

## Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Joint Submission - Jeremy Dixon and Fiona Ross Jeremy & Fiona Dixon & Ross

**Organisation Name:** Friends of Public Housing Victoria

**Your position or role:** members

### 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::**

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

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

An advocacy body

**Are there any additional themes we should consider?**

Poverty as a dominant cause of homelessness.

Stock and Management Transfers of Public Housing to Community Housing Organisations.

### YOUR SUBMISSION

#### **Submission:**

We submit that the best solution to homelessness is Public Housing.

Arguments preferring Community/Social Housing at the expense of Public Housing are essentially ideological, unsupported by evidence or reason. Public Housing should be accepted as a necessary and permanent part of the housing mix. The money needed for Public Housing should not be siphoned into the expansion of Community/Social Housing.

Guy Johnson, Professor of Urban Housing and Homelessness RMIT and Director of Unison Housing Research Lab, in his evidence to this Committee, concedes when examining the factors preventing homelessness that Public Housing excelled : "what stood out was Public Housing. The magnitude of its effect was many times greater than anything else." ( p3 transcript ) This is too important a point to be glibly passed over. We should pause to appreciate its full weight.

The cherry-picking practice of prospective tenants by Community Housing Organisations, ( and we thank Wendy Lovell for clearly pointing this out ) is inherent to its business model. Cherry-picking, apart from being discriminatory, exacerbates the problem of homelessness. The Community Housing business model de-incentivises them from housing the poorest. Professor Johnson has said that the dominant cause of homelessness is poverty. We would add that this is exactly why market solutions to housing and homelessness will not be adequate.

In addition, Public Housing is a healthy restraint on the cost of the high private rental market.

The privatisation policy of transferring Public Housing titles and/or management to Community/Social Housing businesses, has had little to no public discussion and the ramifications of this paradigm shift have not been considered. It has been treated as a fait accompli.

If there is to be continued government support for Community Housing, then it should be strictly separated from Public Housing as they have different functions. For example, the Combined Waiting List should be dismantled.

We urge the committee to take a fresh look at the arguments in favour of Public Housing. The support of a strong Public Housing Program used to have bipartisan support. We desperately need to recover that pragmatic bipartisanship.

**Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:**

As a matter of public policy, we are a bit disturbed that over a third of these submissions have been deemed confidential. If they genuinely involve sensitive personal information then of course this is valid. However, should some of these submissions concerning public policy be from organizations with vested interests in policy directions, this should be openly transparent, and available for public discussion.

## **FILE ATTACHMENTS**

**File1:**

**File2:**

**File3:**

**Signature:**

Jeremy Dixon & Fiona Ross