

Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Councillor Tim Singh Laurence

Organisation Name:

Your position or role:

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Drag the statements below to reorder them. In order of priority, please rank the themes you believe are most important for this inquiry into homelessness to consider::

Rough sleeping,Family violence,Public housing,Housing affordability,Mental health,Indigenous people,Services,Employment

What best describes your interest in our Inquiry? (select all that apply) :

Concerned citizen ,Currently or have had a lived experience of homelessness,Other (please describe)
Elected councillor who has called out to illegal rooming houses and has lobbied State Government and Councils for inclusionary zoning and other measures to creat stock in the Northern suburbs for 35 years.

Are there any additional themes we should consider?

It is time to harness Victoria's second gold rush of land rezoning and development and create a solid stream of betterment and other taxes to execute inclusionary low income house to create 3,000 new low income public housing units per year for 10 years. At present governments at State, Local and even Federal levels are paying taxes and charges of land and developments that is funding general services with no adequate allocation for the creation of adequate low income rentals in our town and cities. Without a base level funding the homeless are left waiting for accommodation and sectors like domestic violence and mental health compete for resources that simply are not there.

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

My submission is quite simple - a state of emergency needs to be declared by the state Government in regards to homelessness with a target to create 3,000 new low income units per year and create the an addition adequate temporary housing supply to end rough sleeping in our cities.

While there are many domestic violence and mental health services that are need to operate along side the provision of temporary emergency housing the key problem is that at all three levels of government taxation has been collected without an investment in low income housing and worse still betterment taxes have not been applied in rezoning situations where capital land windfall gains have remained largely untaxed. The failure of local and state governments in particular has been a blame gain with no adequate creation of a public revenue and land bank to create the extra housing 30,000 housing units we need.

A housing construction guarantee of 3,000 units needs to be created at state government level. The GST on property needs to be fully recouped from Federal Government at COAG. A betterment tax on all rezonings needs to be created to fund public housing units. The State Government needs to compulsorily aquire under utilised council land and consolidate it in a Victorian public housing and homelessness Trust. Local Government's are playing developer games, wasting land in locations with services and apart from rare examples like Port Phillip Council our councils are generally using planning process to slow or stop low income housing.

In addition to this all councils need to be asked to apply a homelessness levy to help fund temporary housing measures. The State Government also needs to allocate an adequate amount from betterment taxes and all taxes on land to create the billions required to fund 3,000 new units each year for ten years.

Mandated inclusionary targets on new developments must be applied at 20% of a new developments of 4 or more units. An application of 10% Mandatory inclusionary to be applied where developers choose to pay a

10% of development sale price into a Victorian public housing fund. This public housing fund would then be used to construct public housing on compulsorily acquired land from local government and state government departments.

As a shelter is primary need and human right our taxes and levies from private land and public land should be prioritised above open space provision and other Government expenditure.

Only by created a dedicated public housing fund to receive land and development taxes and levies and combining it with large scale consolidation of public land for public housing will we create adequate long and short term stock to slow and then eradicate homelessness.

The funding of homelessness, domestic violence and mental health services is also required.

Until an adequate stream of public revenue, mandated inclusionary zoning of 20% and an adequate supply of public lands is created we will see competition for scarce housing stock we will continue to see unfair competition for scarce housing resources. There are also examples of some UK communities getting to zero rough sleeping but linking up council and service agencies to house all rough sleepers in winter. State Government needs to not only compulsorily acquire council land to build up a public housing land bank the Minister needs to put in place a legal requirement for every council to roll out rough sleep programs each winter. These local homelessness programs need to be mandatory in council plans along with targets for new public housing units per year. The state government needs to mandate set responses for all councils on homelessness and emergency and public housing construction in each LGA. Left to their own devices council's are dragging the chain on homelessness.

Some councils have become land developers for private housing and profited from 'flipping' public land. This conflict of interest means councils are a block on Tackling homelessness and public housing construction.

My own city is an example of these twisted priorities where tens of thousands of land sits with under utilised in excess of over \$100 million in value - much of this land close to serviced - while blame shifting on housing issues and blocking of public housing applications means our homelessness rate has grown from 1000 to 1500 in a few short years of inaction.

So homelessness and the broader public housing waiting lists and government taxation of land and improvements are interconnected. The whole state and council taxation system needs to be re-engineered to deliver funding and land to deliver 3,000 new housing units a year and the programs with other NGO services providers to stop the growth of homelessness. Without billions in land and a fair share of land based and development based tax revenues then homelessness will grow in our communities. The homelessness crisis sits inside of the broader housing crisis requires massive action at both local and state government levels to avoid this becoming a permanent blight on the future.

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

In addition to this the illegal rooming houses sector requires better management as councils are causing tenants to become homeless in the enforcement phase. Current state and local laws needed amending to stop councils and consumer affairs from making people homeless in enforcement processes.

I have experienced this both secondhand and first hand.

Once again Councils need to be dragged to the table to relocate tenants and not just force them from secondary homelessness to primary homelessness due to enforcement of rooming house laws.

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1:

File2:

File3:

Signature:

Tim Singh Laurence