

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program

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*This is an open submission that can be published on the Committee's website*

I will address your last reference point – unnumbered – first before addressing your terms of reference (TOR) 1, 2 & 9.

**0.1** There are differences between Public Housing owned and managed by Government as opposed to Community Housing owned/managed. To transfer management/title to the Community Housing providers will do more harm than good for the poorest of people that the government had purchased the properties from the 1930's until now. These are the differences of renting from the two:

I am a Community Housing tenant and have been for over 17.5 years. I also have a close family member who is a Public Housing tenant and has been for over 40 years. By transferring the management and/or titles of Public Housing properties to Community Housing providers, Public Housing tenants can and will be disadvantaged by the policies of these very providers.

At the moment Public Housing tenants have the following as opposed to Community Housing groups:

- Tenants pay 25% of their income in rent
  - o Community Housing provider takes 100% of Rental Assistance on top of the 25% -30% and some have admitted they may charge higher than 30% rent

- Public Housing tenants have security of Tenure in the property that they live in.
  - Tenants may or may not be targeted for the Community Housing underutilisation rule (spare bedrooms) meaning they may be forced to move out of their home or pay an increase of up to 75% of the market rate in rent if they don't move. They may need to stay in the area for medical/family reasons. There is also no guarantee of being rehoused. As someone who was almost made homeless by this rule, this is the worst.
  
- Public Housing tenants can have more than 1 tenant in a property.
  - Community Housing generally allows only one tenant per unit so if the tenant moves out/dies, the residents need to vacate the property with no guarantee of being rehoused by the provider
  
- Public Housing tenants are covered by the Residential Tenancy Act (1997) by mention of Director of Housing.
  - Community Housing tenants don't have such safe guards in place as Port Phillip Housing knows. ie Parts of section 44 don't apply. From experience I was told by the member when I took PPHA to VCAT that as Community Housing tenants didn't pay market rent it didn't apply to us.
  - Rent increases are done by DHHS on a 6 monthly cycle as per RTA (1997) Community Housing groups tend to do when a person moves in/baby is born/child turns 18 no matter when the last increase is and informs tenant that they won at VCAT the last time they were taken re rent increase by tenant
  
- Disability Modifications are generally done by DHS if required and no applicable units are available to move tenant into
  - If a CH tenant requires one (and there is no funding available) are approved (and depending on discretion of the CEO on whether the provider will pay fully or partially or not at all), leaving the tenant the option of agreeing to contribute to the disability modification or being homeless. Those paying for the same modification in one unit is no guarantee they will for the next.

According to the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria, Steve Staikos (Policy and Public Affairs Officer), each Community Housing provider is an individual business with their own policies, and they can and do differ from one provider to the next. These policies can and are changed without consultation with tenants, mainly to the providers benefit.

Steve Staikos has also admitted that without Government monies, Community Housing providers can't survive, even with funding they are not surviving or selling off properties as per the following articles:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-19/indigenous-families-in-cunnamulla-set-to-lose-their-homes/7764630>

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/inanna-staff-kept-in-the-dark-as-organisation-faces-closure-20160908-grbi3m.html>

**0.2** The sale of land that is being sold was purchased through the slum reclamation act to be used for Public Housing. To sell the land off is very short sighted of the government considering the fact that there is 36,000+ on the waiting list. To balance out the private/public aspect of this, the government should be the landlords to the whole site and designate units throughout the building/s as private residences and charge accordingly. This will create a shortage of space for the government to build further Public Housing that is desperately needed at this time.

**POR 1** 1,100 new units is inadequate due to the fact there is 36,000+ on the Public Housing waiting list. As this government has and continues to sell off properties purchased for housing, there will not be enough space or housing to help those on the list.

**POR 2** There will be an inability to cater for all demographics due to the fact that there will be less family units (3 bedrooms) with the proposed housing mix.

**POR 9** There is no way of knowing which of the "social" housing units will be Community Housing or Public Housing as there is a difference in both landlords. Once the land is sold, it can never be returned, nor the titles to the Public housing units. The long term is that once we lose these properties

through transfer of title or sale, there is no replacement to be built on at the expense of families.

I would like to appear before the committee if deemed appropriate.