

# **T R A N S C R I P T**

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE**

### **Inquiry into the Redevelopment of Melbourne's Public Housing Towers**

Melbourne – Tuesday 5 August 2025

#### **MEMBERS**

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Michael Galea – Deputy Chair

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Richard Welch

**WITNESSES**

R-Coo Tran, Founder and Leader,

Diirshe Mohamed, Core Organiser,

Alicia Lay, Member Organiser, and

Kylie Peterson, Member Organiser, 44 Flats United.

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back to the last session today of the Legal and Social Issues Committee. I am Joe McCracken, the Chair, and we are going to introduce our committee members as well.

**Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO:** Good afternoon. Anasina Gray-Barberio, Northern Metro.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Hi. Aiv Puglielli, North-Eastern Metro.

**Ryan BATCHELOR:** Ryan Batchelor, Southern Metro.

**Michael GALEA:** G'day. Michael Galea, Member for South-Eastern Metropolitan.

**The CHAIR:** All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and say the same thing, you may not be protected by that same privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript. You can make any minor alterations that you need to make. Ultimately that will be made public and put on the committee's website.

Just for the Hansard record – and I will go from my left to right – can you say your name and the organisation that you are appearing on behalf of, please?

**Diirshe MOHAMED:** Mohamed Diirshe, from 44 Flats United.

**Alicia LAY:** Alicia Lay, resident of the 120 building.

**R-Coo TRAN:** R-Coo Tran, 44 Flats United.

**Kylie PETERSON:** Kylie Peterson, 44 Flats United and a housing tenant of 12 Holland Court.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks so much. Now we have some time for a presentation. Sorry to be a pain, but we note that on your –

**Diirshe MOHAMED:** Diirshe Mohamed, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, we have got it the wrong way. Which way – is it Mohamed or Diirshe?

**Diirshe MOHAMED:** You can say Diirshe.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. I will hand it over to you, Diirshe, and then you can hand it over to whoever you want, and we will go from there. Welcome and thank you, anyway.

**Diirshe MOHAMED:** Thank you, guys, and thank you again for inviting us to speak today. Before we start we would like to acknowledge that we are appearing today at this public hearing on the unceded, stolen lands of the people from the Woiwurrung and Bunurong language groups of the eastern Kulin nation. We pay our respects to their ancestors and elders past, present and emerging. The inner-city commission estates that we grew up on, that we call here, are sites of rich black history and sites of ongoing resistance and organising for First Peoples. As stated by Senator Lidia Thorpe in her submission 728, these estates have allowed First

Peoples to stay in proximity to one another, which has been fundamental for learning from elders and political idols, keeping culture and people alive. 44 FU stands behind Senator Thorpe's statement:

This land must be part of any future Treaty negotiations between sovereigns ...

If Government is serious about its apology for the trauma inflicted by colonisation, it must halt the sale or lease (including the proposed Ground Lease Model) of any so-called "Crown land" until Treaties with First Peoples have been negotiated and finalised.

And now to take over, Alicia Lay – please introduce yourself.

**Alicia LAY:** My name is Alicia Lay. I have been living at 120 Racecourse Road, Flemington, for the last seven years. Before I lived in the Victoria Street walk-up, where I raised my three daughters. I am here at this public hearing today because I want to share with the committee and the audience what my experience has been like since the demolition was announced in 2023.

This is my second time being relocated by Homes Victoria and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing in seven years. In this process, I have experienced broken promises, harassment by the staff and significant disappointments. I do not agree with the redevelopment plans. I know this plan is just so the government and the developers can profit off prime real estate at our expense. While this parliamentary inquiry is still underway and while our class action case is waiting to be listed in the Court of Appeal, I believe there is a chance these plans will not go ahead.

I am very happy where I am. I do not want to move. I want to protect our communities from being destroyed. This is why I am here and why I am a member of 44 FU.

