

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 – Wednesday 6 August 2025

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WITNESSES

Jacinda Sadler, Founder, Jacinda Sadler Architects; and

Stephanie Bullock, Victorian Chapter President, and

Gavin Salt, Architect and Engineer, Australian Institute of Architects.

The CHAIR: Welcome back to the next session of the Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into the Redevelopment of Melbourne's Public Housing Towers. I am Joe McCracken, the Chair of the inquiry. We will go through and introduce the rest of our members.

Renee HEATH: My name is Renee Heath, and I am a Member for the Eastern Victoria Region.

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

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

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

Ryan BATCHELOR: Ryan Batchelor, Member for the Southern Metropolitan Region.

The CHAIR: And we will be joined by Ann-Marie Hermans, who is also a Member for South-Eastern Metro as well.

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All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript, and the transcripts, once you have gone through and made any minor corrections, will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

Just for the Hansard record, can I get you to say your name, your title and the organisation that you are appearing on behalf of, please?

Stephanie BULLOCK: Sure. My name is Stephanie Bullock. I am the AIA Victorian Chapter President and co-Chair of the sustainable architecture committee.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Gavin SALT: Hi. I am Gavin Salt. I am from i2C Architects, where I am the national residential lead. I am here representing the Australian Institute of Architects.

Jacinda SADLER: I am Jacinda Sadler. I am an architect, and I am representing Jacinda Sadler Architects.

The CHAIR: Perfect. Thanks so much. I will hand over to – do you want to do one as well?

Jacinda SADLER: Yes.

The CHAIR: All right – about 5 minutes or thereabouts.

Jacinda SADLER: It will be less than 5 minutes.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Over to you.

Stephanie BULLOCK: Good afternoon. Thank you so much for the opportunity to appear before this inquiry today. My name is Stephanie Bullock, and I serve as the President of the Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects, representing over 3500 architects across Victoria. Many of our members

specialise in housing design, including public and affordable housing, and are committed to delivering outcomes that are technically robust, environmentally responsible and socially valuable. I am joined today by two subject matter experts: Jacinda Sadler, a registered architect and urban designer whose independent submission provides international examples of successful adaptations of similar buildings; and Gavin Salt, who is an associate and the residential lead at i2C Architects, who also led the Make Room project, which is an adaptive reuse of an existing heritage office building into supported housing for people experiencing homelessness.

The institute's submission outlines five key recommendations. Firstly, to undertake case-by-case assessments of each building, acknowledging the variation in condition, typology, heritage significance and community context. Secondly, to release all technical and feasibility data, including engineering, fire, accessibility and building surveyor assessments, in order to enable transparent and evidence-based decision-making. Thirdly, to apply rigorous carbon accounting to assess both the embodied and operational carbon emissions in line with Victoria's climate targets. Fourthly, to prioritise where possible retrofit and adaptive reuse, drawing on both local and international precedents to retain embodied value and reduce waste wherever possible. Finally, we understand that retrofit may not always be viable and in those circumstances recommend developing a clearly articulated deconstruction strategy rather than demolition. This approach would support material recovery, reduce landfill and align with circular economy principles and government policy.

More broadly, the institute encourages a methodical, transparent process informed by design quality, long-term public value and environmental accountability. We would really welcome the opportunity to contribute architectural expertise to support the responsible renewal of Victoria's public housing assets. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Jacinda, over to you.

Jacinda SADLER: Thank you. For over 50 years Melbourne's 44 high-rise public housing towers have stood as symbols of Victoria's commitment to caring for its most vulnerable. Built by the Victorian housing commission in the 1960s, they addressed pressing issues of the time: urban sprawl, housing poverty, homelessness and city revitalisation. In 2025 these same challenges exist but loom under the current proposal to demolish all 44 housing towers. Rather than pursue blanket demolition, we urge serious consideration of renovation and retention as a progressive alternative.

The towers are inspired by modernist housing designs and share architectural similarities with housing towers across Europe. Importantly, there are successful precedents for renovating such buildings, including Cité du Lignon in Geneva, Switzerland; Rozemaai Housing in Antwerp, Belgium; and Cité du Grand Parc in Bordeaux, France. These projects have extended the life and improved the amenity of similar housing tower buildings, proving that renovation can be both feasible and highly successful.

