

T R A N S C R I P T

SELECT COMMITTEE ON VICTORIA PLANNING PROVISIONS AMENDMENTS VC257, VC267 AND VC274

Inquiry into Victoria Planning Provisions Amendments VC257, VC267 and VC274

Melbourne – Tuesday 29 April 2025

MEMBERS

David Ettershank – Chair

David Davis – Deputy Chair

Ryan Batchelor

Gerogie Crozier

Michael Galea

Sarah Mansfield

Bev McArthur

Aiv Puglielli

Sheena Watt

WITNESSES

Danae Bosler, Assistant Secretary, and

Tiarne Crowther, Politics and Research Lead Organiser, Victorian Trades Hall Council.

The CHAIR: Welcome back to the Select Committee on Victoria Planning Provisions Amendments VC257, VC267 and VC274.

Before we move into witness evidence could I just point out that in terms of the witnesses today, all evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and 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 repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this 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 following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website. For the Hansard record, can you please state your names and the organisation that you are appearing on behalf of?

Danae BOSLER: Hi there. Danae Bosler, Assistant Secretary appointed to Victorian Trades Hall Council.

Tiarne CROWTHER: And Tiarne Crowther, Politics and Research Lead Organiser at Victorian Trades Hall Council.

The CHAIR: Thank you and welcome. We appreciate you attending and your submission on very short notice. Please, would you like to make an opening statement.

Danae BOSLER: Thank you so much. Thank you to the committee members for having us along. I recognise this is on very short notice. And I do want to note and thank you for the work that you do. Committee work often goes unnoticed, and it is an enormous amount of work behind the scenes, but we notice it and we value your work, so thank you for that up-front. Housing is important to workers; that is why I am here today. It is not a theoretical question for workers. I think we all are in furious agreement about why housing is so important, but I just wanted to spell this out, because there are a bunch of speakers that are appearing before the committee – it is interesting to listen as an outsider to all the different views; even within the planning sector there seems to be a diversity of views – but I do not think many of them have been able to speak to the practical applications and what this means for workers in Victoria as well, and that is why we want to appear today to make this contribution.

We surveyed workers at the end of last year in our database and our system, and cost of housing was the number two issue for them – that will not surprise you at all. Cost of living was the number one issue; number two, cost of housing; next was education/health. So it is incredible to see that cost of housing is just such a critical issue to Victorian workers. One thing I wanted to draw attention to which we did not put in our submission because it was on such short notice, but I have been looking at since, is the clear link between stable housing and employment, and how important stable housing is for employment as well.

More working people are seeking homelessness services than ever before. I am just going to refer to a couple of statistics here. Working people seeking homelessness services grew by 14 per cent in 2023. One in eight people seeking homelessness services is employed. Women make up 60 to 75 per cent of the homeless people in LGAs where working people are seeking those homelessness services. The LGA with the largest number of people seeking support for homelessness services is Casey, where 78 per cent of people seeking support are employed women. This number has grown 41 per cent between 2021 and the last couple of years. People experiencing homelessness have reduced employment outcomes. The labour force participation rate in Australia is about 66 per cent; amongst people experiencing homelessness it is 45 per cent. And it is old ABS data now, but it found that 30 per cent of people actively experiencing homelessness were currently employed. So we really need to look at and reflect on the links between the importance of stable housing and stable employment. Those two things go hand in hand, but we all know why this is so important. It is hard to be

employed when you are unhoused, and increasingly, employees are finding themselves unhoused. We recognise that there is a crisis going on globally, and that we are dealing with this in Victoria too.

I also just want to acknowledge that Victorian workers are not a homogenous group. We are not all the same, we do not all look the same and we are a really diverse cohort. We proudly represent Victorian union members. And our housing needs are diverse as well. We need apartments, we need homes, we need backyards, we need units, we need studios, and where we need that housing will change in our lifetimes and our needs will change in our lifetime too. We need social, public, affordable housing, we need it in a variety of locations and we need it to be fairly distributed across the city and across the state and with access to good services, good amenities and jobs. You will talk to workers so often, and one of the biggest challenges and one of the bugbears, and union organisers will know this, is talking about how long it takes you to get to your job. It really has an impact on — I was going to say joy, but that might not be the word — the livability of your city, how long it takes you and what it is like to transit to work. So those are some of the comments I would make. We are all in furious agreement about the need for more housing, and I think we are in agreement that the government's role is to increase housing supply and that these amendments do that, although there has been some discussion about that.