**Diirshe MOHAMED:** And please, Kylie, take over.

**Kylie PETERSON:** Good afternoon. My name is Ky Peterson, and I live at 12 Holland Court, Flemington, one of the first buildings that the state government wants to knock down, which is in part of tranche 1 demolition. Before this I lived in community housing for three years, and before that I was actually homeless for 16 months, and before that I had my own unit for three years. When I moved into 12 Holland Court, I fell to my knees and said, 'Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.' I could not believe how spacious and bright it was, and I fell in love with my unit instantaneously. Ever since I heard the news on the TV about the demolition, I have become a completely different person. I am constantly scared, anxious, sick and in pain due to health reasons. This whole process has been very traumatic and triggering for me. I am still here in my flat at 12 Holland Court because I fight for what I believe in. Sorry. And I also have not been given a safe or secure home to live in yet by Homes Victoria or DFFH. I have not been offered one place this year, and they want us to move out in less than two months, by the end of September apparently. Everything that was good about our flat, our home, and that made me feel happy, safe and stable, Homes Victoria and DFFH have destroyed. I am here today because I want to help – sorry – to make a case to save public housing. Sorry. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Do not worry. You did a great job. Well done. I will start off with questions, and then –

**R-Coo TRAN:** Actually, we are not quite done.

**The CHAIR:** Apologies. Do you want to finish off? Sorry. Apologies. I thought you had gone through. My mistake.

**Diirshe MOHAMED:** Thank you, Kylie, for your submission. So who is 44 Flats United? 44 Flats United is a group of residents, former residents and supporters of public housing in Victoria, collectively organising across estates to ensure that not one person is left worse off because of the decision to demolish our homes and to ensure that our homes remain as public housing.

What have we done? Since September 2023 we have doorknocked almost every home in tranche 1 and tranche 2, which is a total of over 1000 homes. We have had hundreds of in-depth conversations with the residents to better understand how they feel about where they live, their communities and their thoughts on these demolition plans. We have also provided them with materials from CLCs, which are the community legal centres, the local MP offices, academic and other research papers – a lot of work with interpreting between Vietnamese, Somali and Arabic. We have held community meetings where we have provided information about the class action, this parliamentary inquiry and previous community campaigns to save public housing.

44 Flats United has also facilitated attendance at the class action hearings; assisted residents to make submissions and present at public hearings; put residents in touch with relevant CLCs; raised more serious concerns with CLCs, the state member of Parliament and the local council; attended HV meetings with residents as their support persons; organised media interviews to allow residents' voices and concerns to be heard more broadly; and created spaces for peer support. I would like to pass on to R-Coo.

**R-Coo TRAN:** In all the doorknocking that we have done – which, to clarify, is all of tranche 1 and all of tranche 2; that is five high-rise buildings and almost all of the 12 walk-ups in Richmond – this is what we have found. From the TV announcement of the demolition plans by former Premier Dan Andrews on 20 September 2023 to the recent decision to continue with decommissioning works while residents are still living inside these buildings after assurances were made that this would not occur, Homes Victoria, contrary to what their comms say, have failed at every step of the way to centre residents and their communities in this project. They have blatantly lied to residents, talked down to them, pressured them into doing things they did not understand and did not want to do, and they continue to do so despite being called out. Homes Victoria acts with impunity, and despite numerous complaints made against them by residents, nothing has changed. In recent years the flats have changed. A combination of a lack of maintenance and repairs, the atmosphere since the COVID hard lockdowns and the beginning of relocations has meant residents have reported feeling less safe. This is what one resident from Richmond said:

It used to feel like home, but now it doesn't. Things have gotten worse in the last year. All my community has left. When I first moved here, it felt safe and good, like home. Now it no longer is the case, especially since COVID. I feel like it is a cage.

From the hundreds of conversations that we have had with residents, it is clear that it is community that makes the flats feel safe, it is community that has shouldered the burden of making the flats livable in the face of years of managed decline, and despite the failure of the government to uphold its side of the tenancy agreement and its duties as a landlord, residents have overwhelmingly expressed a desire to stay in the flats. One resident from South Yarra, from 259 Malvern Road, says:

I am worried about relocating to a place without my community. I have come to rely on my neighbours and the other local Russian speakers to get by.

Yet residents also express hopelessness and a serious lack of agency, that there is no viable path to alter the government's decisions. One resident from the Richmond high-rise says:

People from Homes Victoria were down on the floor passing out paper that says they are going to demolish this building. This is a big business, and if they want to do it, I am a poor guy that cannot go and control all these multimillion-dollar projects that are going to go down. So I am just going to go along with it and see where it takes me.

Many residents have also indicated that their neighbouring apartments have been left vacant, some for up to eight years. One resident from 139 Highett, Richmond, said:

I do not know why they did not move other families in. I thought we were in a housing crisis, and I know many people are waiting for a home. It is a joke.

Based on our doorknocks, this was most prevalent in Richmond, and this is supported by data that has been FOI-ed by Purple Pingers, by Jordan, that shows that many vacant public housing units are in Richmond. As months have passed, more pressure is placed on people who remain to move out by the relocation officers as their buildings get emptied. One resident from Richmond also says:

I will tell you the truth, I am really stuck here. If I could afford to pay for a private rental, because it is better, I would. But if I sign the agreement, I may get somewhere in community housing, like a prison place. Staying here with zombie, but it is convenient for living.

Another resident has spoken with complete dismay at empty promises by Homes Victoria. It is in submission 501. He says:

They are treating the community really poorly. I have been deceived and lied to, and the apartment they are moving me to is meant to get demolished in 5 years. I feel a lot of stress and anxiety and I have no security in my housing for the future.

44 FU are currently working with two other residents who are living in limbo because Homes Victoria and DFFH have failed to deliver on what they promised residents in their new homes. There simply are not enough suitable homes for people to move into. That is what we have been finding. The majority of people that we speak to, or who have moved into community housing, do not like living there. They cannot afford it, and they liken it to living in a prison cell. One woman, who is in her 90s, says:

It is so cold in these new homes. I wear many layers to stay warm because the electricity is so expensive. We have to pay for hot water here too, so I only shower every three to four days, and when I do, I use a small bucket to save water. When I lived in the flats in public housing, I could save about \$100 to \$150 a week in savings from my Centrelink payments, my pension payments. Now, since moving to community housing, I have about \$20 left each fortnight. I cannot visit my friends here either because I cannot access their floors. I feel very lonely here.

Many in community housing hold out hope that we will win this class action appeal so that they can return home to their high-rise flats. A number of people are reapplying to move back into public housing in fact. If you head to 12 Holland Court or 120 Racecourse Road in Flemington on the weekends, you will see people coming back to their old buildings to do their laundry, because it is too expensive to run their laundry in the new community housing builds.

One woman in 33 Alfred Street, North Melbourne – I am almost done – who has Alzheimer’s still comes back regularly to her flat thinking that this is where she still lives. We are told that she stands in front of her door for hours until neighbours recognise her and bring her back to her new flat in Sutton Street.

We also speak to those who are sleeping rough and find refuge with a friend or a family member who lives in the flats or in one of the vacant units. When we ask them if they have applied for public housing, almost all of them say, ‘Yes’. They are some of the 64,000 adults who are on the Victorian housing register who will face further housing insecurity because of the demolition of the flats and the walk-ups. These are not the stories that get covered in Harriet Shing’s Instagram posts; they are also not the stories that feature on Homes Victoria’s websites, but these are stories that are important, and we believe that they highlight yet again that it is the marginalised, primarily racialised working-class poor who are suffering the consequences of another bad government decision that puts profit before people. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks very much. First I will start off and then we will go to the other members of the committee. I just want to say thanks very much for your submission first up, and Kylie in particular, I know that was really difficult for you.

**Kylie PETERSON:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** I can see it in your face, but you got through it, so well done.

**Kylie PETERSON:** Thank you so much.

**The CHAIR:** I have got a question, and my first one is to Alicia actually. I listened very intently to what you said in your opening. In one of the parts, you said you felt harassed by Homes Victoria staff. Was that correct?

