

From: Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program
Sent: Thursday, 2 November 2017 5:54 PM
To: phrp
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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I am a community worker in West Heidelberg in my paid role four days a week. I also coordinate a charity that provides material aid for babies and children in West Heidelberg and surrounding suburbs for one day a week as a volunteer. My submission is actually based on understandings gained from both of these roles.

My points to the members of the enquiry committee are as follows:

1. There is a need for more 3 and 4 bedroom houses in the estates replacing Bell Bardia and Tarakan St . These areas house a lot of Eastern African families - particularly from Somali and it is quite common for these families to have 7 or more children living at home. In my role arranging clothing and equipment for families having babies and subsequently for the children as they grow older, I know of many families who live in very overcrowded conditions. One family the 3081 Angels provided for had one bedroom for 4 children under 4 years and two parents, living in one of the estates earmarked for replacement. . These people had come to Australia on a skilled migrant Visa and were renting a one BR flat from another person. The husband/father had only 10 hours work a week and an impossible debt from the Hospital that had delivered their baby as they were not eligible for Medicare. The heater was exposed and a real fire danger, especially to the toddler. I know many Somali families who are unemployed or working for a very low wage who have multiple children sleeping in the same bed. This may be possible when they are very young, but as the children grow older, it becomes impossible to accommodate these families in 2 bedroom flats.
2. Through both areas of my current work , I know that having a safe place to call home is fundamental as a first step to addressing other issues and barriers. If people do not have somewhere suitable and safe to house their family and keep their belongings, they are not able to look beyond their immediate needs and therefore are unable to engage meaningfully in interventions to address substance abuse, mental health and other serious issues. I believe that there needs to be considerably more than 10% increase in public housing in this area as there

are so many people with complex issues who have lived in generational poverty all their lives. The planned development as it stands, is a lost opportunity .

3. I believe that the new estates must have community space built in - facility where people can meet, plan and play together. We know from experiences in North Melbourne and other public /private developments that significant tensions can develop due to different cultural practices and that the aspirations and expectations of someone who has saved for years to purchase their first home can be quite different to a newly settled family with six children from eastern Africa! It takes work to build community and it is short sighted not to include a community centre in each of the developments to encourage positive interactions to occur as naturally as possible.

The developments must also allow adequate space for children to play together and the community centres must include facilities for playgroups to be run on site as these encourage the women in particular to forge relationships, break down barriers and build community . I also recommend a shared cooking space and a gym area for adolescents in particular.

Thank you for considering these issues.

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File1:

File2:

File3: