HANDS OFF PUBLIC HOUSING SUBMISSION

TO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

INQUIRY INTO THE PUBLIC HOUSING RENEWAL PROGRAM

HANDS OFF PUBLIC HOUSING

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INTRODUCTION

This is a social justice issue consistent with the basic human right of all to adequate, affordable shelter.

Successive governments over the past decades have failed to adequately respond to the increasing affordable housing and homelessness crises. The current situation has been a long time in the making and the policy and program responses dealt with in this submission refer not only to the current government but also previous governments.

This submission is made by the Hands Off Public Housing (HOPH) sponsored by Fair Go for Pensioners (FGFP) Coalition Victoria Incorporated, Friends of Public Housing Victoria (FOPH), Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG), and Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church (MUPMC). This identifies a core group to take responsibility to spearhead a campaign and bring other like groups together around agreed aims, terminology and information sharing.

The definitions of ‘public housing’, ‘community housing’, ‘social housing’ and ‘affordable housing’ given in Appendix 1 are used throughout the remainder of this submission.

HOPHs submission addresses your last reference point – unnumbered – first before addressing your terms of reference (TOR) 1-6, 9 &12. TORs 7, 8,10-11 are beyond the scope of this submission.

Please also note that state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH) is not covered in this submission. SOMIH meaning “dwellings owned and managed by State housing authorities that are allocated only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants, including dwellings managed by government Indigenous housing agencies”. Box 18.1, dot point 2, p: 18.2, Housing in Report on Government Services 2017 at https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2016/housing-and-homelessness

TOR un-numbered
“Any other matters the Committee considers relevant.”

HOPH wishes to address the glaringly obvious omissions of the privatisation of public assets as the key policy and action left out of the identified and numbered TORs and the Australian Government’s response to the housing and homelessness crises.

0.1 Privatisation
Two forms of privatization are identified here: the sell-off of public assets and the transfer of management to the community housing sector. Each is discussed in turn.

0.1.1 Sell-off of public assets
Public housing is under its worst threat since its inception. Across our State, a great sell off of public assets is being undertaken under the guise of the so-called Stage 1 Public Housing Renewal Program.

As Shaw records, “privatisation of public land to fund upgrades to public housing not only fails to deliver good value for taxpayers, but is unsustainable. At some point there will be further upgrades needed and no land left to sell.”
The government’s plan to privatise public housing will exacerbate the growing affordable housing need, while producing sizeable windfall profits for market-based property developers. It will also decrease urgently needed land for future public housing requirements.

The private market sector does not have a responsibility to low income vulnerable Victorians but rather only to themselves and/or their shareholders. The Victorian Government is meant to have this responsibility in relation to the provision of public housing but is set to ‘wriggle out of it’ as Shaw demonstrates.


0.1.2 Transfer of Management

It was reported in the Productivity Commission study report Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services: Identifying Sectors for Reform that in 2009 "state and territory housing ministers agreed to develop a community housing sector that manages about one in three social housing properties by 2014. This target remains unmet, with one in five social housing properties currently managed by community providers". https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/human-services/identifying-reform/report

HOPH opposes the transfer of management of 4,000 public housing properties to the Community Housing Sector under Stage 1 Public Housing Renewal Program on three main grounds. First, it is not proven that private landlords make better managers than public landlords. Second, and unlike the public housing sector, the community housing sector needs government subsidy vital to the viability and growth of the sector. Third, this transfer is handing over the management of an essential public service to private providers. www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=c5f4481d-7415-45e2-bbe2.

It is important to record here that HOPH acknowledges the importance of the role of community housing in the provision of affordable housing options but is opposed to the growth of community housing at the expense of public housing.