**Alicia LAY:** Yes. The relocation team.

**The CHAIR:** Can you tell me a bit more about that?

**Alicia LAY:** Because she called me, like, 10 times a day. I did not pick up. I got 10 missed calls, then five or six messages per day. And then after, I sought a legal aid lawyer. So now I have a lawyer and everything that she wants to contact me about has to go through the lawyer, so now it has stopped. Then she only offered me the really bad properties, one to another. Then recently she offered me a one-bedroom where the elderly live, and all the parking spaces are disabled parking. When I went to have a look outside – because she made an appointment for me on Friday to go to inspect the property, but Thursday, the day before, I went to have a look outside and I cancelled the appointment, because I cannot live there. If I live there, I have a fear I am going to have mental health problems.

**The CHAIR:** Of course.

**Alicia LAY:** The surrounding area, it is all elderly people who live there.

**The CHAIR:** Okay.

**Alicia LAY:** Then I emailed my lawyer. I emailed her and the relocation team, and she said that is for someone over 55, but I did not accept it.

**The CHAIR:** Okay.

**Alicia LAY:** If I have to move, I want to move to the 130 or 126 building, which is the next building.

**The CHAIR:** Which is still in same community?

**Alicia LAY:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** One of the things that you said in your opening too was the fact, and I wrote it down, you said you do not believe the plans are going to go ahead.

**Alicia LAY:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Why do you say that?

**Alicia LAY:** Because our lawyers are going to re-appeal in November and –

**Diirshe MOHAMED:** As part of the –

**R-Coo TRAN:** Parliamentary –

**Alicia LAY:** Yes, plus the class action.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. I just out of interest asked, that is all. Well, thank you for that.

More broadly, and this is open to everyone, there has been a lot of commentary and evidence given about a lack of consultation. I have only got 30 seconds left, but if I can get a little bit from everyone: what do you rate the consultation that you have been a part of or engaged in, or lack of, out of 10? I will go Kylie, and then I will go right across.

**Kylie PETERSON:** I will give that a straight maybe minus one, actually –

**The CHAIR:** Negative! Right, okay.

**Kylie PETERSON:** A one, probably. I have not had any contact or any offers this year, as I said, from Homes Victoria, apart from when I physically went to the relocations meeting that was on 10 July this year at 120 Racecourse Road, where I physically went in because I had not been hearing anything. When I had seen neighbour after neighbour on my floor moving with boxes, it is quite distressing. And sorry, just quickly, the two offers that I did get last year from Homes Victoria, when they have been given documentation from Flemington police of an IVO that I have with a stalker who used to live in my building who now lives at 45 Holland Court, the two offers that Homes Victoria gave me – wait for it – were at 45 Holland Court. This was after I had given them the IVO documentation from Flemington police. I had actually spoken to two workers from Homes Victoria or DFFH, whatever title they come under. I had physically spoken to them and I had given them documentation, and those were the two offers that I was given. Sorry.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Just quickly, to the rest of the panel – consultation: good or bad?

**R-Coo TRAN:** I can go. I will just speak really quickly. I grew up in public housing in the Carlton estate, and my dad still lives there. We attended the very first ever consultation session that happened on that estate, and that would have been early last year. It was purely to obtain what the ‘values’ of the community were around the relocation process.

**The CHAIR:** What do you mean by the ‘values’?

**R-Coo TRAN:** That is a very good question, Joe. I have no idea. It was, ‘What are your values? Within this relocation process, what are your values?’ Honestly, I also was confused. We attended this meeting expecting to find out a little bit more, but they already had prewritten values on the walls around things like ‘respect’ and ‘diversity’ and really wishy-washy things that did not actually explain anything to us. In fact all it really was was an opportunity for them to showcase what the new community houses looked like.

