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Submission to the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into the Redevelopment of Melbourne's Public Housing Towers.

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Introduction

The Carlton Housing Estates Residents Services (CHERS) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne's public housing towers. As an organisation representing the interests of local residents, we acknowledge both the challenges and the potential benefits associated with the proposed redevelopment.

Key Issues

Aging Infrastructure & Modern Living Standards Upgrading the 44 existing towers—mostly built in the 1970s—to meet contemporary living standards would be a substantial challenge. These buildings lack adequate air conditioning, heating and cooling systems, energy efficiency, and other basic amenities essential for comfortable, modern sustainable living.

Stigma & Urban Design The distinctive architectural design and appearance of the towers contribute a stigma, shaping both resident experiences and public perception. Redevelopment offers an opportunity to rewrite this narrative by creating inclusive and dignified housing environments.

Reduction in Open Space vs. Unit Expansion While the redevelopment may result in a modest increase in overall housing units; it also entails a reduction in open, green communal spaces. This trade-off must be managed thoughtfully to maintain resident access to shared areas vital for social inclusion and wellbeing.

Increase in Larger Family Units A particularly welcome aspect is the proposed increase in four- and five-bedroom apartments—especially in the Carlton redbrick tower redevelopment. This directly addresses a long-standing shortage of large family dwellings and supports multi-generational households.

Key Issues with Existing Towers

- Buildings are outdated and appear disconnected and out of place from their surrounding urban environment.
- A strong and persistent stigma is attached to their design and condition.
- Heating and cooling systems are inadequate
- They are not energy-efficient

Commitments by Government

Residents will be relocated to suitable accommodation, assisting relocation.

They will be given first right of return once the redevelopment is complete.

Assistance for relocation back again for those wishing to return.

The new builds will include more large-family apartments (four bedrooms and above)

Resident and Community Concerns

Shift away from full public ownership to partial the current public land.

A reduction in open, accessible public spaces

Despite these concerns, many residents are hopeful that thoughtful planning can help address and balance these trade-offs.

Recommendations

- Ensure transparent and continuous consultation with residents throughout the redevelopment process
- Create job and enterprise opportunities for current residents to promote economic capacity and community involvement
- Provide pathways to home ownership through cooperative models or family-focused initiatives
- Explore Community Land Trust (CLT) models to maintain long-term affordability and empower residents seeking ownership.
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Community Land Trusts (CLTs)

CLTs offer a valuable framework to prevent displacement and support affordable housing.

Several Australian initiatives are exploring CLTs as part of sustainable housing solutions:

- *Australian Community Land Trust Network* – Advocates for CLTs that support permanent affordability and community-led development
- *Grounded Community Land Trusts* – Emphasizes resident-driven models and environmental stewardship

AHURI Research on CLTs – Highlights CLTs’ potential to create secure, long-term housing options.

Incorporating these models into the redevelopment could help deliver both stability and opportunity for current and future residents.

Resident-Focused Capacity Building

Redevelopment should not be limited to new buildings—it must also foster long-term empowerment. Suggested initiatives include:

- *Community Markets* – Encourage resident-led enterprises and cooperatives
- *Employment Opportunities During Redevelopment* – Prioritize jobs for local residents in construction and support roles
- *Workforce Development After Redevelopment* – Provide training and career pathways to ensure long-term community resilience.

These measures will ensure the redevelopment becomes a driver of social and economic renewal.

Conclusion

The redevelopment of Melbourne’s public housing towers presents a critical opportunity to modernize infrastructure, enhance living standards, and strengthen community connections. With inclusive, transparent planning and investment in resident capacity, this project has the potential to deliver transformative outcomes for residents and the broader city and community.

CHERS thanks the Committee for the opportunity, its leadership in this Inquiry and welcomes further dialogue on how best to support public housing tenants.