0.2 Australian Government Response

A key response to the affordable housing and homelessness crises of the Tumblong Government came through its commissioning of the Productivity Commission to conduct a public inquiry into the increased application of competition, contestability and informed user choice to human services' with the first stage of this 2-stage inquiry entitled Human Services: Identifying sectors for Reform – Study Report released on 5 December 2016 with the final stage underway. 'Social Housing' services were recommended for reform. Overview, pp: 15-18 at

Those recommendations were reflected in the new national housing and homelessness agreement announced in 2017 federal budget. Premiers and Treasurers/ies of state and territories governments appear to have welcomed this agreement including funding being linked to outcomes in priority areas such as ‘social’ and ‘affordable’ housing targets, transfer of public housing to community housing providers and residential land planning and zoning reforms. HOPH understands that details of delivering mutually agreed measurable actions are yet to be finalised.

What seems clear in this new agreement is as Martin and Pawson record that “properly funding the growth and maintenance of our social and affordable housing stock will require more than what the federal government is offering”. [https://theconversation.com/budget-2017-charts-new-social-and-affordable-housing-agenda-76794](https://theconversation.com/budget-2017-charts-new-social-and-affordable-housing-agenda-76794)

**Recommendation 0**

0.1 **HOPH calls on the state government to introduce an immediate moratorium on the sale of any public housing land and property to allow culturally and linguistically appropriate consultation for public housing tenants on all affected Estates and to allow political parties in Victoria time to consider the issues and allow for a period of broader public consultation.**

0.2 **HOPH calls on the government to protect public housing by reversing both the policy of transferring management of public housing to community housing providers and by investing the allocated social housing growth funds into public housing. Reinvest in the refurbishment/demolition of existing public housing stock and in the provision of new public housing stock to begin a long-term program of dealing with the affordable housing and homelessness crises.**

0.3 **HOPH calls for the government to adopt the objective of expanding and developing the public sector’s role in public housing provision and to set clear targets for growth, sustainability and growth in demand for public housing as a matter of urgency.**

0.4 **Targets must constitute measures to be used in decisions regarding new construction of public housing against replaced or disposed stock.**

0.5 **Build, refurbish and increase public housing stock in order to look after low-income Victorians and defend their basic human right to secure, safe and affordable public housing.**

0.6 **Rethink the view that private landlords are better managers, cost efficient and provide more informed choice.**

0.7 **Investigate and report on the Australian government’s role in driving the direction of ‘affordable housing’ in the state/territories under the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement 2018-19 and beyond.**

0.8 **Investigate with recommendations the likely impact on public housing stock of the funding linked to outcomes under the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement 2018-19 and beyond.**

0.9 **State Government to renegotiate funding arrangements for the new agreement insisting that the renewal of public housing means just that:**
owned and managed by the government. A precondition of funding must NOT be linked to the handing over of public housing to private providers community housing or otherwise.

0.10 Need for State Government to advocate to federal government the need for action on the demand side of the housing market to help improve affordability of housing by abolishing negative gearing for residential property investors and reducing capital gains tax discounts from 50 to 25 per cent for investors in the residential property market.

TOR 1

The adequacy of a proposed 10 per cent increase in public housing (or 1,100 public units) on the sites given the size of the waiting list for public housing.

The Victorian Government’s plan to sell off the majority of the public land on existing public housing estates for private development at discounted rates and for a meagre 10 per cent increase in ‘public housing’ is not in the public interest and is morally reprehensible. It is a fact that some of the walk-ups to be demolished have been refurbished in the past 5 years or so. http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/research-data-and-statistics/public-housing-waiting-and-transfer-list

The number of Victorians in need of public housing is at scandalous levels with over 35,000 Victorians on waiting lists and a further 22,000 homeless. Numbers for those living in housing stress is not included but growing quickly, for example: VC0SS says, ‘If you’re on Newstart payments with rent assistance, you’re getting $340 a week. If you want to rent a one-bedroom apartment in Melbourne, that’s $340 a week. Basically you don’t have enough money to pay rent, let alone pay for food and other expenses, so we are seeing an absolute crisis,’ yet we are told that plans mean ‘public housing’ will increase by a mere 10 per cent.