Demolition of the Victorian housing towers will not only destroy the buildings but will also dismantle entire communities. Around 11,000 residents will be displaced and vital connections to shops, health centres, schools and neighbourhood services will be decimated. Demolition will erase the historical and cultural value of the towers and disconnect Victoria from an era of social progress and care. In contrast, preservation of the buildings would support social cohesion, community identity and Victoria's reputation as a compassionate state. It would also address major contemporary challenges particularly facing the Victorian construction industry, which faces escalating construction costs; labour, material and energy shortages; and environmental pressures related to climate change. From an environmental perspective, retaining and retrofitting the towers is the significantly more sustainable option. Buildings contain embodied energy, which is the carbon and resources used in their original construction. Demolishing buildings wastes this energy and generates landfill. New construction demands fresh materials, adding to carbon emissions. As we say, the most sustainable buildings are the buildings that exist now. Retention, retrofitting and renovating housing towers would offer Victoria the chance to save homes, save jobs by upskilling and employing local workers, save energy by reducing demolition and construction waste and also save history by preserving the physical links to the state's substantial social housing legacy. Current thinking calls for a transformative, aspirational approach. With aspirational vision, the towers can be reimagined not as outdated structures but as foundations for a sustainable, inclusive future in Victoria.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I will start off with questions, then we will go back and forth from committee members. You guys are all architects, obviously, and you have a view on – I think someone might have said the

‘cultural and heritage value of the towers from an architectural perspective’. They were built between the late 1950s and the early 70s. Do they have a unique status from a heritage perspective worth protecting?

Jacinda SADLER: I would say that they would, because they are connecting global social history of a time where countries were looking for ways to house a lot of people after particularly the Second World War when there was a serious lack of housing, right? So those towers were a great way to accommodate a lot of people.

The CHAIR: Architecturally, though, do they strike you as something that is heritage related?

Jacinda SADLER: Well, it was a new construction method.

Stephanie BULLOCK: And I think the concept of heritage is quite broad; it is about a range of things, including: is it significant in the context in which they were built? So we would say that they definitely have significant heritage value in terms of that. So yes, we would say that.

Jacinda SADLER: We would, yes.

The CHAIR: What is it about them that makes you say that they have a particular heritage value? Is it the particular design elements, is it materials that were used or is it the whole package?

Stephanie BULLOCK: I think it is all of those things. It is the context in which they were constructed. I think it is the methodology in terms of what they represented at the time and innovation in terms of methods of construction that have a value. I think also they are part of the social fabric of Melbourne as well. To that extent, in terms of individual architects’ opinions as to what has architectural value, that is personal opinion and, I suspect, could also be argued.

Jacinda SADLER: It also introduced the vertical accommodation of people.

Stephanie BULLOCK: Yes, a verticality that was highly unusual at the time.

The CHAIR: I guess 44 towers in terms of what Melbourne has – compare that to other parts of the world. Where does it fit?

Stephanie BULLOCK: Well, it has got a strong lineage to other constructions, which I think you have referenced in your paper too.

Jacinda SADLER: Yes.

The CHAIR: Can you give examples in terms of – is it Britain? Are there links to there, or is it –

Gavin SALT: I can probably lean into that. But yes, I am from Glasgow originally.

The CHAIR: I thought you might be able to help.

Gavin SALT: We have been through that process in Glasgow, and I have been involved in some of those projects, so I am seeing a similar pattern of demolition rather than retrofit.

The CHAIR: In Glasgow?

Gavin SALT: That was originally the intent for a lot of the public high-rise towers. There is an example which is in the OFFICE paper – I believe you had OFFICE speak yesterday first thing. One of their examples is a project by Collective Architecture, the Red Road flats, and that is a particularly successful example from when Glasgow assessed the need to retrofit rather than knock down and rebuild. So that is one that I can definitely speak to.

The CHAIR: Okay. We are very jealous of Glasgow because they get the Commonwealth Games, but we will leave that to another situation.

Gavin SALT: Twice.

Renee HEATH: You’ve got to rub it in!

The CHAIR: There are also comments about needing to assess each of the buildings based on a case-by-case basis, as opposed to 'They're all gone.' Why?

Stephanie BULLOCK: I suppose we would say, in our experience, it would be highly unlikely that every single one of those buildings is actually identical to the others. So we would suggest that you do need to look at each of them, if only to prove the case. Just because they look similar does not mean that they are actually identical. They are all on different sites. There would have been differences depending on exactly when they were constructed and by whom, so you cannot actually take one and extrapolate all of that out. We would suggest that a more nuanced approach is the best opportunity to perhaps retain some of that embodied carbon.

The CHAIR: Do you agree?

Jacinda SADLER: I 100 per cent agree. They will all be sitting on different sites, they have all got different geotechnical conditions. They all need to be investigated from the ground up.

The CHAIR: Okay.

Gavin SALT: I might also just add, around maintenance regimes as well and how well the buildings have been kept through their tenure. Different exposure settings – there will be buildings that have been exposed to the elements because of their geographical location more than others, so there will be better examples in the suite of 44 that may be better suited to retrofit.

The CHAIR: Okay. All right. I appreciate that. My time has run out, I am sorry. I will hand over to Mr Galea.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Chair. Thanks very much all for joining us this afternoon. I might start with you, Ms Sadler. Your submission touches on three examples from overseas from – forgive my dreadful pronunciation – Cité du Lignon, Rozemaai in Belgium and one in Bordeaux as well. To your knowledge, with each of these three developments, were residents required to relocate during the duration of the works?

Jacinda SADLER: Cité du Lignon is a massive housing site; it goes over, like, a kilometre. So what they did was – and there are over 2000 apartments – they took a sample. They started with about 20 units and worked out how they could retrofit those but keep the rest of the residents onsite. They did groups; they renovated that whole block in different groups, different waves. The Lacaton and Vassal buildings in Bordeaux – they kept all of the residents onsite and basically prefabricated balcony structures offsite, delivered them in, then craned them in and then attached them to the building.

Michael GALEA: Sorry, they were required to relocate in Bordeaux?

Jacinda SADLER: No, all of the residents stayed onsite.

Michael GALEA: They were not. It was external works; it was not internal.

Jacinda SADLER: Exactly.

Michael GALEA: In Rozemaai you have said that the two buildings were radically stripped down to the concrete construction.

Jacinda SADLER: Yes. That was a whole different thing, a whole different way of looking at it: take everything off, keep the actual structure as the most valuable part of the building and then refit it.

Michael GALEA: Did that allow for things such as ceiling heights to be increased as well, or was it still on the same –

Jacinda SADLER: Same floor plates, yes.

Michael GALEA: Same floor plates.

Jacinda SADLER: I think in Rozemaai they did cut through some of the panels and lift them up to give them a little bit of extra height.

Michael GALEA: Okay. Would you see it as possible to retrofit the existing towers – I am happy to put this to everyone again – in a way that would actually be able to not just make the accessibility changes, but also to increase floor heights?

Jacinda SADLER: I think that, going back to Steph's point, it is a matter of actually looking at each site and having a really good investigation of what the conditions are.

Stephanie BULLOCK: Yes, definitely. And I think there are also things to be considered in terms of the existing internal linings, you know, what is done with those. You can certainly do adaptive reuse projects where you keep the structure and still increase the ceiling heights, but it is very case by case. I would also just perhaps like to draw to your attention that there is also a Melbourne precedent of this type of process. There was a project called Tower Turnaround that was done on one of the towers in Footscray – which is still in place, in fact – which was a prefabricated module that was built offsite, craned into place and attached while the residents were in occupation. It increased the floor plate of that particular unit by around 25 per cent, I think. It is still there.

Michael GALEA: But in any existing tower you would then be having the trade-off between, if you are increasing ceiling heights, you would be unable to then increase the number of apartments without making them much smaller.

Stephanie BULLOCK: Well, it depends.

Michael GALEA: It depends on the project.

Stephanie BULLOCK: There are examples where you can actually extend the floor plate, for example, which does extend the size of the apartment.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. You have both cited in your submissions and opening statements the role of heritage, and I think the word 'icon' was used – forgive me; it might have been a previous session. Indeed, Ms Bullock, in your submission the second criteria for the interrogation of the towers you list as the heritage value of the towers, including cultural and built. A broad question to you all: how important is heritage, and what is the relationship between that and livability, functionality, accessibility and safety for residents who are living in these apartments?

Stephanie BULLOCK: I think one thing I would note is that heritage also takes in the idea of cultural memory: an attachment to place and to built form as well. That is part of it too. These have been part of the fabric of Melbourne for many, many years and there are people that have lived there and have that attachment to it. That cultural memory does form part of the heritage value. In terms of the trade-off between those various elements, that is very complex. We accept it is complex, and there are a lot of things to consider. I suppose what we are asking is that those things are considered and given appropriate weight.

