

PROTECT PUBLIC HOMES

A MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO GROW PUBLIC HOUSING IN THE HEART OF MELBOURNE

Home is the foundation for our lives. None of us can go about our lives, raise a family, go to work or stay healthy without a stable and safe place to call home.

Two years ago the Victorian Government committed to invest in old public housing sites in inner Melbourne. This was a unique opportunity to grow public housing in the heart of Melbourne. To give people from all walks of life the advantages of inner-city living and ensure Melbourne continues to be a vibrant and diverse city.

The Victorian Government has missed this opportunity. The first three public renewal sites will have no public housing.

The Victorian Government has announced a private developer will rebuild public homes in North Melbourne, Northcote, and Preston.

Homes that were publicly owned and managed in these estates will be privatised and run by a not-for-profit organisation.

PRIVATISING PUBLIC HOMES - A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

We are disappointed by the Victorian Government's announcement to privatise public homes, particularly because they committed to opposing further privatisation of public assets in their election platform.

There is a clear need for a huge and urgent expansion of public homes just to reduce the current waiting list of over 82,000 people, including 25,000 children.

There are 125 new applications for housing every week.

The Victorian Government's privatisation of public homes is a missed opportunity.

Privatising public homes by selling public land or transferring the management of public homes to community housing providers will not meaningfully reduce the public housing waiting list and may result in people being worse off.

ERODING PEOPLE'S RIGHTS - THE SHIFT TO COMMUNITY HOUSING

Social housing is public housing and community housing. Both play a role in the housing mix. However, the rights and conditions for residents are different.

People who live in public housing have more secure and stable tenancies. Community housing can be uncertain, with each community housing provider having a different set of policies and rules. This can mean people living in community housing can pay higher rents, struggle to get maintenance and disability modification for their homes, and may be more likely to be evicted for falling into arrears or temporary absences to attend rehabilitation.

People living at the renewal sites have been promised by the Minister that they have the right to return and retain the same housing protections as before. However, based on the information currently available, it appears this will not be the case.

We understand that public housing residents that decide to return to the newly privatised estates will do so on the following terms:

- ▼ The Director of Housing will own some of the redeveloped homes, except they will now be privately run by a community housing provider;
- ▼ Rent will still be calculated in the same way as it is for public residents elsewhere;
- ▼ Residents in the new homes will be otherwise governed by the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

WE CALL ON THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT TO:

- ▼ Guarantee that the public housing residents that decide to return to the redeveloped estates in North Melbourne, Northcote, and Preston have the same rights as they did before they were relocated.
- ▼ Guarantee that all new tenants on the redeveloped estates that take up tenancies with Housing First will still be governed by identical policies, procedures, and guidelines as those who live in publicly owned and managed homes.
- ▼ Ensure all people who live in community housing have the same rights and conditions as those who live in public home.

The Victorian Government can provide better protections for those wishing to return to the redeveloped estates, as well as those in homes run by community housing providers.

We want to work with the Victorian Government to improve our broken housing system to make things fairer for those being pushed into poverty and homelessness.

SIGNATORIES

The Federation of Community Legal Centres signs this statement in partnership with the community legal centres who provide support and representation for the tenants at the public housing renewal program estates. **4 APRIL 2019**



NEW STREET, BRIGHTON: BANGS STREET, PRAHRAN



GRONN PLACE, BRUNSWICK WEST



NOONE STREET, CLIFTON HILL: WALKER STREET,
NORTHCOTE: STOKES PENOLA ESTATE, PRESTON



BILLS STREET, HAWTHORN

WEST HEIDELBERG
COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICE



TARAKAN AND BELL BARDIA ESTATES, HEIDELBERG WEST



ABBOTSFORD STREET, NORTH MELBOURNE