Even this 10 per cent public housing figure is doubtful. In delegation meetings with Advisers – Housing and Premiers – and also in the government’s written information which uses the terms social housing, community housing and public housing interchangeably which of course they are not. There is no specific reference to 10% public housing.

It is most likely that there will be no public housing if this redevelopment goes ahead. Government has abandoned its people.

Victoria needs more public housing to address the chronic shortage and unmet need and to address homelessness.

Begging off providing detailed information about the mix of housing types replacing public housing and the cost to tenants and taxpayers for reasons of commercial-in-confidence is simply no longer acceptable.

Recommendation 1

1.1 Set 100 per cent targets for public housing provision on each of the 9 Estates identified under Stage 1 of the so-called Public Housing Renewal Program.

1.2 Allocate funds as a matter of urgency for public condition assessments of the estates including options such as refurbishment of all or part of the existing housing units.
1.3 Take the opportunity to redevelop only as indicated by public condition assessments.

1.4 Retain all new dwellings as part of the public housing stock with relocated tenants returned prior to additional stock being used to decrease waiting lists.

1.5 Undertake lobbying work for the implementation of a Federal State Housing organisation. This body is to comprise Federal and State representatives of governments, local government and representatives of public housing (not 'not for profit housing') to meet bi-annually to promote and cost public housing as the essential focus to meet the housing crisis.

TOR 2

The ability to cater for all demographics including families, couples and singles with the proposed housing mix

HOPH does not believe that the plans can cater for larger families or those in need of carers to stay over or in fact live-in as the planned redevelopment of most sites is to provide mostly 1 or 2-bedroom units.

Larger families will not be able to return to their former homes and it is doubtful if those in need of carers either full-time or sleep-over will be assessed as in need of this additional bedroom. Under-utilization of space will be likely given for a refusal.

HOPH says there should be no 1 bedroom dwellings not only because it is building cost inefficient but also it will not meet the future longer term needs of many tenants, especially older tenants, tenants with disabilities and large families.

There is also an underlying ideology at work that people on low incomes, people who are poor or living in poverty are somehow undeserving of care. Public housing tenants have been depicted as lay-abouts, drinking and drugging their way through income support payments as if it is their own behaviour which is the problem not poverty and inequality.

Recommendation 2

2.1 Acknowledge that it is a myth that a social mix of private and public housing generates vibrant communities.

2.2 Publish the evidence which discredits the myth that low income people are better off with different types of people, those with more educational qualifications, professional jobs and so on. http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/social-mix-approach-to-public-housing-is-failing-research-finds-20170616-gwsjj3m.html

2.3 Acknowledge that societal inducing poverty and inequality are the problems not individual behaviour

2.4 Ensure dwelling bedroom sizes are built to cater for the needs of families and others in need of additional bedrooms e.g. older tenants with a carer not a family member or home-based care for a person with a disability.

2.5 Commit to the provision of public housing based on the needs of current tenants and of future tenants on exceedingly long waiting lists.

TOR 3

The effects on current public housing tenants, including: a. whether they will be moved to accommodation that is secure, stable and fit for purpose
a. whether they will be moved to accommodation that is secure, stable and fit for purpose. Establish costs involved to government;

b. whether they will be moved to accommodation that is close to their existing social support networks, educational, health and welfare services;

c. whether all current tenants who choose to, will be able to return to their estates;

d. to recognise the importance of community built on estates by public housing tenants and not to destroy it.

HOPH is concerned that people who live on the estates are not being treated with dignity or respect. Information provided to them has been inadequate, contradictory and does not meet the requirements of a multi lingual society. In fact, tenants have indicated that they are being ignored and worried half to death due to woefully inadequate information, having no idea when, where or for how long they will be relocated, if they have a right to refuse to relocate and whether indeed all those who wish to return will be guaranteed the right to do so.

Promised benefits of new homes and amenity have not occurred in earlier similar redevelopments with evidence mounting of the outcomes being markedly different to those promised.

Experience has shown clearly that there is not only no effort to integrate all tenants/owners together without demarcation, indeed, the reverse is the case. HOPH asserts that it is not in the interests of developers to achieve this, nor will they.

The information available on the right of return of tenants is inadequate, misleading and confusing. Information available states tenants who are moved out will have an "option" to return to their former homes. Do they have a right? If tenants have the right to return to their former homes please be clear and say so. "Option" does not mean a right.

**Recommendation 3**

3.1 Need to investigate previous redevelopments to analyse the outcomes. The Kensington and Carlton Estates are both worthy of examination.

3.2 If tenants have the right to return to their former homes this needs to be made clear in all forms of communication. "Option" does not mean a right yet HOPH understand that the Minister has guaranteed a right of return.

**TOR 4**

*The allocation of parts of the sites between the proposed new public and private housing units*

HOPH supports retaining and extending 100 per cent public housing meaning owned and managed by the government. Our view has been expressed in correspondence to the Government and more broadly to the community.

Public opposition to the government’s Stage 1 Public Housing Renewal Program is rapidly increasing as more people learn what this Program actually means when the confusing and ambiguous language used by the government in its information sheets and its *Homes for Victorians* is unpacked. [https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/homes-for-victorians/](https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/homes-for-victorians/)
Nearly all of the 50 people/organisations (virtually equal numbers of public housing tenants, community groups and unions with 3 interested residents of nearby Estates) attending the 7th of September forum supported 100% Public Housing. Those attending large community meetings held at Ascot Vale, Hawthorn, Brighton, Northcote and Brunswick West fully supported the retention and expansion of public housing 100 per cent. A significant majority of those attending extremely well-attended public meetings organised by the inner city local government Councils of Boorandara, Bayside, Darebin and Moreland also have supported public housing not community housing or other forms of private rentals.

Recommendations

4.1 The government implement a moratorium as a matter of urgency in order to allow for a reconsideration of this very controversial plan.

4.2 Fully consider reversal of Stage 1 Public Housing Renewal Program and consider the public interest.

4.3 State government must investigate the impact including the negative impact of the outcomes on public housing tenants and their former local communities of earlier public housing renewal programs in Victoria such as Kensington and Carlton Estates. Evidence is required and made public before Stage 1 is rolled out.

4.4 State government must provide evidence for the argument that community housing providers are better managers and/or owners and better private landlords than the government as public provider/landlord.

4.5 Reverse the policy of transferring the management of 4,000 public housing properties to community housing providers.

TOR 5

The lack of public condition assessments of the estates or alternative options such as refurbishment of all or part of the existing housing units

Ascot Vale is an example given by tenants who report that staged refurbishment of walk-ups has been underway for some time. Noone Street, Clifton Hill is another with 30 of 36 walk-ups refurbished in recent years. Refurbishments using public money used to reinvest in upgrades now identified for demolition. This is a wilful waste of taxpayers’ money.

A Productivity Commission Inquiry found that throughout Australia 20 per cent of public housing is not in an acceptable condition and accords with our observational experience of visiting the Estates.

It is critically important that public condition assessments are done before current tenants are moved.

HOPH knows that serious maintenance and improvements are required on some Estates or parts of Estates to end the decades of neglect by the Department.

Recommendation 5

5.1 Allocate urgent funds to the upgrade and maintenance of existing stock as required so that the excuse, used so often, that properties are beyond saving can no longer be used.
5.2 Undertake staged refurbishments to enable tenants to remain on their Estates or close to their local communities and thus also avoid destroying actual vibrant and stable communities.

5.3 Ensure only those dwellings beyond repair are demolished.

TOR 6

The proposed significant increase in density and heights and any local environmental impacts, such as the loss of open space and mature vegetation

The proposed demolitions will result in uprooting many people and their families from their homes, from their close communities, from their broader social networks, from their medical and other community service supports, as well as the disruption of children's lives and education. In short, it is the destruction of these strong local communities.

What happens to existing tenants? How are existing tenants to be treated?

HOPH also asks how are these communities to be kept intact and guaranteed return to their former locations as soon as possible and to homes of sufficient size to house their families?

Density & Heights
Stock size of dwellings if only 1 or 2-bedrooms means larger families will be excluded from returning to their former communities. This could be viewed as discrimination.

Open space & mature vegetation
On behalf of HOPH, four FGFP Victorian Steering Committee members attended a public meeting at Wingate Estate, Ascot Vale Saturday 27 May 2017 and were disturbed to hear that public housing tenants were deeply concerned about the lack of factual information available, worried their voices were either not being heard or ignored and clear they wanted to stay in their homes on this well-kept vibrant garden estate.

The open space and mature vegetation is highly valued by tenants for themselves and for their children. Those estates with community gardens are greatly appreciated and gardens tended with care. Children play in playgrounds and play sport on the open spaces. They have room to move and be safe and secure within their own communities.

It is also important to note that the Wingate Estate, Ascot Vale has heritage significance as one of the public housing estates designed as a garden community with acknowledgement that open space and grounds are important for the physical and mental well-being of tenants and their children.

Refurbish not demolish
Not all of Wingate Estate is run down. In fact, refurbishments have commenced with some properties already completed unlike what the State Member for Essendon's handout on the day stated.

Those present - about 100 tenants - including representatives of tenants with limited English language skills made it very clear that tenants do not want to move; rather they want their homes updated and common areas refurbished not destroyed.
Note some tenants came late explaining that it took time to notify tenants in languages other than English that the meeting was on.

**Key points made by tenants of what they want:**

i. their homes refurbished not demolished.
ii. more than a flimsy option of returning when the undated redevelopment is completed.
iii. professional interpreters provided for information sessions including for the linguistic diversity of tenants from African countries.
iv. culturally and linguistically appropriate consultation.
v. clear and factual information in the major community languages spoken.
vi. retention of community facilities such as the community centre (offering a range of support services), community rooms, halls and kitchens.
vii. retention and update of current common outdoor areas: community gardens, children’s play areas, sporting areas and general estate grounds including solar lighting, seating, and footpaths.
viii. retention and update of common residential zones - including regular maintenance - such as foyers, hallways, laundries and utility areas.
ix. improved safety measures.

Tenants on the Estates visited are invested in their local communities and in stable accommodation. Some tenants have lived in their current dwellings for years. They now report a decline in their health with inadequate information, or no information at all for those with languages other than English, worrying them half to death. This is demonstrated in the following composite case study of older tenants thoughts, views and needs.

**Case Study: older public housing tenants and recurring reactions**

I do not want to move I love my home

I want my home refurbished not demolished and to stay while the work is done

Having lived here for many decades and now they want me out

Breaking up my local community makes me sad and I do not want to leave my community

Visitors are shown through homes with pride. Walls have become storyboards of lives.

I am being asked to leave my memories behind.

I am too fearful of being targeted to protest but ‘sick with worry’ as I do not know when I will be moved other than it will be late 2017 – close to Christmas! “This is what the Department is doing to tenants”.

I have not been told where I will be relocated or how long, or when I may return and to where. I have lived in this location all these years.

The Department does not care about tenants and the whole thing depresses me.

This move will kill me.

These tenants look you straight in the eye and without expression say these devastating words. We believe them.
Depression & Disempowerment. These older tenants have felt powerless to change what is happening to them against their will. Can they refuse to move – they do not know! They do know that they are losing their stable homes and local communities and this is making them "sick with worry" and for some depressed.

The following view is repeated often clearly demonstrating the fact that the tenants are not being listened to or their views counted. An elderly public housing tenant from Ascot Vale said "I like the estate the way it is. There's nothing wrong with it".