Michael GALEA: Do you think they should be given more weight? Sorry. My time is up. I will leave it there. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Sorry to cut you off, Mr Galea. I am going to hand over now to Ms Gray-Barberio.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thanks very much, Chair. Thank you all for your submission and your presentation this afternoon. We really appreciate it. I would like to start off by asking for your professional opinion: what signs would you look for that these public housing buildings are beyond saving, and do these buildings display any of those signs?

Gavin SALT: I will base my opinion on the reports that I have been able to get that are get freely available. Those reports do not seem to note any of those concerns. There is the report and the feasibility study that has been carried out by Hayball, and that lists concerns. There is then the OFFICE report, which then lists out countermeasures to be able to address some of those concerns. There may be other towers that have more difficult items to deal with. I think what we are talking about here as we have this conversation is not a refurbishment but is a deep retrofit in some instances. I do not think joinery and paint is necessarily the extent of what we would see in a refurb here. This would be a deep retrofit solution, in which case you would have to address all of the livability and safety concerns.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thank you. Jacinda, did you want to add anything to that?

Jacinda SADLER: No, I agree with Gavin.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thank you for that. Why do you think the government chose to announce the demolition of the 44 towers rather than adopt a case-by-case interrogation like you made in your submission? In your professional opinion, is this best practice?

Stephanie BULLOCK: I feel like that is a little bit outside our scope to speculate as to why that might have happened. I suppose that is part of the reason why we are asking for more transparency and to release all of the available information. I think that that would go a long way to perhaps clarifying the position.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thank you. That is fine. Do you think the government has considered the environmental impacts of the demolition when deciding on this plan? What kind of scale are we talking about for such a massive project?

Jacinda SADLER: I suppose the thing is that we are here because we do not know.

Stephanie BULLOCK: But I think it is also fair to say that in terms of adaptive reuse – my practice does quite a lot of adaptive reuse projects but in a different sector, more in the tertiary sector. Typically what we find is that by adopting that approach you can save about half of the embodied carbon that you would by doing a brand new build, and that is not even taking into account the carbon that you lose by demolishing something in the first place. There certainly is potentially a substantial environment benefit to be had by looking at whether you could retain some of the towers or parts of the towers.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Can I also follow on from there – if the towers are demolished, what happens to all that concrete? Can it be reused or recycled?

Gavin SALT: It can be, but that is a tricky process. It is precast reinforced concrete, so there is steel in there, which is obviously valuable, and the concrete has a value as well. Part of our advocacy here is that if the towers are not proven viable to be refitted, then there should be a deconstruction process rather than a demolition process.

Stephanie BULLOCK: I think it is important to note too that this is a very rapidly evolving field. There are some fantastic examples internationally of where this is being done really successfully, so it is certainly worth investigating. There are a lot of examples of that, particularly in Denmark.

Jacinda SADLER: Yes, with material banking and material reuse.

Stephanie BULLOCK: Yes.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Great. I have actually run out of time, but thank you.

The CHAIR: I am now going to hand over to Dr Heath.

Renee HEATH: Thank you so much. Thanks for both your submission and for coming in here today. You just used the word ‘material banking’. What is that?

Jacinda SADLER: Well, it is basically taking materials from an existing building and sorting them and putting them into a big warehouse with sections for concrete, sections for gravel, sections for timber, glass – basically a bank of building materials.

Renee HEATH: Yes. I really enjoyed your examples particularly, because in this inquiry it seems like the solution we have is very limited, which is to knock the whole thing down because it is not fit for purpose. But today we have heard some different views; we have heard that we could retrofit it. You used ‘deep retrofit’ – I think is what you said – so I would love you to explain that a bit further. That would bring it up to new – is that correct?

Jacinda SADLER: Yes.

Renee HEATH: My understanding is correct?

Stephanie BULLOCK: Yes, that is correct.

Jacinda SADLER: Yes. All of these buildings we are talking about have been brought up to current standards and people live in them.

Renee HEATH: Yes. So we are not talking about going in and giving it a lick of paint?

Jacinda SADLER: No.

Stephanie BULLOCK: It is a lot more than a lick of paint.

Renee HEATH: Can you explain that process, what that process could look like?