I just want to make some comments briefly about consultation as well, because I will not go deeply into the ins and outs — you have got plenty of planning experts here to talk about the ins and outs of the amendments. In terms of consultation, in our submission we talk about the extensive consultation that we have participated in over many, many years around planning, housing, transport as well to a lesser extent, the consultation that we have participated in, and we would always say and we would always furiously agree with everyone that would take this position on the panel that workers need to be, are entitled to and deserve to be consulted about what happens in their neighbourhood, what happens in their street, what happens in their community. Workers need to be consulted in that too, and we take a very inclusive view about what that consultation should look like. So it is not just the worker who lives in that street; it is the worker who takes the bus down that street to get to their cleaning job in the next suburb over, and it is the worker who works at the cafe at the corner block at the end of that street who rides their bike there and does 8 hours five days a week in that cafe. That is their community too. It is the workers who are working really hard to save for a mortgage to buy an apartment that is being built at the end of that street as well. All of these workers and all of these people deserve to be consulted and included.

Further to that, I talk about how governments need to be responding. Constantly you are responding to changes in the community and responding to the crisis and all those sorts of things. Consultation can also happen, I do not want to say 'on the go'; that is not what I mean, but you should be constantly consulting on the policy changes and the policy levers that you have. You can implement these amendments, you can continue to consult and work with them and if you need to come back to make modifications you can do that. Do you know what I mean? Consultation can happen while you are also responding to the crisis that is in front of us. I know I need to wrap up — I will.

If I can briefly take my Trades Hall hat off, in a previous life I served as a councillor and as a mayor, and I know deeply and personally how challenging this space is. I do — I feel it for you all. I was on Yarra City Council. I was on my local city council as well. I represented Collingwood, which is a rich and a wealthy area in the council, but Collingwood is the area with the highest rate of social, public and affordable housing in the state. I understand deeply what it is like dealing with the planning system and making sure that the planning system, which at times feels old and clunky, is responding to the needs of the community. There are few decisions that can be more tense at times than dealing with planning decisions as well, so I understand what that feels like. But what it means to be elected to represent your community is to make those decisions.

I will stop there. I will just say, though, we are excited to be here; we would love to talk to you about lots of other things as well. Let us get on with the business of building more houses, putting more housing supply into the market. Let us talk about key worker housing. New South Wales is doing an inquiry right now into key worker housing. I do not like it when New South Wales is ahead of us, so let us catch up on that. We would love to talk about recommendations we have made in previous submissions about making rentals more safe and affordable. We would love to talk about the right to shelter; we would love to talk about more public and social housing. I will pull up stumps there.

The CHAIR: Thank you for your passionate advocacy and for your submission.

Bev McArthur interjected.

Danae BOSLER: If nothing more, Mrs McArthur and I will both be enthusiastic about our positions.

The CHAIR: I think we all recognise that homelessness is a huge issue. There are two questions, and one is striking to how we best address that as an issue. I guess more particularly, notwithstanding your very exciting menu of things that we could talk about, probably what we are actually here to talk about are the three planning amendments. I am actually going to try and bring the discussion back to that, if I may, and obviously I am keen to have all of my colleagues do the same.

Could I just ask: in terms of the planning scheme amendments that are before us, is there anything there that you see that will actually improve the supply of affordable housing – and I mean affordable housing, as Mr Batchelor pointed out, with a capital ‘A’, as in a class of housing specifically at a lower price for those and for essential workers? Are you seeing anything in these amendments that will actually increase that supply of affordable and essential worker housing, especially, I suppose, compared to what existed previously?

Danae BOSLER: I think the comments I would make are actually referring back to the speaker – was it Mr Brooks? – who spoke beforehand as well. He said there is a clear link of evidence that increasing the housing supply helps those in need at the bottom most at pushing up access to housing. So even if the amendments – and correct me if I am wrong on these ones – do not have specific clauses about essential worker housing – and we are happy to have conversations about that as well – and affordable housing clauses in them, any increase in housing will help increase access for essential workers and access to more affordable housing too. So we want to see a plethora of more housing options.

