

SE News
HD **City high-rises riddled with inferior design**
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Melbourne's newest high-rise towers are overrun by bad-quality apartments, but the investors who **buy** them do not care - as long as they get the rent.

A Melbourne City Council study has estimated 55 per cent of the city's tallest **apartment** buildings over 15 storeys are of "poor" quality, with common design flaws such as cramped layouts and a lack of natural light.

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Windowless bedrooms exist in almost a quarter of new **residential** developments studied.

Some Melbourne architects are so unhappy with the result of buildings they have designed that they have refused to have their name associated with them, the Australian Institute of Architects has said.

The **group**'s president, Melbourne architect Jon Clements, is backing calls for minimum **apartment** design standards to be legislated.

"The general feeling among architects is that it's ridiculous to be forcing architects to produce buildings that don't deliver appropriate quality and amenity standards," he said.

Melbourne City Council's Future Living report, which analysed the design of 25 of the city's new **residential** developments, found poorer quality apartments were more likely to be located in taller apartments.

All 11 of the high-rise **apartment** designs studied were considered either poor or average quality. Common failings included kitchens in hallways, poor storage, lack of ventilation and excessive energy use.

But the report's authors said as long as there was someone willing to rent the **property**, the investors who **buy** 85 per cent of apartments in the municipality were not bothered.

"An owner occupier ... will be more discerning when it comes to layout, access to sunlight, daylight, ventilation and adequate storage," the report said.

"An investor will be less concerned with these elements as long as the **apartment** can be rented."

There are no laws in Victoria on how apartments must be designed, beyond the National Construction Code.

A set of **apartment** design standards is being developed by the the Office of the Victorian Government Architect. Planning Minister Matthew Guy is committed to enforcing them.

"They're being developed to be enforced, not as a deceleration," he told The Saturday Age.

Labor will also support minimum design standards. Opposition planning spokesman Brian Tee said they wanted reforms that would "enhance liveability but not compromise affordability".

Victoria's high cost of construction and the hefty sums paid for blocks of land are among the factors blamed for developers skimping on quality.

Mr Clements said some developers would simply employ another designer if an architect made a stand on quality.

"If there is legislation in place around minimum standards, the developers have to achieve the standards. If you don't [have rules], the architects will be subject to pressure."

But Mr Clements argued it was possible to build quite liveable small apartments, if designed right. And many of the residents of Melbourne's tiniest high-rise units agree, including Peter Truong, who said he is happy paying \$250 a week for his Flinders Street flat.

Earlier this week it was revealed Melbourne is home to developments so dense that they would not pass laws in **Hong Kong** New York and London.

The good, bad and the ugly of Melbourne apartments

POOR design

- ✗ Small and cramped
- ✗ South facing (limited sunlight)
- ✗ Bedrooms without windows
- ✗ Kitchens located in hallways
- ✗ Narrow **hotel**-style designs that limit light
- ✗ Many apartments along a single corridor

GOOD design

- ✓ Plenty of storage
- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Range of sizes and layouts
- ✓ Environmentally friendly
- ✓ Communal space, including for children
- ✓ Wheelchair access Source: Future Living report, City of Melbourne 2013

Source: Future Living report, City of Melbourne 2013

CO melurn : Melbourne City Council

NS garchi : Architecture | gart : Art | gcat : Political/General News | gent : Arts/Entertainment

RE austr : Australia | melb : Melbourne | victor : Victoria (Australia) | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania

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