

Inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne's public housing towers

Presentation from the Department of Families,
Fairness and Housing

OFFICIAL



Families,
Fairness
and Housing

OFFICIAL

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) proudly acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us.

We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

Victoria's Housing Statement

Victoria faces significant housing challenges, with affordability at historic lows and rental vacancy rates under pressure.

The Housing Statement outlines an ambitious plan to address housing supply by constructing 800,000 homes in Victoria over the next decade.

Melbourne's ageing high-rise public housing towers no longer meet modern living standards and require substantial investment for retrofitting.

The High-rise Redevelopment Program will retire and redevelop Melbourne's 44 aging high-rise public housing estates by 2051, unlocking the delivery of thousands of new and improved homes.

The redevelopment will not only provide modern homes but also increase the number of social, affordable, and market homes across the sites, benefiting around 30,000 residents.

Through collaborative action, we aim to shape the future of housing in each neighbourhood, ensuring safe, secure, and affordable housing for generations to come.



Current Redevelopments

The redevelopment program is underway across 5 estates.



Carlton

- ✓ Two vacant towers on the corner of **Nicholson & Elgin Streets**
- ✓ Currently in deconstruction
- ✓ Crane to be erected in August
- ✓ Scheduled to be redeveloped by 2028



Richmond

- ✓ One tower at **139 Highett Street & walk ups**
- ✓ Relocations underway and forecast to be completed February 2026
- ✓ Scheduled to be redeveloped by 2032



Flemington

- ✓ Stage 3 – 700 homes (400 social)
- ✓ Relocations underway at **120 Racecourse Road & 12 Holland Court**
- ✓ Demolition to commence once homes vacant
- ✓ Scheduled to be redeveloped by 2031



South Yarra

- ✓ One tower at **259 Malvern Road**
- ✓ Relocations underway and forecast to be completed February 2026.
- ✓ Scheduled to be redeveloped by 2032

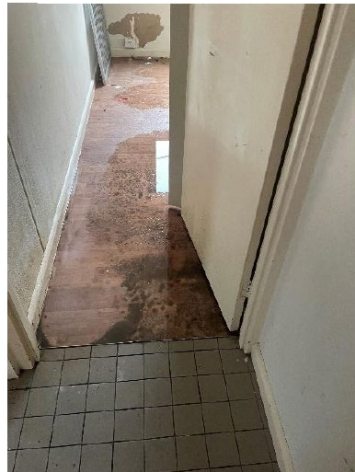


North Melbourne

- ✓ Stage 1 – 800 homes (300 social)
- ✓ EOI submissions being evaluated
- ✓ Relocations underway at **33 Alfred Road**
- ✓ Demolition to commence once homes vacant
- ✓ Scheduled to be redeveloped by 2031

Sewer and Structure

Failing Sewer Stacks - Increasing occurrence & risk in larger family towers



- ✗ Sewer stacks and water pipes are increasingly prone to failure. Larger family towers have pipes that have eroded down from 2.0mm to between 0.6mm and 0.2mm thick.
- ✗ Temporary patches are unable to restore the pipe and full replacement is required, which can involve partial demolition of bathrooms.
- ✗ 52 Temporary patches installed over the last 3 months alone. ~3,000 homes at risk from failure of sewer stacks.
- ✓ Partial replacement of main sewer stacks underway to address higher risk towers – but full replacement is difficult given pipe and connection complexity.

Concrete Cancer - Inherent and cannot be reversed



- ✗ The thin panels, lightweight porous aggregate, low cement content, low cover to reinforcement and the use of calcium chloride in the original casting has resulted in "concrete cancer".
- ✗ In places reinforcement has debonded from the concrete, giving the panels decreasing structural integrity. Fixes involve breaking back the concrete and replacing reinforcement, but cannot reverse the concrete cancer.
- ✓ The condition of the panels are monitored – every 5 years externally and on upgrade internally and repaired as required – this adds to the maintenance costs. (Note there is a current concrete spalling make safe program on facades to reduce public safety risk.)