The CHAIR: So are you agreeing with the Centre for Independent Studies that this could actually –

Danae BOSLER: Was that Mr Brooks who was beforehand?

The CHAIR: That was Mr Tulip up on the telly. But are you suggesting that actually this can be achieved through a market mechanism rather than actual specific regulation? Because there is no regulation for essential workers within these amendments and the only reference to affordable housing as in a class of housing is an objective to encourage it. It does not actually mandate it, so I guess I would be interested in your thoughts on that.

Danae BOSLER: We would always support targeted legislation or targeted clauses or targeted amendments that are about affordable housing and essential worker housing. The thing I would say – and it is funny because of that comment you made there – and that I was going to say is that housing is a human right. We should recognise housing as a human right, and it is very difficult how dependent we are on working with developers on this as well. So yes, I would advocate for government intervention to encourage, steer, direct the market to ensure that we have got all cohorts or all sectors of housing covered.

The CHAIR: Okay. Can I switch the subject slightly: looking at workers as citizens – and I think you were going into that space in terms of participation and democracy – clearly these amendments in certain circumstances remove the rights of people to object to development, and in other circumstances they actually remove the right of people to even receive notice of a pending development. How do you sit with that proposition?

Danae BOSLER: My understanding is that the circumstances in which that occurs are very narrow and very specific, and you need to meet all the standards for third-party appeals to be removed. But as a principle I would go back to our original one, which is that workers should be informed, they should be consulted and they should be able to participate in the decision-making process.

The CHAIR: Okay. But in the activity centres obviously it is actually much broader than that. What you are saying is: more generally, yes, but in activity centres, in the absence of a specific mandating, there is no right to notification.

Danae BOSLER: My understanding is with the activity centres – I had someone in our policy team have a look at the consultation that has got underway for activity centres and for the SRL too, and it was pages long, the engagement and the community consultation that was underway. If there was any criticism I would provide

of that actually, when we looked at the data, when we looked at the participation, the only comment I would make is that there were low contributions from people that had English as a second language. The submissions that were made in languages other than English were low.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Davis.

David DAVIS: I am just reading your submission, and you note there that you have made submissions to Victoria's housing statement, electrification, minimum standards, rental housing affordability, Victoria's Big Build and priority precincts. I wonder if we might have copies of those submissions.

Danae BOSLER: We should be able to provide all of them. I do not think we made submissions in every one of those cases. I think in some cases submissions were made. I do not think we made written submissions about priority precincts, I want to say.

Tiarne CROWTHER: I think we have been consulted widely through some of the processes, but whatever written submissions we have we are very happy to forward on.

David DAVIS: Thank you.

Danae BOSLER: I am pretty sure priority precincts, because I was in that consultation – I remember it – with the department. But I do not think it was a written one.

David DAVIS: You are a former councillor, Ms Bosler, and I note in the submission here you say:

In many ways though, the planning system based on appeals to VCAT is geared towards a small number of vested interests ...

Look, I am sorry, I recoil at that. I think that people have democratic rights. People should have a say in the future of their suburb. They should not have planning changes made without consultation which strip them of their rights to appeal but also fundamentally change longstanding characteristics. Do you agree with that?

Danae BOSLER: Absolutely. I would say to look at the broad statements I said at the start about consultation and participation and workers. We take that very inclusive view of what it means to be consulted and workers being consulted. I guess with my previous hat on, let us not think that participating in the whole planning scheme system and the VCAT system is a level and equal playing field for everyone to participate in. My lived experience from that was that it was not working people that were taking up these –

David DAVIS: But the issue here is that people are actually being stripped of their right to have a say, their right to –

Danae BOSLER: My understanding is in limited circumstances when all the standards have been met –

David DAVIS: I will have to disagree with you about 'limited'. I have to say the fact is they are. But let us move on. I want to ask you something else. I imagine that you strongly believe that there is a climate crisis and that we need to have sufficient tree canopy.

Danae BOSLER: Yes.

David DAVIS: Many of these changes will see the denuding of large areas of the city, because they will see large blocks stripped of tree canopy with very little control. Isn't that counter to the objectives of protecting the city in terms of its tree canopy and climate objectives?