Gavin SALT: With a deep retrofit, in looking at the reports that I have read here, there are concerns around fire – sorry, I will start from the top. There are concerns about structural issues. In a deep retrofit you would be doing an interior strip-out of the building and getting right back to the concrete bones of the building. You can then assess the condition of the building at that point. You would do deconstructive testing, core holes and compression testing to understand whether the building has been built to the standard it should have been at the time and whether it is fit for purpose in the current day. You would then start to look at your environmental envelope, so you would be looking to bring the building and its fabric up to existing construction codes. You would then start with your fit-out around your interior comfort – heating, cooling, and making sure that that was compliant – and then accessibility as well and space standards. These are all pieces that you would have to address as part of a deep retrofit.

Renee HEATH: All right. You mentioned cooling. One of the reasons that has been cited for the demolition is that there is no ability to add cooling to these units. Is that something you would think is factual?

Gavin SALT: I have just been through a process with the City of Melbourne and Unison, adaptively reusing an office building from the 1940s and retrofitting that into transitional housing. That has gone from an office and archive space into 50 supported units and wraparound support services. Each of those 50 apartments has its own individual air-conditioning unit, which is split system heating and cooling. If it can be done in that instance, I do not see why it cannot be done elsewhere.

Renee HEATH: With the right attitude it might be achievable. What is the timeframe that this could be done in?

Stephanie BULLOCK: Again, that is probably a little bit outside –

Renee HEATH: That is okay.

Stephanie BULLOCK: Again it would come down to the extent of deep retrofit or not, how much is being retained, so it is quite complex. But again, I think it would really have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on what the approach was.

Renee HEATH: Yes. And then the cost – obviously it is better for the environment. Is there a cost benefit in doing it this way?

Stephanie BULLOCK: Well, I suppose what we would suggest is that all of the costs need to be considered, including the cost to the environment. It is not just about the up-front cost, it is about what is the cost in terms of all of that embodied carbon that potentially might go to waste, effectively. We are just arguing for a broader consideration of what is the cost, not just to actually do the project but in terms of the broader community as well.

Renee HEATH: Would it cost more?

Stephanie BULLOCK: Again, hard to say.

Jacinda SADLER: In terms of carbon emissions.

Stephanie BULLOCK: In terms of carbon it will definitely cost more.

Jacinda SADLER: Definitely.

Gavin SALT: I think, again, transparency is the piece here. I would have assumed that that study had been undertaken to understand that cost-benefit analysis. I would love to see that report. All the reports that I have read from other unassociated practices have suggested that it would be cheaper to do a retrofit. You would have to build a contingency into that space for latent issues in a retrofit, but I would love to see the data on whether that is viable or not.

Renee HEATH: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much. We are now going to hand over to Mr Batchelor.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Thanks, Chair. Thanks to all of you for coming in today. I want to quickly just touch on the heritage side. Have you read Heritage Victoria's exclusion determination report on the first three tranches of the buildings? Maybe you can explain to the committee what that is and what it means.

Gavin SALT: Well, I suppose in reading that – I think we were talking about heritage value earlier, and these buildings were identified at one point as being of heritage value and a potential listing on the heritage register.

Ryan BATCHELOR: What does the exclusion determination mean?

Gavin SALT: It means that the determination has been made that they are not historically valuable.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Okay. One of the things that has come up a number of times, and you have mentioned it here, is the question of whether we can do adaptive reuse, retrofit or deep retrofit. You put all these issues in. Mr Salt, you said, 'If it can be done there in an office building in the city, why can't we do it on the towers?' Would you accept that the biggest issue determining whether a building can be retrofitted is the structure of the building itself and that fundamentally the design, the composition and the structure of the building are the biggest issues about whether a retrofit is possible?

Stephanie BULLOCK: I mean, I think it is certainly very important, but it is also where the bulk of the embodied carbon sits as well. You are trying to play off, I guess, two competing interests to a certain extent. But again, I think it will come down on a case-by-case basis. A lot of things are possible, and what it often comes down to is cost as well. Many things are possible, and there are many examples of adaptive reuse in Melbourne and Australia where this has been done, so it certainly can be done.

Ryan BATCHELOR: The point I am getting to there is that these buildings were constructed in a pretty unique way for the time, and office buildings in the city that many people see are built and designed in a completely different way to the structure of these large panel systems towers that we have, where every wall is structural and made of concrete. Some are more load bearing than others, but they are all load-bearing walls, and so there are significant constraints that exist when you are trying to widen a doorway to make it fit a wheelchair than exist when you are just dealing with plaster. It is a lot harder to do it with concrete. Would you accept that that is fair?

