—water bills, gas bills, all the things I'd have to pay for in the new housing. They only told me later. And they didn't give me a choice. They said I *had* to move by next February. They said

the building was going to be demolished, but I don't even know if that's true. We don't know anything—only the government does.

Many of us felt pressured to sign because we were scared. Scared that if we didn't, we wouldn't have anywhere to go. Scared of the uncertainty, the cost, the difficulty of finding housing at our age. I'm 70. I can't go out and find a job to afford private housing. Even if I went to 1,000 job interviews, I know no one would hire me.

That's the reality we're facing.

My experience with the Homes VIC relocation team

One day, they knocked on my door and asked me to sign. They told me they were finding a new home for me, a new address. I mentioned streets and locations that I preferred, and they promised they would try—but they couldn't guarantee anything.

The threat of eviction was always there.

They explained the process to me, but in a way that made it sound simple. But it's *not* simple. It's confusing, overwhelming, and full of hidden complications.

What do I hope for?

All I want is to stay.

To keep my home, my community, my way of life.

That's all I hope for.

Conclusion:

- **Summary:** I have lived in this community for 25 years, and it has become my home. Everything I need—my doctor, healthcare, and daily necessities—is within reach, and many people in this building rely on these services for their daily well-being and quality of life. More importantly, this is a supportive, close-knit community where neighbours help each other, and I have actively contributed through my work in hospitality and community service.

Despite this, I was not consulted about the redevelopment. There was no effort to hear my thoughts or ensure I understood the process. I was simply told that I had to move. The relocation process comes with significant financial and emotional burdens that many elderly residents, including myself, cannot afford. There is also no guarantee that our community will remain together or have secure housing, creating deep uncertainty and distress.

I strongly believe that instead of demolishing our homes, the buildings should be refurbished and maintained for another 20–40 years. If relocation is unavoidable, the government must provide financial support for essential costs and ensure that elderly residents are placed in suitable housing close to their doctors, grocery stores, and familiar surroundings. Transparency and proper consultation must be prioritised, so residents fully understand their options rather than being pressured into decisions out of fear.

At the heart of my request is a simple wish: to remain in my home, in the community I love, with the security and support I need.

Public Hearing

- I give permission to be interviewed by the committee in public and prefer to come in person.