**The CHAIR:** I am sure you did not think it was genuine.

**R-Coo TRAN:** It did not feel genuine at all. My father actually asked a question to the head of engagement of Homes Victoria at the time. The photos were for the new red bricks that were going up, and they were saying, 'Everyone, don't worry. If you're in the Carlton estate, we'll move you into the red bricks when that is done. They're going to be nice. They're going to be public housing.' My dad just asked a really simple question: 'How is everyone in my building going to fit in those red brick buildings, especially the people that used to live here. Aren't they coming back too?' She said straight to my dad and I, 'We'll make it work.' That is about as much as you get from Homes Victoria, and that is consistent; others have experienced similar things.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you for that. I am going to pass on to Mr Galea now, because my time has run out. I will hand over to you, Michael.

**Michael GALEA:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you all for joining us today and sharing your stories. I would like to ask about something that has come up a few times in these hearings, and I would like to get your perspective on it. We have heard, in terms of the announcement and how it was originally announced, that most people found out about it on the news. Given the vast numbers of people who are in public housing, we have heard that people did not appreciate being told through the news and that they would have appreciated finding out directly. With the benefit of hindsight, how would you do that in a way that ensures that you are getting to everyone at the same time, without some people hearing and passing it on and then rumours getting out of hand and people hearing all these things but not hearing it from the source? In terms of looking at the best practice for consultation, I am really curious to know how you think this could be done better?

**R-Coo TRAN:** I might just respond to that, if that is okay. Michael, I do not know if you know, but at the same time or shortly thereafter, this letter was sent to residents. This was for tranche 1 tenants. So you did do that – Homes Victoria did send out letters – but there is almost no information in these letters. It is actually quite distressing to receive a letter like this that says, 'Your home is going to be retired, but we'll support you. We don't know when it's going to happen, but it will happen sometime between now and 2051.'

**The CHAIR:** Can you provide a copy of that to the committee, if you would not mind?

**R-Coo TRAN:** Absolutely, yes. Then the same thing happened for the tranche 2 buildings, which was a year after. Richmond and South Yarra residents received – well, there were people at the bottom of their buildings who gave out these brochures that said very little, just lots of pretty photos of the new community housing builds. They also got a letter that said very little, and I can also provide a copy of that letter.

**Michael GALEA:** I suspect I might know the answer to this, but what sorts of details would you have liked to see in that communication?

**R-Coo TRAN:** Honestly, Michael, a letter is not sufficient. You call a meeting. You call a meeting on each of the estates. I do not want to tell you how to do your job, but it is like –

**Michael GALEA:** That is literally what you are here for. We are very keen to hear your feedback.

**R-Coo TRAN:** I think there are so many ways that you could have done this better.

**Kylie PETERSON:** Can I just say that on 10 July they held a relocations meeting and update. I believe – I could be wrong – that was only the first or the second one this year. That was on 10 July, not even a month ago, for a relocations meeting. The flyer stated that, 'This is a chance for you to come on down'. And that update with air conditioners. We have a flyer here which again was quite distressing. It was given for community updates on relocation, which was just a little on the bottom here – 'Relocation check-in drop-in session' – which, thank God, I attended. The flyer also states some other things which were quite distressing about the installation of air conditioners happening at 130 Racecourse Road, which is right next to my building.

**Michael GALEA:** How much time do I have, Joe?

**Kylie PETERSON:** Sorry, I lost where I was going with that.

**The CHAIR:** You have got about 10 seconds, Michael, but I am feeling generous so I will give you a whole question.

**Michael GALEA:** Thank you. Do I infer from your answer that you would have preferred more group meetings at an earlier stage?

**Kylie PETERSON:** Well, yes. As it was getting close to the push – ‘We’ve got to get everyone out. We’ve got to get everyone out’ – there was finally a relocations drop-in session meeting, and I was given this under my door and also in my letterbox. We have always been given documentation into our letterboxes.

**R-Coo TRAN:** Maybe for Alicia and Kylie I might rephrase the question. I think Michael is saying, ‘Are there other ways?’ Is that right, Michael? ‘Are there other ways that this news would have been best received?’ I think this news is inherently shocking. I feel like it is on you guys to work out how to deliver this news, but the way you have done it is wrong.

