

Petition #572

Stop wholesale destruction and privatisation of public housing

Council

Sponsored by: Samantha Ratnam

Presented on: 1 August 2024

Petition

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that the Victorian Labor Government's proposed destruction and privatisation of Victoria's remaining 44 public housing towers will displace over 10,000 people during a housing crisis. Across Melbourne, 6,660 public homes are planned to be destroyed. The majority of the land will be used to build private, market-rate apartments. There is no public housing guaranteed on this land into the future. The average increase in social housing proposed over the next 28 years is just 15 homes per year. there are currently 125,000 people on the public housing waitlist. this plan will make it harder for everyone to find secure, affordable homes and will worsen the housing crisis.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to immediately stop the wholesale destruction and privatisation of public housing and instead maintain existing public housing and build new public housing on public land.

[Tabled petition 8386 - Stop wholesale destruction and privatisation of public housing \(parliament.vic.gov.au\)](https://parliament.vic.gov.au/tables/petitions/8386)

Response

I thank the Member for Northern Metropolitan Region for sponsoring the petition regarding the redevelopment of the 44 public housing towers, presented to Parliament on 1 August 2024.

Melbourne's 44 high-rise public housing towers were built after World War II, between the 1950s and 1970s. Constructed at a time that pre-dates current building codes, the towers no longer meet the minimum standards Victorians expect.

The towers fail against noise, sustainability, waste and recycling, seismic, bedroom area dimensions, room depth, ventilation, private open space, accessibility and minimum amenity standards. Substantial intervention would be needed to retrofit the towers, which would still require relocation of residents. But even then, their design means that many tower homes would never be able to meet contemporary codes, nationwide energy rating schemes or accessibility needs for many households.

Not only will the redevelopment mean households will move into a new home that meets every modern building standard – it will boost the overall number of social homes across these sites by 10 per cent, while also boosting the number of affordable and market homes across the sites, delivering on a key pillar of Victoria's Housing Statement: building more social and affordable homes across Victoria.

It is vital that we maintain the strength and vibrancy of existing renter communities; we therefore have and will continue to involve them in the redevelopment of housing towers across Melbourne by drawing on their lived experience and insights.

For example, in Carlton, we are engaging with renters, stakeholders and the local community to help shape plans for new buildings, community spaces and homes to replace the old red brick towers on Elgin St and Nicholson St.

Homes Victoria is committed to the program to relocate existing renters while the rebuild takes place, being renter focused. For example, in Flemington and North Melbourne, where relocation is under way, Homes Victoria considers the information provided by households through their housing relocation application and subsequent conversations, about their relocation needs and preferences when matching households to available homes.

This includes matching households who have asked to live close to each other or in available housing in the same local area. For example, Holland Court and Racecourse Road residents are prioritised for the new Victoria St social housing apartments next door.

These conversations also include how many bedrooms they may need if they have children in local schools, if they need to be near a job, if they rely on public transport, if they have a pet to consider, or if they need to access health or support services. All these factors inform the alternative housing offered to renters.

Additionally, the recently built community housing apartments at Victoria Street and North Melbourne meet the Victorian Building Apartments Design Standards which are mandatory requirements for bedroom, living room, balcony and storage. They also meet the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines to silver and gold levels. These guidelines are a national, voluntary set of standards for liveable dwellings. This is beyond mandatory standards and is not usually found in standard market apartments.

The apartments have a 6-star Green Star rating and 7-star rating under the Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme, to ensure environmental efficiency and reduced energy consumption, and additional apartments are included to provide safe accommodation for residents living with disabilities.

When the rebuild of the towers is complete, all renters will have the option to remain where they are or return to their neighbourhood based on their needs and eligibility at that time.

Thank you for taking the time to express your views on the High-rise Redevelopment Program. I am confident that, with the positive outcomes to date in Carlton, Flemington and North Melbourne, the program will continue to have a significant positive impact on the quality of life for and increase the availability of housing for our fellow Victorians.

Please contact my office if you would like to accept my standing invitation of a briefing on social housing.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Harriet Shing', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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Hon Harriet Shing MP
Minister for Housing