Accessibility & emergency conditions

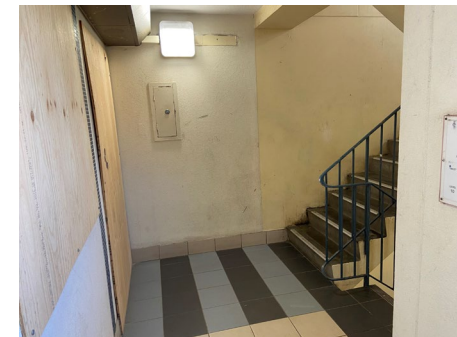


Accessibility – Elevator, doorways and wet areas

- ✗ Only 5% of elevators are stretcher compliant, 68% are opening compliant as per National Construction Code 2022 (NCC) Part E3 and AS1735.12.
- ✗ Elevators in 11 older persons towers are so narrow (down to 705mm - 740mm) that new fridges need their doors removed to fit in them.
- ✗ Colocation of elevators in shared riser and pit means both lifts are not serviceable if the lift shaft is flooded.
- ✓ Heavy reliance on elevators means they are serviced fortnightly (twice as frequently as comparable buildings); however we still have ~80 responsive service callouts a month.
- ✗ Doorways in apartments are not wide enough to be Disability Discrimination Act compliant and cannot be readily widened because all internal walls are load bearing.
- ✗ Enabling renters to age in place is hampered by low ceiling heights which mean stepless showers cannot be retrofitted.
- ✓ 1 step showers have been fitted to reduce falls risk.

Emergency Conditions - Multiple emergency / fire current code issues cannot be resolved

- ✗ Stairwells in many buildings are not fire isolated as per more recent National Construction Code 2022 (NCC) Clause D2D4 – installing them would require the reconfiguration / losing stock
- ✗ Ceiling heights are non-compliant as per the more recent NCC Clause D2D7 and F5D2 and floor slabs are thinner, meaning evacuation times are shorter for smoke inhalation and structural reasons
- ✗ Travel distances between alternate exits are non-compliant as per the more recent NCC Clause D2D6.
- ✓ Unless the buildings undergo a major refurbishment, alteration, or extension there is no legislative requirement for buildings to be upgraded to comply with current requirements
- ✓ Smoke doors at the lifts and sprinklers have been retrofitted to improve the fire safety for residents.



Ageing Critical Services

Electrical infrastructure beyond service life



- ✗ Main switchboards are original and unable to handle peak loads, partially overcome by the load shedding of laundries e.g. in North Melbourne and Flemington during Ramadan.
- ✗ Unable to provide evacuation routes from switch rooms.
- ✗ Original cabling, fuses and switchboards are non-compliant as per NCC, AS3000 and AS61439 and in need of phased replacement.
- ✗ Most meter panels located in cupboards in each floor contain asbestos.
- ✓ Program of partial replacement of switchboards and harvesting of parts for strategic spares. Externally rated switchboards are being used when upgrades are required for high-rise cooling.

Supporting Residents

Resident support

This includes providing up to two suitable housing offers according to each household's needs and preferred location. We cover moving costs and residents continue to enjoy all the same rights and protections.

Resident right of return

When complete, residents can return to their neighbourhood based on their ongoing eligibility, needs and the suitability of new homes. Residents can also choose to stay in their relocation home if they prefer.

Rental cost

Where a redeveloped site is to be managed by a Registered Housing Association, we will negotiate similar rent settings to public housing tenants (after allowing for any applicable Commonwealth Rent Assistance) when returning to redeveloped homes.



Working with residents to inform the redevelopment

People come first

Resident wellbeing and input drives every stage of redevelopment – from why it's needed to how we do it.

Last year we consulted more than 700 residents across high-rise neighbourhoods establishing shared principles to guide us.

In November we also consulted with renters and residents in North Melbourne and Flemington to seek feedback on what features were important to them in the redevelopment. In December we consulted on the final plans for Elgin Towers.