**Alicia LAY:** I did not receive one.

**R-Coo TRAN:** You didn’t.

**Alicia LAY:** I did not receive any letter or flyers at all – not in my building, 120.

**Kylie PETERSON:** Alicia lives in 120 and did not receive this, but I live in 12 Holland Court and people in 130 received this as well, so it is quite contradictory.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Galea. I am going to hand over to Ms Gray-Barberio now. Over to you.

**Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO:** Thank you. Before I begin, I want to acknowledge each and every one of you. Thank you for the work that you do to try and bring the voices of residents that could not be here today. I particularly have a pit in my stomach right now when I hear of an elderly person who cannot have a shower for four days because they are so afraid of what it will cost them or an Alzheimer’s person who keeps going back to their home thinking that it is their home. This is the human impact that we are hearing directly from you all and from the testimonies that you are sharing to the committee today of how deplorable this whole situation has been and how it is impacting so many public housing residents. And like you said, R-Coo, it is often the marginalised and the racialised that are directly impacted by these decisions. I also would like to acknowledge you, Kylie. Thank you for being here yourself, Alicia – all of you. Would it be okay with you if I asked a question?

**Alicia LAY:** Of course.

**Kylie PETERSON:** Of course.

**Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO:** Thank you. Kylie, you said that you have not been given any safe or secure housing options. How do you think Homes Victoria expects you to meet the 30 September deadline if you have not been given any options?

**Kylie PETERSON:** Your guess is as good as mine. I do not know.

**Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO:** I do not want to upset you.

**Kylie PETERSON:** No, it is not your question that is upsetting me. It is just, as I quickly stated – and I will try and be quick, sorry – I had my own unit from 2012 to 2015. Life was great. Then I was homeless for 16 months. Most of that was in my car. All this process is bringing up some traumatic – sorry – crap. And then, due to the Salvation Army we will just say, I was placed in a rooming house run by community housing. I know what they can do. They can make their own rules. They can set their own amount. I was paying \$340 a fortnight and that was back in 2017 to 2021 – \$340 back then for a little box the size of a cell. I shared the kitchen. I had to share laundry. It was worse. It was a 24-bed rooming house. It was supposed to be female only but they had males there. It was run by community housing. All of this is just bringing it up. It is not your question. I apologise. It is not your question; it is this whole process. Sorry.

**Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO:** Thank you, Kylie, I really appreciate it. Thank you. Alicia, is it okay if I ask you a question?

**Alicia LAY:** Yes.



**Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO:** Thank you. I just want to follow up from what Mr McCracken asked you earlier about harassment. You also said in your opening statement about broken promises that you also got from the Homes Victoria staff. Can you explain to the committee more about what you meant by that?

**Alicia LAY:** I was living at 36 Victoria, in a walk-up in Victoria Street seven years ago. When they told me to relocate to 120 they said, 'When we rebuild, you can just come back to the building.' But when the building was built and I asked to go back, they said that it had become affordable housing – 'You are not allowed to go back where you used to live.' That is 30 to 35 per cent of your income, and you need to have a full-time job, not even a casual or part-time job. So they gave me 45 Holland Court. That is called social housing. It is one bedroom but very small. I cannot even fit my couch – a five-seater couch. I can only fit three. I could fit my fridge in the cabinet. They told me to sell it. The relocation team officer told me to sell my furniture on eBay and then go to the Salvation Army and get second-hand goods. I cannot do that, so I did not accept the offer. And I asked them for two bedrooms so I have a spare room and can put my furniture there. But they said, 'No, you only can have one bedroom.' But I know one person living in two bedrooms. I do not know why they do not offer me two bedrooms.

I think I was targeted because I went to Supreme Court for the class action. Also, I went to a rally and there I was on the news and in the newspaper. Since then they just offer me those properties that are unsuitable to live in. Even today probably they will see me on the TV or something and I will get more targeted.

**Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I am going to hand over to Mr Batchelor.

**Ryan BATCHELOR:** Thanks, Chair, and thanks all of you for coming in and for the evidence you have given. Kylie, after your opening statement I wanted to ask what had happened, but I think you have explained it in your subsequent answers to the question. I still do not think it is particularly satisfactory – the two offers being unsuitable – and there is clearly an issue there. If it is okay with you, we might, on a policy question, follow up with Homes Vic to see, in cases like yours – not to go into the specifics but in cases where due to court orders the housing offers are unsuitable – it seems to me that that should not count in the offers that you have had and that there should be further genuine attempts made. So if you are okay, we might follow that up when we get the opportunity with Homes Vic on a policy level to see what their response is to that question.

**R-Coo TRAN:** To make sure that they do not count as two of the two valid offers?

**Ryan BATCHELOR:** Yes. If there is a court order in place that prevents it from occurring, then I do not see why that should count.

**R-Coo TRAN:** Definitely. But we also know that the idea of valid offers is kind of a farce anyway, because yes on paper it says that you are given two valid offers, but we definitely know people that have been given seven offers or eight offers.

**Ryan BATCHELOR:** That could be some of them. Anyway, there could be reasons for that.

**R-Coo TRAN:** I think the point that I am trying to make, though, with the valid offers business is, even if you follow it up and make sure it is not included, we also know that people get given offers even if they do not sign these relocation forms. I think the issue is –

**Ryan BATCHELOR:** But in those circumstances Homes Victoria does have an obligation to make the offer if people are living in towers that are scheduled for redevelopment, don't they? I mean, they cannot not provide an offer.

**R-Coo TRAN:** I think it is a very confusing thing for everyone. What residents are told when they are shown the relocation form – they will be told, 'You need to sign this. We need your consent in order to look for a property for you.' However, we know of many families that have never signed these forms and Homes Victoria proceeds to find properties for them and offer them to them.

**Ryan BATCHELOR:** So are you saying that Homes Victoria should not be providing offers? I think I am a little confused because on the one hand you are saying –

**R-Coo TRAN:** I think what I am saying, Ryan, is that people are treated differently and it confuses people, because some people will be given one offer and it is really not what they want. For example, maybe a month ago Diirshe and I were out door knocking at 33 Alfred Street in North Melbourne, and there was a woman. She is in her 60s. She is Somali, and she was coming back to pick up stuff. She had been moved to Craigieburn. She asked to be relocated to Flemington, Moonee Ponds at the furthest – Craigieburn. We asked her, ‘Why did you take that offer?’ She said, ‘Well, that was my first offer, and I was really scared that the second offer would be a worse one, so I took that offer.’ We know of many people who have taken that very literally and are in homes now that they deeply regret being in. And it is not their fault that they come to that conclusion. I think people are treated differently across the estates. People are confused and scared, and they will do what they can with the information.

**Ryan BATCHELOR:** I want to ask one question. The point you made earlier that it is not up to you to tell the government how to do the job properly – it is up to us to make recommendations about how things could be improved. It would be a really useful for our processes for you to give us some evidence about what a best practice approach to this sort of relocation –

**Kylie PETERSON:** A more humane approach?

**Ryan BATCHELOR:** Yes. You could do it on notice if you want, but what does it actually look like? Is it you want personally delivered? We just need some concrete recommendations because this is about making recommendations about how to change process, and we have got to be pretty specific.

**The CHAIR:** Can I make the suggestion that you might want to consider that more broadly and then maybe write into us as a supplement to your evidence today. That might give you a more fulsome look at it. I am going to pass on to Mr Puglielli now.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Thank you, Chair, and good afternoon. Thank you for what you have shared with us today. I cannot even begin to imagine how difficult it must feel to come into a room like this and do what you have done. Power to you for speaking truth to power in this moment. I have two questions, and they sort of both relate to sharing insights that the government should therefore consider and adopt to make sure that we do not see what we are seeing continue to transpire and negatively impact residents across our state. The first one is a matter of the policy discussion. As we know, Labor is in power in this state. In terms of political approach, the policies of the Labor Party matter in this conversation. Over the weekend we saw the ALP state conference. The co-convenor of effectively the party’s working group on housing, Labor for Housing, said that the debate about public housing needed to move past a false dichotomy of public versus community housing. I might put this to you, R-Coo, if that is all right. Would you agree that public housing and community housing are in any way the same thing?

