INQUIRY INTO THE REDEVELOPMENT OF MELBOURNE'S PUBLIC HOUSING TOWERS

Name: Dr David Kelly

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Submission to the inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne's public housing towers

David Kelly, Priya Kunjan & Libby Porter, RMIT University

We acknowledge the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct our work. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders past and present who have cared for Country since time immemorial. We acknowledge the enduring connections of all First Peoples to culture, language, knowledge and Country. We understand and take seriously the role that colonisation has had and continues to play in disrupting First Peoples' ability to be at home on their sovereign territories.

There are significant differences between rental tenures in Australia, and Victoria in particular. The following table describes the key differences between the three main rental tenures: private, community and public. More information can be found here: https://rahu.org.au/public-housing/

	Private Housing	Community Housing	Public Housing
Who owns your home?	A private owner, either an individual or an organisation.	A Community Housing Organisation (CHO), the Victorian Government, or a private owner.	The Victorian Government.
Who manages your tenancy?	The owner or their agent, via a real estate agency.	CHOs, which are private, not-for-profit housing agencies registered with the Victorian Government.	The Department of Families Fairness and Housing or a CHO authorised by the Victorian State Government.
How much rent will you pay?	Up to the discretion of the rental provider.	The Victorian Government caps community housing rents at 30% of a household's income. However, housing costs can increase with the addition of any service charges or other property costs – these are applied at the discretion of the CHO.	Public housing rent is capped at 25% of a household's income, or at market rate if this is lower.
How long can you stay?	Up to the discretion of the rental provider. The rental provider has the right to evict you, but must provide a reason for this.	Up to the discretion of CHO. CHOs have the right to evict you, but this is meant to be a last resort.	Generally long term. It is not as easy for the Government to evict you as it is for a private landlord or CHO.
Who can live here?	Up to the discretion of the rental provider. They are not legally allowed to discriminate based on 'protected characteristics' including race, gender, age, religion, sexuality or ability.	Applicants on the housing wait list who have asked to be considered for just Community or Public *and* Community Housing. Tenant approval is at the discretion of the CHO. They must also not discriminate based on 'protected characteristics'. CHOs may have strict eligibility criteria (e.g. no history of mental illness/criminal record/drug and alcohol use etc.), or rules that tenants must follow to stay in the property (e.g. no smoking, no use of alcohol or other drugs).	Applicants on the housing wait list who have asked to be considered for just Public or Public *and* Community Housing.

(a) the rationale and cost modelling for the decision to demolish and redevelop the 44 high-rise public housing buildings and associated sites ('the plan'), including alternatives to demolition, such as refurbishment and renovation;

Homes Victoria CEO, Simon Newport, described his appointment six months prior to the housing statement as being to facilitate 'the plan' to 'retire and redevelop' the towers, which he noted was commensurate with his extensive public housing renewal experience in NSW First Nations communities. The appointment of the current Home Victoria CEO in July 2023 is directly related to developing and initiating 'the plan' to demolish the 44 towers. According to Newport, multiple options for estate renewal were explored and reported to government, including refurbishment, although these have not been released to the public.

As at March 2025, the cost-modelling for the government decision to demolish and redevelop the 44 public housing towers has not been disclosed. Public reporting and court proceedings have identified at least 142 non-disclosed documents believed to relate to the rationale and cost modelling of the plan. Executive privilege has been claimed over these documents on two occasions, first in response to a Legislative Council resolution for the production of documents in Parliament (June 2024), and again in the Supreme Court in response to a call for disclosure made by the plaintiff in the public housing class action (February 2025).[1]

There is likely to be historically significant targets and estimates of economic value described in these documents, and the likely beneficiaries of future economic value which can only be brought about by demolition. Production of these documents is essential to fully contextualise the assumed value for money, in relation to the known and currently unfolding impacts to public housing tenants, their communities and neighbourhoods, *and* housing infrastructure itself.

The cost to demolish the first tranche of five public housing buildings is at least $100m. The redevelopment with advance a Ground Lease Model (GLM) that has also been used on public housing estates undergoing redevelopment, such as Barak Beacon Boulevard, Port Melbourne. Our analysis of the first two iterations of the GLM deployed at seven (7) different public housing estates, found that the total public expenditure through direct capital grants and subsidies of over $2b, represents a cost of $6.3m per social housing

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[1] In a ruling delivered on 28 February 2025, Justice Keogh upheld the government's claim of executive privilege over the documents, but noted that evidence presented by departmental officials indicated the materials included briefings, cabinet submissions, and internal assessments related to the rationale and cost implications of the redevelopment proposal. See: Supreme Court of Victoria, Keogh J, Ruling of 28 February 2025, https://www.supremecourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-02/Ruling%20of%20Keogh%20J%20%2810%20February%202025%29_1.pdf

dwelling added to redeveloped sites. Direct provision by government would represent a reduction of this cost by orders of magnitude.

Analysis by Liam Davies at RMIT University has calculated the systemic impact of redevelopment on addressing the housing crisis, using a 'payback' metric to assess how long it takes for the dwelling capacity lost through demolition to be restored. Davies modelling (table below) shows that renewal projects vary widely in their payback periods depending on how redevelopment is staged and delivered. For example, Carlton Estate's public housing was delivered relatively early in the redevelopment cycle, even though the broader precinct was not completed until over a decade later. This staged delivery led to a 15-year payback period. In contrast, at Walker Street in Northcote, all dwellings appear to be coming online simultaneously, producing a longer 28-year payback. The Red Brick towers (141 Nicholson Street and 20 Elgin Street, Carlton) exhibit the longest delay: dwellings were vacated by December 2022 but have yet to be demolished, contributing to a projected 32-year payback period. These variations suggest that carefully staged renewal, especially projects that prioritise early delivery of public housing, can reduce the time taken to recoup dwelling capacity and thus better serve system-wide housing need.