Danae BOSLER: I do not know if I can fully respond to it. Absolutely we support action on climate change at every level of government. Tree canopy is just one of a thousand things that government needs to be doing and taking responsibility for. There are some energy- and climate-relevant clauses in these amendments that are being dealt with. I cannot speak to and do not know the percentage that is around tree canopy. We need to be balancing up the importance of housing, which is a human right, with making sure that we have green spaces across the city as best as we possibly can.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much. Mr Berger.

John BERGER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you both for your appearance this morning. Chair, I should disclose that in my former role as the branch secretary of the Transport Workers' Union I had some significant dealings with Trades Hall, in particular Danae. I think that should be on the record.

The CHAIR: Badge of honour.

John BERGER: In your opening today you talked about the access to jobs and how it is dependent on transport. I just wondered, from your affiliate members, is there a particular group that has vocalised it more with you and the council in respect to housing issues?

Danae BOSLER: As in particularly with respect to access to transport? There are a couple of cohorts that are coming to mind as well. I am thinking particularly about shiftworkers and unions that represent shiftworkers, who talk to us a lot about access to large sites like airports and how as much as possible we want people to be close to their places of work. So how do we make sure that we have more transport options, particularly for shiftworkers? That is not just nurses as well, that is cleaners and security guards that I am particularly thinking about. The United Workers Union are constantly advocating for better and more transport options for their members too.

I am also thinking about something else that is another component that some of our affiliates have advocated for – it falls a bit out of the remit here – which is access to child care on the way to work and making sure that your transport routes include child care on the way so child care is either close to home or close to work.

Tiarne CROWTHER: Can I just add to that? I think the other cohorts that we are hearing from are young workers, women who are single women, workers who are workers of colour and migrant workers. They are a highly mobile group of workers because often they live far away from their jobs, and so the interconnection between affordable housing and transport is really, I think, poignant for that group.

John BERGER: I suppose it then follows from there that people in the retail sector, given the large concentration in some of the larger centres, need to be able to get affordable housing within those precincts. Are you hearing about any issues in respect to that?

Danae BOSLER: Absolutely, and particularly from young people who are working at universities, who need to be able to get to university and to get back home so they can work at the local cafe or the local shops. These activity centres will create more jobs in those precincts and those areas, particularly for young workers in retail and in hospitality too.

John BERGER: We are hearing more and more 'live where you work', and I think that is a key to ensuring

Danae BOSLER: Yes. And it helps with tackling climate change too. The shorter distances that we have to travel to get to work will help with those matters as well. I almost want to say that more than just climate change, it is about the livability of your city how long you have to spend in transit to get to work.

Tiarne CROWTHER: Just another thing to add on that, with those vulnerable cohorts, they deserve quality amenities and quality communities just as any worker does, and so we want to make sure that no matter what you do, no matter what job you have, no matter what age you are and no matter what your experience is, you can have easy access to public transport but also easy access to a park and easy access to a really thriving community as well.

Danae BOSLER: Tiarne is out of the Young Workers Centre at Trades Hall, where she was a lawyer, so represents huge numbers of young workers, and for them when they are having a wage justice matter, it is so they can pay their rent.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Mansfield.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. Thank you for appearing today. I think everyone would agree that we want to see more housing and we want to see more affordable housing. One of the things that this inquiry is looking at is the specific detail of these amendments and whether they are the best way to deliver that. One thing we have heard is quite a bit of criticism in particular about VC267, which is the new ResCode changes. There has been a bit of a consistent theme of concern coming through about the potential lowering of ESD

standards and the wide range of exemptions that mean that housing could potentially be built in a flood-risk area or on contaminated land, and I think Mr Davis touched on changes to vegetation and tree canopy. I am wondering what your thoughts are on whether they are areas that would be worth looking at improving at the very least in that particular planning scheme amendment.