**R-Coo TRAN:** Absolutely not. Kylie would best be able to answer this because she has lived in both. But before I let Kylie continue, we have spoken to residents who have been relocated from the high-rises, from public housing into community housing. People cannot survive. I recounted that quote before of the older woman who showers every three days because she cannot afford the electricity bill. That is the same for a lot of people in the in 45 Holland Court. It is a fundamentally different thing. We have got a whole list of reasons why it is very different in a really real way. In the Homes Victoria pamphlets they will talk about why we are moving towards community housing instead of investing in more public housing. They talk about improved livability, improved comfort, improved safety, more energy efficient, and being more fit for purpose.

Time and time again everyone you speak to – community housing homes are too small, they are draughty, they are really cold. All the levels are locked so you cannot visit your friends. It is not conducive to forming community. There are no community spaces. As you heard from Grace last week, who lives in affordable housing which is attached to community housing, if there is a community garden, it is inaccessible to everybody. There is nothing that feels like a sense of community in community housing. Growing up in the flats, all of us, that sense of community is fundamental to your wellbeing, your sense of safety, your ability to, you know, get good deals, like you know where to go to find cheap shit and stuff. It is just so fundamental to everything about you. When you move people into community housing, you isolate them, and that alone is so damning. That is not a well-designed model at all. There are no windows – people always talk about there being no windows in the bathrooms.

**Kylie PETERSON:** No security door.

**R-Coo TRAN:** There is no security door, there is no eyehole.

**Kylie PETERSON:** I know a couple of people, males as well, that have had their door actually broken through – their wooden door, and that is a male. That has happened to least three people that I know that live at 45 Holland Court. I have spoken to the workers themselves who built it. When I moved in in March three years ago they were the same workers that were building the apartments right across the road from myself. I built a great rapport with a lot of those workers, and one worker actually said last week when I was going for my usual run, ‘Aren’t you going to move to one of these?’ I said no, because he knows about my stalker, and he went, ‘Yeah, I thought they were a bit small when we made them.’ One of the workers themselves said that. Now when I go for my walk down past the community centre and I look at the ones that are currently being built, they are even tinier.

**The CHAIR:** I was just going to say Aiv has got one more question, and then we are going to finish up, but did you just quickly want to make a comment, Alicia?

**Alicia LAY:** My friend, she and her husband moved there last October. When she lived in my building, every three months she paid the electricity bill – \$300. Now she pays, for one month, \$400. Also in community housing there is only one energy company you have to use – b.energy. You cannot use another company. If they have to, they have to pay both bills, because community housing said I think they are connected with the electricity network.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, they do it through one company. I will hand it over to Mr Puglielli for your last question.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Thank you, and thank you for those responses. Again, this is on the topic of us making sure that we are taking away exactly what your views are so that they can inform ultimately recommendations coming out of this process that hopefully government then adopts. We have heard a lot about consultation through this inquiry, particularly through lines of questioning from government members. But I want to be clear, though: do you think that there is any way that we could consult our way out of this crisis that we are now in? If we consulted better with communities about the current plan, would it fix things, or is there something more fundamentally broken about what is being proposed here?

**R-Coo TRAN:** I think the fact that everyone who is being relocated out of the high-rises is either being moved into another high-rise that is due for demolition at some point in the near future or community housing that they are really not happy with, or you are in the small few that does get a home spot purchased for you or head leased for you, and we are really happy for those people, like genuinely happy – good for them. Unless you are in one of those two, everyone else is in a worse situation than they were when they were in public housing. For us, 44 FU, that is the main aim – to ensure no-one is left worse off. This whole thing is inherently flawed. No-one is happy – very few people are happy.

**Kylie PETERSON:** I know one person.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. I might leave it there.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Thank you. I think that is my time.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. I want to thank everyone here from 44 Flats for appearing as well. I really do appreciate it. Thank you for your time, your effort and your evidence. You will get a proof version of the transcript. From us, thanks very much and enjoy the rest of your day.

**Committee adjourned.**