Gavin SALT: It is harder to deal with concrete than it is with plaster. Constraints often result in good outcomes. As architects, we work with constraints on a daily basis. Planning, building control, structure – these are all considerations and constraints that we work with. I suppose what we are asking for is for that information to be disclosed around how these existing structures have been assessed. Of the reports that I have read, there seems to be a demonstration that it is possible to work around the existing constraints.

Ryan BATCHELOR: What are your reflections on the report from Approval Systems on the condition of the Elgin Street towers?

Gavin SALT: I think a lot of that is to do with maintenance and the upkeep of those buildings.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Would you be concerned by the comments in that report about the condition of the concrete in the buildings and the corrosion in the steel reinforcement?

Gavin SALT: It would have to be assessed by a structural engineer in more detail. I think there is a comment there around how it sits, but that really needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis and in a more in-depth piece.

Ryan BATCHELOR: But it would be a concern.

Gavin SALT: It has to be. A structural issue has to be a concern, but there are ways of fixing structural concerns.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Is that my time?

The CHAIR: Yes, that is your time. I was just trying to be a bit generous. Thank you. I will now hand over to Mr Puglielli.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon. We have had a lot of submissions to this inquiry that have advocated for retrofit of the towers, but some in particular have highlighted using it as a way to invest in creating an innovative retrofit industry for our state. Could I potentially ask you all to reflect on the economic and productivity benefits, for example, for Victoria if in maintaining and retrofitting our public housing stock we use this as an opportunity to grow this retrofit industry?

Stephanie BULLOCK: I think we would strongly support that view. I think it is an excellent point to make, and I think that there is an opportunity here. It is being done overseas. We could actually invest in that and become leaders in this field using this as a prototype.

Jacinda SADLER: Yes, 100 per cent. If we are talking about individual assessments of different types, then building trades and builders suppliers can get around specific systems that suit particular instances. It can translate across Victoria with a greener way of building.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Jacinda, I will stay with you for a moment. Specific to your submission and also your opening statement, you have been quite clear that on the information you have been provided with you are opposed to the demolition plan as it stands. You have reflected on the fact that you have not seen information to indicate that it is the state of the buildings that has brought us to where we are now – that information has not been made clear to you – but how much do you think the value of the land at these sites has influenced the decision?

Jacinda SADLER: The value of the land?

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Yes.

Jacinda SADLER: I do not think I can talk about the value of the land. I can talk about the value of that building as a piece in the puzzle of the whole of the state. That is crucial.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: You mean the cultural value rather than monetary?

Jacinda SADLER: And the piece of infrastructure in the middle of the city.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Yes. Okay. Thank you. We have touched on the environmental impacts of what has been proposed. Does anyone here on the panel see how this would in any way be compatible with the government's carbon reduction targets of 50 per cent by 2030 and net zero by 2045?

Stephanie BULLOCK: Given the ambition of those targets, I think we need to be doing everything we can to minimise new construction. I think that this is a great opportunity to help try and meet those targets.

Jacinda SADLER: Yes.

Gavin SALT: From the available information, I understand that a knockdown-rebuild has a 60-year payback period on embodied carbon, whereas an adaptive reuse has a lot shorter of a payback period on that as well. So I think the retrofit of the towers is pivotal in being able to achieve those aims. We also need to talk about energy poverty as well. These are buildings that need to be upgraded to meet current standards if they are to be retained. That will go some way as well to help hit those carbon targets.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Just with the time I have left, are you able to confirm for the committee which documents specifically you would want to review in relation to these tower demolition proposals to have a more thorough analysis of the state of these towers and to assist in evaluating the government's current approach? You can even take this on notice if necessary.

Stephanie BULLOCK: We can certainly provide further information, but as a basis, what we put in our submission in terms of structural engineering, fire accessibility, building surveyor advice, geotechnical – all of that; anything that is available.

Jacinda SADLER: Yes.

Gavin SALT: For all 44 of the towers.

Jacinda SADLER: For the stormwater.

Stephanie BULLOCK: For all of them.

Jacinda SADLER: Yes, everything.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. Thank you. Do I still have some time, Chair, or am I out

The CHAIR: Not really, but I am going to give you one more.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: One more. Okay. Thank you. We are in a building right now which has required extensive retrofitting and renovation. It is going on right now just outside the door. We have not, though, decided to demolish the building that we now sit in, Parliament House. Instead we have chosen to modernise and upgrade it. Surely, can't the same be done for these 44 towers?