Danae BOSLER: Yes. I am not going to dispute that with you at all. What I would say is that – and I do not know who said it – doing the same thing and expecting a different outcome is just madness. We have had these residential codes in place for a while. There was obviously a need to change. There was feedback, and you have heard from planners today talking about the need for change. Does that mean that this is perfect? No. The sector has been calling for more consistency. Let us see if that has the response – let us see if that results in more housing approvals and more housing supply. That would be my hope. But I would say from the perspective and the commentary I made before that I want nothing but the best for the working class and for working people, so I do want the highest possible standards that we can advocate for in terms of energy efficiency, electrification – all of those sorts of things. Is this amendment the place to do that? I would hand that back over to planners and to yourselves to make decisions about where the best place is to be putting in the best possible housing standards for workers to be moving into. I was thinking about it and reflecting on it this morning too, and it is not just the new stuff that is being built, but it is the upgrades of the stock that we already have, and rebate and support from the government to make that happen for working people is critical too. I do not know if that answers your question entirely, but hopefully you can see my sentiment.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Yes. I think one of the things that this committee is considering is if we can work with these. Are the amendments that are there okay? Do they need changes, or should we scrap some or all of them and start again? They are questions that we are all trying to grapple with – and as I said, we are getting some fairly consistent criticism about different aspects of different amendments, but particularly VC267 – on those particular areas, and I just wonder whether you feel there is room for improvement.

Danae BOSLER: There is always room for improvement in government, so I am never going to dispute that.

Bev McARTHUR: They say they are perfect down the other end.

Danae BOSLER: I do not think I can add more to that. There is always room for improvement. And the other thing, especially in this area as well – sustainability – is we are just making leaps and bounds in terms of technology and what is the next best thing to do. So I think, yes, we should be constantly making improvements there. The component where it has provided a consistent standard: having been on one of 79 different councils, I do appreciate having consistent rules across residential zoning. There is some appeal in that too.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Crozier.

Georgie CROZIER: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you very much for being before the committee this morning. Could you answer: does Trades Hall have any concerns regarding urban heritage planning and the ability for heritage considerations to be considered in these planning amendments?

Danae BOSLER: Absolutely. We are guardians of and protectors of, I would say, one of the best buildings, in Trades Hall, in the city.

Georgie CROZIER: So it is important to you, the heritage aspect?

Danae BOSLER: Heritage is absolutely important.

Georgie CROZIER: What about in suburbs, though?

Danae BOSLER: Absolutely as well. What some people might find ugly I find beautiful because it is workers' history, you know – some of the buildings that are in some of our industrial areas as well. All I would say is that I am not a heritage expert and I will defer to those on that one, but we should have – and my understanding is there are still – some supports and protections around heritage overlay, and if a building needs protecting –

Georgie CROZIER: Okay. But you would not consider, for instance, tearing down Trades Hall to put up a tall tower?

Danae BOSLER: Currently it is a state heritage listed building, national heritage listed, and we are going for World Heritage listing, but we are not objecting to –

David DAVIS: And that does not provide protection under these changes.

Georgie CROZIER: That is my point.

The CHAIR: Okay. Let us not –

Georgie CROZIER: If I could move on –

Danae BOSLER: I would say we are not objecting to – around Trades Hall there are some –

Georgie CROZIER: No, no.

Danae BOSLER: We support development in the city as well.

Georgie CROZIER: If I could just move on.

Danae BOSLER: But there are strict heritage restrictions on our building.

Georgie CROZIER: Thank you. In your submission you said:

Unions have long stood by the principle that workers should be consulted on issues that affect them – both in the workplace and in the community.

And you have gone to that very extensively in your evidence today before the committee. There are people that work in retail or work in public transport all over Melbourne that live in these suburbs which are going to be impacted by heritage destruction when some of these amendments are considered. They have not had a voice through their council. They feel very strongly about that. What do you say to those workers that have been impacted?

Danae BOSLER: I would be really concerned. I would want workers to feel like they have a say, and if they feel like they have not, I would be concerned about what their local council is doing to –

Georgie CROZIER: But they are not allowed to.

Danae BOSLER: My experience is that –

Georgie CROZIER: Not under this government. The councils have been overruled, and that is part of the problem.

Danae BOSLER: Local councils have been doing – and again I refer to previous experience that I have. We had a heritage committee, and we had regular and ongoing consultation around all elements of the planning scheme as well –

Georgie CROZIER: Okay, but that is not happening. Can I have one last question?

Danae BOSLER: and I would hope that local councils would continue that and keep doing that.