The response by government officials as reported by the tenant "Well it is going to happen. Get used to it". This was supported by other tenants present at the time.

This cruel and disrespectful treatment of public housing tenants underscores the systemic disempowerment public housing tenants already experience – it is both callous and utterly shameful.

Recommendations
6.1 Retain open space on Estates.
6.2 All Estates should not be demolished without detailed evaluations of both physical structural assessments and assessments of the needs of families and of individuals.
6.3 As far as is possible tenants' voices and their need to remain in their local communities needs to be respected. Refurbish rather than demolish.
6.4 Any demolition required to occur in stages to enable tenants and their families to stay connected to their Estates and to their wider local communities such as schools, work, friends and faith groups.

TOR 9
The transparency and genuine community consultation with affected residents, neighbouring communities and the broader Victorian community regarding the short, medium and long term implications of the PHRP model as currently proposed

The government has not carried out effective consultation as it has been indecently rushed, without professional interpreters or translators and the information available misleading at best, for affected tenants. Local businesses report little or no information received from the government

It is a fact that the majority of those we have spent time with do not want to move they want to stay in their homes and in their communities. They do want their properties refurbished in stages while they remain on their Estates or near-by in their local communities. They desire as little disruption as possible to their daily life and that of their children.

Public housing tenants are very critical of the 'consultation' process which denies them accurate information and informed choice and leaves them in homeless limbo. Yet these tenants are expected to start packing in order to be out by the end of the year.

There has been no participation processes in place to involve tenants in the planning and design of refurbishments or new builds. Blueprint plans have been denied to tenants and concerned citizens on the grounds of commercial-in-confidence. This is unacceptable and for those of us still believing in democracy unfair and unjust.
The government has not listened to the tenants and tenants have not received information to allow informed choices to be made. HOPH asserts that the information provided was deliberately opaque and misleading – it was not transparent.

Government departments need to be open and transparent about their immediate, medium and long-term plans and the impact on the rights of tenants, the future lease arrangements and the longer-term management of part of or all of the redeveloped Estates.

Public housing tenants value their housing and need accurate and clear information which they did not receive through the consultation process and neither did HOPH members through their delegations. There is no informed choice here.

Information available from the state government states tenants who are moved out will "have an option" to return to their former homes. As already stated, if tenants have the right to return to their former homes then that must be made clear and just say so.

How very disappointing for HOPH and how incredibly insensitive and uncaring towards the public housing tenants who have been/will be tossed out of their homes if not forcibly moved-on with no knowledge of where they will be sent or how long until the very last minute. This includes many young families, migrants, people with disabilities and older pensioners, some of whom have lived in their homes for 25 or more years.

The Government has worried many of these tenants half to death and this remains unconscionable.

Recommendation 9
9.1 Undertake considered, lengthy and multi-lingual consultations with public housing tenants on all affected Estates.
9.2 Provide clear, concise and factual information in the major community languages spoken by the affected public tenants on the 9 Estates
9.3 Utilise staff well versed in cross-cultural consultation processes who not only understand the concept of active listening skills but have at least 5 years demonstrated experience in their use.
9.4 Treat tenants with the dignity and respect that they deserve by open and transparent communication and access to specialist advice and information for the culturally and linguistically diverse communities of the Estates.
9.5 Uphold the rights of tenants under the Victorian Charter of Rights not trash them. HOPH members thank you for the opportunity to submit.

TOR 12
Best practice models for the provision of public housing from within Australia and overseas

It is accepted by most research that Australia has a poor track record in the provision of public housing whether this is understood in terms of the ratio of public expenditure on public housing to GDP, share of government budgets or proportion of public rental housing to private rental set against other comparable societies. G.

