



Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee

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

Hearing date: 22 July 2025

Question taken on notice

Directed to: Fitzroy Legal Service, Dr Sebastian Sharp and Hamish McLachlan

Received date: 7 August 2025

1. John BERGER, p.19

Question asked:

You would have had some clients that have been relocated from other social housing sites as part of the regular portfolio upgrades; can you give me some examples of who has not been able to return?

Hamish McLACHLAN: Do you mean in terms of previous projects?

John BERGER: Yes.

Sebastian SHARP: We might have to take that question on notice.

Response:

In the Coalition of Community Legal Centres' submission to the Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program (PHRP) in 2017, we observed that the Department of Health and Human Services failed to provide tenants with clear and consistent information about their right to return.

The Legal and Social Issues Committee, in its final report on the PHRP, recommended that the Victorian Government formally confirm a right of return for relocated tenants. In response, a Deed Poll was developed to safeguard tenants' return rights and rental conditions.

We support Inner Melbourne Community Legal's recommendation to this current Inquiry: that it investigate what happened to tenants relocated under the PHRP — specifically, how many were actually able to return and whether the Deed Poll protected their rights in practice.

2. Ann-Marie HERMANS, p.20

Question asked:

I just have a concluding question. I think it was Hamish that mentioned that Victoria has the lowest proportion of public housing in Australia. Is that because we have a number of our towers empty and because we are relocating, or is that because that is all that has been provided per se, in

Victoria up until now and now of course it is diminishing rapidly with this situation? Could you please elaborate on that and any statistics that you may have on that.

Hamish McLACHLAN: I do not know if, Sebastian, you have a greater sense of that, but we could definitely take that on notice and tell you. I am not sure whether it is only because of this process or whether it is just a diminishment over time – that we have not kept pace with growth of population really.

Response:

According to VCOSS's recent *Growing Social Housing* (2025) report, social housing currently makes up just 3.1% of Victoria's total housing stock — the lowest in Australia.

This situation is not primarily due to the recently emptied towers or relocations underway. Rather, Victoria has experienced decades of under-investment in social housing, leaving it well behind other states in terms of both stock and proportion of total housing.

The report makes it clear that this position is due to long-term systemic under-provision: "Decades of under-investment in social housing by previous governments has left our state with the lowest proportion of social housing in Australia." (p.5) While current relocations due to the tower redevelopments are reducing stock in the short term, the proportion was low well before these policies were introduced. For example, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *Housing Assistance in Australia* report (2014), as of 30 June 2013, Victoria had only 64,616 public housing dwellings, placing it closer to Queensland (51,675) than New South Wales (111,216) (p.29.)

Furthermore, if no further action is taken, the percentage of social housing is projected to fall even further due to population growth outpacing investment (*Growing Social Housing* p.14).