



JENNY LEONG MP

MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN



**THE
GREENS**

7 July 2020

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP Premier
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

cc.

The Hon. Gareth Ward MP, Minister for Families Communities and Disability Services

The Hon. Melinda Pavey MP, Minister for Water, Property and Housing

The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP, Minister for Health and Medical Research

Dear *Premier, Gladys*

Re: Covid-19 Emergency planning and support for public housing communities

The current situation in Melbourne which has seen thousands of public housing residents subject to a hard lock down due to the COVID-19 pandemic is the cause of much concern for myself and those living in high rise public housing in the electorate of Newtown and surrounding areas.

It is absolutely true that unprecedented measures need to be taken to deal with the current health crisis, however, it is crucial that in implementing these measures, further harm is not inflicted to those in our community who are already vulnerable and at risk.

As you will be aware, the Newtown electorate houses a significant number of people living in public housing, and a significant number of the high rise public housing blocks in the inner city. For your information we have included a list of these sites with this correspondence.

Given this, and the potential for similar spikes of community transmission in Sydney (although hopefully we can all work together to avoid this), I seek your urgent assurance that:

- Proactive preventative health measures are being implemented in public housing across NSW.
- NSW Health is and will continue to be the lead agency for handling and managing clear contingency and emergency response plans and that protocols are in place should a similar cluster arise in a public housing high rise building in Sydney.
- Dignity and rights of public housing tenants will be protected should there be an outbreak, and that these people will be treated in the same manner and with the same level of care, support, and treatment as all others in our community.

The sudden hard lockdown, with minimal communication by the Victorian authorities has led to confusion, fear and anxiety amongst the residents and shows a blatant disrespect for the rights of those living in public housing, as well as an ignorance of the complex needs of many people living in these buildings.

It is crucial that a similar situation does not happen in NSW and the best way to ensure this is to do all we can to keep everyone, including our public housing communities well-informed and safe.



As an immediate and practical way of doing this, over the coming week, our office will be writing to all tenants in public housing in our electorate providing them with basic contact information, advice from NSW health in a range of languages and offering them our support during this intense time. This is in addition to a direct mail correspondence that each of our constituents over the age of 65 received a number of months ago providing offer for assistance and key information.

Beyond this, and given the split of responsibilities over three different Ministerial portfolios, **I ask you to take personal responsibility to ensure that the following basic preventative measures are in place in all high rise and high density public housing in the coming week:**

- Increase to daily cleaning of common areas, including lifts, laundries, hallways and entrances
- Hand sanitizer stations installed and maintained at all entrances to buildings, in common areas and by lift entrances
- Health signage in a range of languages reminding people about hand hygiene, social distancing and symptoms throughout buildings and in lifts

Finally, I wish to raise with you some serious concerns I hold over the loss of resourcing at crucial place-based services and supports in the Surry Hills, Redfern and Waterloo area.

At this time when our vulnerable communities need ongoing and reliable support services, the decision to defund, restructure and reduce support needs to be reviewed. I ask that you reverse the decision to cut staff support positions at Counterpoint Community Services in Waterloo, and reduce staffing and resourcing levels for Surry Hill Community Connect and Redlink in Redfern in light of the specific needs and pressures these communities are facing and will continue to face during the pandemic.

I have raised a number of intersecting issues that span the scope of three separate Ministers, however, the community impacted by these issues is the same and it is crucial that these issues are approached in a holistic manner.

As such, I seek an urgent meeting with you and whoever you identify to be the relevant Ministers or Ministers' offices to progress discussion and action on these issues in the interests of the safety of public housing tenants in our community and our community as a whole.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Leong MP
Member for Newtown