Georgie CROZIER: Well, they are trying. One last question: you mentioned the airport. There are roughly 18,000 to 20,000 people out there – no infrastructure. Why do you not support developing homes closer to that area, where there is retail, ground handling – those blue-collar workers that you are talking about? Why don't you support greater housing out there that is closer to their workplace?

Danae BOSLER: I think one of the best solutions we will have to get workers closer to the airport is with airport rail as well, and the TWU have been a passionate advocate for airport rail as well. That probably does not answer your question, but we would say that we do need to balance up location – again, this is the challenge of government; I recognise that. It is balancing up locations, balancing up where we do the housing, balance of location. There were lots of speakers this morning that talked about infill versus moving out further into agricultural –

Georgie CROZIER: I think the government is confused about that balance.

The CHAIR: Mr Batchelor.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Thank you, Chair. Thank you both for coming in today. I want to sort of riff off Ms Crozier's line of questioning about houses where workers need them. One of the things that the set of planning scheme amendments is trying to do is provide more opportunities for people to access housing in our more established suburbs, with the new activity centres, the 10 pilot sites and also the 50 around tram and train zones, predominantly in areas that are more established and where there are greater transport links. I am wondering if you can reflect on your experience of the sorts of employment that we see in those areas and the needs for people who, for example, work in supermarkets, retail strips and hospitals – nurses, community based aged care workers – and childcare workers in these established suburbs and some of the challenges that they might be facing in terms of housing unaffordability and the consequences and the impacts that that has on their ability to live close to where they work and the consequences of having to live far away from where they work in these communities.

Danae BOSLER: I would make just two comments on this quickly – thank you for your question – which are, number one, and I kind of alluded to it beforehand, the thing that appeals about activity centres for the workers is that they can do multiple activities there too, right? You do your job, you do your shopping, you put the kids into child care and you go to the gym. It is that component that I really appreciate as well. Because it was on such a short timeframe, we have not been able to, and I really did want to, collect more qualitative research from workers about –

Ryan BATCHELOR: Are you talking about the timeframe you had to prepare a submission for this inquiry?

Danae BOSLER: Yes, for this inquiry.

Ryan BATCHELOR: The timeframes were short for this inquiry, which has curtailed our capacity to get into some of those issues in depth, but please go on.

Danae BOSLER: We did that survey last year, which should provide some data, but I really wish we could have gone back to unpack it with those workers. But I would refer to – I was reading it last night – the nurses' submission to the key worker housing inquiry from across the border. We will not name that state. A whole bunch of unions made submissions. The stories they have collected about the impact of travel time and the impact on accessing affordable housing and what that means for workers were incredible. The impact is enormous, and workers talked about – and this is nurses – having to constantly move because they are in a rental situation, being dependent upon their partner for financial security and having kids at a different school and a different childcare centre and the impact that has and the stress that causes. I hope that sort of answers your question.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Yes.

Danae BOSLER: I think that workers talk a lot about the quality – I am talking to a lot of workers right now. It is federal election time. We are calling a lot of union members, and they are talking about wanting good jobs not just for themselves but for their kids and wanting good housing not just for themselves but for their kids. Being close to the community that you grew up in and that your parents still live in is still actually critically important too, which is why these amendments about infill will help keep people close to schools, close to parents and close to communities.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mrs McArthur.

Bev McARTHUR: Thank you both for being here today. Great to have you. Now, as a former mayor and councillor –

Danae BOSLER: I did not realise I was going to get so many questions on this. I am meant to be here with my Trades Hall hat on, but please.

Bev McARTHUR: Well, actually, you have alluded to the fact that you have got this wonderful experience. It is my information from the councils that are talking to me that they have had little or no consultation with the government over these amendments, none whatsoever, but some have actually been told that they are going to have to pick up a lot of the cost of infrastructure associated with these tall tower centres. So do you think, as a former mayor and councillor, that is acceptable, that the burden of infrastructure falls on the ratepayers in these areas?

Danae BOSLER: It is a topic dear to my heart, actually. Local councils would argue that they disproportionately carry the burden of local infrastructure, particularly when it comes to roads, they would argue. So I would always advocate and support –

Bev McARTHUR: A lot of roads in the City of Yarra.

Danae BOSLER: ASU members, of which we are both members, who represent local council workers. I will always advocate for more funding for community infrastructure, for community projects and all of the things that make our local communities better. I will always advocate for –

Bev McARTHUR: But that is not happening, is it, because the government is saying to these councils that they will be picking up these extra infrastructure costs? So the ratepayers will bear the burden. Is that acceptable from your point of view?

Danae BOSLER: Absolutely. I think that all levels of government should be contributing to making sure that our communities are wonderful, and the state government should be contributing just as much as local council and federal. Let us all be contributors. We should all be –

Bev McARTHUR: That is going to affect your workers, though. The rates will inevitably have to go up, even though –

Danae BOSLER: They have got rate capping in Victoria.

Bev McARTHUR: There is rate capping, but the rate in the dollar is a major issue, so many of these councils will have to go into debt. Is that acceptable?

Danae BOSLER: I would be really concerned about that. There have been some concerning impacts around that in New South Wales where we have had to see council amalgamations as well. So I would want to ensure and I would hope that all of our local councils are suitably and properly funded to provide the support that communities need.

Bev McARTHUR: But that is exactly what is not happening under this proposal.

Danae BOSLER: It has only been in action for a couple of months, so I look forward to seeing the impact.

Bev McARTHUR: Well, that is the problem with the lack of consultation, isn't it, that has occurred through local government. There has been basically no consultation. They have had these amendments imposed on them, they have had where they are going to be imposed on them, the number of tall towers et cetera imposed on them, with no consultation whatsoever. You talked about the importance, you said, of constantly consulting with the workers. The workers are the ratepayers in these areas, and they have not been consulted. So do you accept it has been a totally unreasonable approach by the government?

Danae BOSLER: I can only speak to the consultation that we have experienced, with the principle that we should all be consulted. I have not had conversations with our local council members, so I cannot speak to the consultation that they have received there.

Bev McARTHUR: Well, maybe you should investigate exactly –

Danae BOSLER: With more time, I look forward to going and talking to our ASU –

Bev McARTHUR: Exactly. Well, that is the problem with this, isn't it? People have not had the time to do the consultation. Do you accept that?

Danae BOSLER: I was referring to the consultation required for this particular inquiry.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. We will leave it there. Firstly, thank you both for attending today. It is really appreciated. We know it is at very short notice.

Sheena WATT: I have a question.

The CHAIR: My apologies.

Sheena WATT: I will be quick.

The CHAIR: No, it is all right – it is my stuff-up.

Sheena WATT: I am happy to go quickly. I just want to go to point 2 of your submission, which speaks to inequality of the distribution of housing. In particular you noted that traditionally working communities such as Melton had a growth of 433 per cent and Wyndham of 346 per cent over the last 30 years and then looked at some other areas closer to the city, including Bayside and its limited growth of only 28 per cent over that same period of time. Do you have any further comments about what that actually means in terms of access to quality services for working people in these areas? Because whilst you have talked a lot about child care and aged care, I do note that communities such as Melton, Wyndham and others have limited child care, aged care and other social infrastructure that bring the quality questions to bear, about quality of life and livability.

Danae BOSLER: Thank you for the question. It is something that I feel really deeply about – quality and equality across the whole of our city and more broadly across Victoria as well. I do not want Geelong and Ballarat to be excluded in this conversation. This inner-city versus the outer suburbs and the ring – we need to make sure that we have got quality access to services out in the outer suburbs as well. I note that there were some speakers earlier who talked about how infill is more expensive than growth corridors and stuff like that. I will put that aside. The question is about workers. Workers should be able to live and work in a community. They should have just as much choice over that as anyone else who has lived there for 50 years or more prior too. I want all parts of our city to be accessible to workers, and it is an inequality that some people have schools and hospitals and childcare centres on their doorstep and some of us do not. So we need to have equitable access to that and equitable access to transport to get to those facilities as well.

Tiarne CROWTHER: We are also seeing people forced out of their communities, which is something that we are really worried about as well. I think those stats to me really speak to the fact that some communities have shouldered the growth that we have seen. Of course every worker deserves housing, but is that housing quality? I think that is what those stats really speak to for me; it is seeing that all workers deserve quality housing with access to quality amenities if I can make that condition.

The CHAIR: Thank you for attending today on very short notice. Could I just note that you will shortly receive a copy of the transcript for review before it is published on the website.

Witnesses withdrew.