Stephanie BULLOCK: That is exactly what we are putting forward, yes.

Jacinda SADLER: Yes, agree.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much. I will now hand it over to Mrs Hermans.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Thank you. I did not get to say hello to you earlier. I am a Member for the South-Eastern Metropolitan Region as well. Thank you for everything that you have been contributing today. I have got just a few quick questions. A lot of them have already been asked. You did mention the cost–benefits and differences. Obviously you have not seen the details, but we were thinking that if it was retrofitted the cost–benefit would be significant. Listening to you as architects, that sounds like that is debateable depending on what would be done to the actual properties. To what extent, in terms of other retrofits that have taken place around the world as examples that you are aware of, has there been a cost–benefit to actually doing the retrofits and refurbishments over demolition?

Stephanie BULLOCK: In my personal experience doing a lot of adaptive reuse projects, it has always been cheaper to do the retrofit, so –

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Significantly?

Stephanie BULLOCK: It can vary, to be honest. Sometimes it can be a little bit borderline, and borderline is where it might cost 70 to 80 per cent of the cost of a new build. But I suppose what we are saying is, again, we need to think about all of the costs, including the cost of the carbon as well.

Jacinda SADLER: And there is a figure from the Lacaton & Vassal building, which was the one in Bordeaux, where the actual cost of works to retrofit and keep the residents in place was €50,000, compared to €100,000 to rebuild. But I do not know how we –

Ann-Marie HERMANS: They build cheaply overseas. Thank you. That is really helpful. Now, going to the things that you have mentioned overseas – and this might be a question for Gavin; I did not write down who

said it – there was an example that was alluded to of refitting in Denmark. I would just like to hear a little bit more about what they did in terms of what might be relevant to our situation here in Melbourne.

Gavin SALT: Not Denmark from me.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Who mentioned Denmark?

Stephanie BULLOCK: I think I was referring to 3XN, and they have been doing a lot of work, but perhaps you talk about your overseas experience as well.

Gavin SALT: Sorry, the question around –

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Just in terms of the refitting and what they have actually done, because you have given us a little bit of an outline of what happened in Switzerland, Belgium and Bordeaux in France. I just wondered if there was anything different that had happened in Denmark and, in terms of your experience, Gavin, if that one is not going to float and we are not quite sure where that is.

Stephanie BULLOCK: What we can do is we can send through additional information about work that we are aware of that has been done in terms of taking components of existing buildings and reusing them in other buildings, for example. So we can certainly provide information after this about those projects, because I think they are highly relevant.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: That would be excellent.

Gavin SALT: The specific example I had was the one in Glasgow that is appended to the OFFICE document that was presumably presented, which is Collective Architecture in Glasgow and the Red Road flats refurbishment there.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: That is great. Now, in terms of consultation of community involvement in terms of what is required – because I have to say that when I went to one of these towers and walked in the foyer, instantly I was just overwhelmed with how incredibly gorgeous the retrofit had been downstairs with the tiles and the opportunity. I was instantly, in my head, putting a childcare centre here, a cafe there – ‘This is great.’ I actually really liked it. In terms of community consultation for any of these ones that have taken place in Scotland or in any of the other European refits, how much community consultation has taken place with them in terms of what would work? Because often architects have great ideas, and they are just given the specs and told, ‘We need this, this and this,’ and they just go ahead and do it, but when there is community consultation with people who are actually going to be using it there are often people coming and saying ‘Well, actually this is what we need’ or ‘This is how this has an impact on how we live in these situations’. So to what extent has there been community consultation in any of these situations, and how has it impacted the build, if there has been?

Gavin SALT: Sure. I was involved in a project in Glasgow – in fact I have done three – that involved an awful lot of community consultation. I hear your comment around architects potentially designing for themselves. That is something that we try not to do – we are always designing for somebody else – so therefore consulting with your end user is absolutely pivotal. During those processes there were several community consultations from an early concept schematic design all the way through to pre town planning lodgement, engaging the community and understanding their needs, requirements, likes and dislikes. I have been listening to parts of this inquiry yesterday and this morning, and there are a lot of people with a lot of opinions, and there is a lot of lived experience in these buildings as well. It would be incredible to fold that into something new or repurposed for those communities.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Thank you so much.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. That brings an end to this session. Thank you so much for your contribution today. As I said, you will be given a copy of the proof version of the transcript, but from us, thanks very much and enjoy the rest of your afternoon.

Witnesses withdrew.