As Australia’s population grows and cities become more crowded the role of governments in providing decent public housing becomes even more important not less. https://www.planetizen.com/node/66252

**Recommendation**

12.1 The state government to investigate international examples of public housing Estates that work by not only providing a roof over tenants heads but also using creative designs to provide high quality accommodation in low-cost buildings.

12.2 Explore for adaptation to public housing in Victoria international examples of existing central urban infrastructure converted to public housing enabling families and individuals on low-incomes to live close to - for example - their places of work, study, social support networks and faith groups as well as access to affordable public transport.

12.3 The State Government to take a leadership role in driving new direction reforms for reinvestment in both upgrades of current public housing stock and the extension of public housing stock through a considered long-term public housing strategy for Victoria and for a national strategy. Reforms to be based on best practice international and local.

Signed: 
Date: 2010/17

Cc: Appendices 1 - 3
Appendix 1. Definitions – Information 2
Appendix 2. Hands Off Public Housing – Information Sheet 1
Appendix 3. Declaration in Support of Public Housing – Information sheet 3
HANDS OFF PUBLIC HOUSING – ACT NOW

INFORMATION SHEET 1

Why is the Victorian government handing over public housing to private landlords instead of owning and managing public housing for vulnerable Victorians? This includes selling-off up to 80 per cent of these public assets and transferring 4,000 properties to the "community housing" sector. This is privatisation of public assets.

FACTS

1. Currently there are over 58,000 Victorians either homeless individuals or families (22,773) or waiting often years on public housing waiting lists (35,392) and thousands more paying in excess of 40% of their income in private rental. The shocking high numbers of homeless Victorians sleeping rough in the streets, in unsafe rooming houses or couch surfing include 26% of children aged 12 years or under. 


2. Nine estates will be redeveloped under the so-called Stage 1 Public Housing Renewal Program: Ascot Vale, Brighton, Brunswick West, Clifton Hill, Hawthorn, Heidelberg West, Northcote, North Melbourne and Prahran. There are also renewal projects at Flemington and Preston. All walk-ups are to be demolished even though some have been recently refurbished.

3. The government is moving public housing tenants from their homes for indefinite periods of time. At the time of writing, where they will be relocated and for how long is unknown. Tenants have been told to start packing as they will be moving out by the end of the year. The speed and secrecy by which the government is planning to displace masses of vulnerable people (many with disabilities and elderly pensioners) is cause for suspicion, and constitutes a very serious human rights issue. Already tenants are reporting that their health is deteriorating. Feedback from public tenants and perusal of government fact-sheets suggests a lack of genuine consultation and misleading and conflicting information.

4. Public Housing was introduced after a hard fought battle to end the slums in the inner city over 70 years ago. It has been a wonderful program of support for low income families and continues to be so. That it is government run and funded is the most important aspect of this program and one that we should be protecting overwhelmingly. Privatisation has been a disaster around the world and certainly here, and "social/community" housing is simply another form of privatisation. It lets governments off the hook.

5. The decision by the State Government to sell off huge areas of publicly owned land utilised by public housing is a disgrace. It is wrong because that land can never be replaced. It is wrong because it creates huge crises for families living on those estates. It is wrong because experience has shown that developers discriminate against public housing tenants on private estates, and it is totally wrong because it removes government responsibility for its people.

Hands Off Public Housing will continue to fight for the reversal of this policy and to fight for the rights of public housing tenants to remain in their local communities if their homes are in need of redevelopment – some to be demolished have already been refurbished.

Please join the Hands Off Public Housing campaign by writing, phoning or visiting your local state and federal members of Parliament and letting them know that you are opposed to the sale of public housing land to private, for profit developers and you want current public housing stock owned and managed by the government extended to assist those in need.

You believe that public housing is the best way to proceed to resolve the current and growing housing crisis in Victoria. Spread the word and start a conversation with family and friends.

Hands Off Public Housing

Jointly established by Fair Go for Pensioners (FGFP) Coalition Victoria Incorporated; Friends of Public Housing Victoria (FOPHV) and Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church (MUPMC).
HANDS OFF PUBLIC HOUSING Information Sheet 2
DEFINITIONS

Definitions
The Victorian State Government’s definitions of ‘public housing’, ‘community housing’, ‘social housing’ and ‘affordable housing’ are used consistently by all involved in the Hands Off Public Housing campaign with one clarifying paragraph added to the definition of ‘affordable housing’ as outlined below.

It is Important to state here that even though the Government provides the definitions of these terms it then proceeds to use these terms in both written documents and in delegation meetings interchangeably which is misleading, confusing and inaccurate.

Public Housing
Housing owned and managed by the Director of Housing. The Government provides public housing to eligible disadvantaged Victorians including those unemployed, on low incomes, with a disability, with a mental illness or at risk of homelessness.

Community Housing
Housing owned or managed by community housing agencies for low income people, including those eligible for public housing. Community housing agencies are regulated by the Government.

Social Housing
Social housing is an umbrella term that includes both public housing and community housing. Its provision usually involves some degree of subsidy.

Hands Off Public Housing Campaign believes the term ‘social housing’ is not public housing. Social housing was a British import which worked well for the Thatcher Government allowing her government to destroy public housing in the UK.

Affordable Housing
The Government defines affordable housing as housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low to moderate income households, and priced (whether mortgage repayments or rent) so these households are able to meet their other essential basic living costs. This is the definition used by the Hands Off Public Housing campaign together with an affordable housing measure as outlined below.

It is important to note here that ‘affordable housing’ is often used in government documents to refer to both community and social housing, and to mean ‘up to 80% of market rents’. This is not ‘affordable’ to people on low incomes unless supplemented by a continuous stream of Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Hands Off Public Housing uses the University of Melbourne School of Design affordable housing measure used in its report Transforming Housing: Affordable Housing for All. This is the Area Median Income measure which means “housing costs do not exceed 30% of gross household income to rent plus utilities (renters) or 35% gross household income to mortgage, property taxes and insurance, rates and strata fees (owners).”
https://dl.dzak330y9c.cloudfront.net/cdn/farfuture/qPbNpVg9a-nESG7FFsy9iKSOulidihtZpqU5syhl/mtime:1481254086/sites/default/files/docs/Transforming%20Housing%20Dec%2

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DECLARATION OF SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

There is no other title for public housing. It is not community housing, it is not social housing, it is not ‘not for profit’ housing. It is housing owned by the people, used by the people and administrated by our elected representatives. Public housing belongs to us, it is a recognition that housing is not a commodity it is a human right.

No government has the right to sell public housing. Privatisation of this fundamental inalienable right will not be supported or tolerated, particularly at a time when there are 58,000 Victorians either homeless, paying in excess of 40% of their income in private rental, and while there are children suffering because they have no secure, affordable roof over their heads.

The decision by governments to sell off huge areas of publicly owned housing land is a disgrace. It is WRONG because that land can never be replaced. It is WRONG because it penalizes families living in their homes on those estates. It is WRONG because we know that private developers discriminate against public housing tenants on private estates and it is totally WRONG because it removes government responsibility for housing its people.

We are totally opposed to the sale of public housing land to private for profit developers.

Governments claim that ‘estates are run down and need redeveloping’. For those that are, they are right, but it was government who ran down the estates not tenants and it is government that must bring these estates back to community standard and ensure that individuals and families are not victimized by government failure to maintain public property. Instead of privatisation, each estate should be improved with tenants remaining in their areas, to avoid disruption to schools, doctors, hospitals and community support. These are people not commodities.

We, the people therefore, undertake to intensify the campaign to DEFEND AND EXTEND PUBLIC HOUSING as the only real solution to the housing crisis and will continue to fight for housing justice for the people of Victoria. HANDS OFF PUBLIC HOUSING CAMPAIGN IS ENDORSED BY.