What this analysis underscores is that demolition-based renewal carries long delays before lost capacity is replaced, with payback periods spanning 15 to 32 years depending on staging and delivery models. These delays should be considered a systems-level cost, measured in years of unmet housing need, when evaluating the rationale for demolishing the 44 public housing towers under 'the plan'. By contrast, renewal strategies that incorporate refurbishment, retrofitting, or in-situ upgrades are likely to avoid these extended delays entirely. They allow for continued occupation and incremental delivery, reducing the overall time tenants spend in displacement while preserving community integrity and system capacity. This is particularly important in a context of chronic housing shortage, where each year of delay further deepens crisis conditions.

	Carlton Estate Redevelopment	Redbrick - Tower redevelopment	Walker Street - PHRP
Start year	2008	2023	2020
Dwellings before	192	196	87
Dwellings after	246	231	106
Redevelopment complete year	1-Jan-14	1-Jan-28	1-Jun-25
Repay year	1-Jan-23	1-Jan-55	1-Jan-48
Payback years	**15**	**32**	**28**

Alternative proposals

A comparative analysis of demolition versus refurbishment at the Flemington Estate demonstrates that a retain-repair-reinvest (RRR) approach offers significant financial, social, and environmental advantages over the current plan[2]. The external relocation cost alone under the plan is estimated at $227.7 million, while under RRR, minimal costs are anticipated due to in-place staging. Similarly, health and wellbeing costs and educational disruption costs, calculated at $2.1 million and $2.5 million respectively for the plan, are avoided entirely under the RRR model by maintaining resident continuity.

In terms of construction, the estimated plan costs total $650.7 million (approximately $501k per unit), while refurbishment and infill under RRR totals $519.4 million (around $400k per unit), representing a $131.3 million saving. Importantly, the RRR model achieves the same housing yield target of 1,297 dwellings, while retaining the original 720 public housing units. The model also meets Homes Victoria's objectives (energy efficiency, accessibility, lift access) and reduces embodied carbon emissions by 55%, making it a far more sustainable option.

When aggregated, the total cost of the plan including demolition, relocation, construction, and social impact, is $883 million, while the RRR model is costed at $519 million, producing an overall saving of $363.6 million. These findings are directly relevant to the proposed redevelopment of the 44 towers, where similar benefits in cost, carbon, and community continuity could be realised through a retrofit-first approach.

Full project findings for the *Retain, Repair, Reinvest: Flemington Estate* feasibility study can be found here: https://www.office.org.au/project/retain-repair-reinvest-flemington-estate/

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[2] https://office.org.au/api/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Retain-Repair-Reinvest-Flemington-Estate_OFFICE_Full-Report.pdf

(b) the impact of the plan, including the compulsory relocation and displacement of public housing residents on the future net availability of public community housing and the existing decanting plans and the department estimates on the number of people who will permanently leave the area being developed;

This section responds to ToR(b), which frames the impact of the plan in terms of net housing availability, decanting logistics, and the number of residents expected to permanently leave. Notably, the Terms of Reference make no substantive mention of the impact of the plan on residents themselves—their health, wellbeing, social connections, or right to remain. The only proxy for resident experience appears in the form of departure estimates and, elsewhere, a vague reference to the "nature of consultation" [ToR c(i)]. This absence is telling. In what follows, we centre the impact of the plan on those who are being displaced, with particular attention to the likelihood of return and the long-term effects of forced relocation.

Public housing communities

The international evidence shows that people who experience structural social marginalisation are more likely to bear a much greater health, social and economic burden of displacement. The demographic profile of public housing residents in Victoria shows significant marginalisation reflected in lower income and barriers to healthcare, with a proportion of people requiring additional support/resources in relation to disability and caring responsibilities. These are demonstrated in the following profile, drawn from ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021:

- The age of the primary tenant is older with 59% of main tenants aged over 55 and 15% aged over 75
- 100% of households are classified as 'low income' which means they are in the bottom 40% of equivalised household income
- 80% of households have government payment as source of income mostly disability pension (27.3%) and the age pension (23.7%)
- 6.2% of households are Indigenous
- 36.5% of households have at least one person living with disability

This means that the decanting plans are likely to have substantial, cascading burdens on individuals and families rippling out to community-wide impacts. Large estates, particularly high-rise towers, are spatially distinct neighbourhoods with a high level of informal types of social bonds that form over time. Also, many residents in Victoria have lived in public housing for a long time, nearly half of public housing households have lived in public housing for more than 10 years. Approximately 60% of residents at the Towers in

question have lived there for more than six years (State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, 2022a, 2022b).

For people experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage and living in close proximity for a long time, caring for each other and providing social and physical support informally is essential to making life in difficult circumstances work. Studies with public housing residents facing redevelopment in Sydney found that "social connections among public housing tenants in the area were unusually strong and enduring" (Morris, 2022) see also (Meegan and Mitchell, 2001; Morris, 2017a; Ruming and Melo Zurita, 2020). This sense of community stretches across and between public housing estates, and indeed is a notable phenomenon among public housing residents generally where people feel a strong sense of bond just by identifying as a public housing resident

The international evidence, and research conducted in Melbourne specifically, demonstrates that public housing estates are communities, with systems of mutual aid, community support, thick social bonds and community-organised services. Indeed, these are common characteristics of community, which can fracture in a context of residualising resource provision, over-policing of dwelling places and the exclusion of that community from participating in the political process of determining its future.

International evidence on displacement

International research spanning decades has established that displacement, defined as forced relocation under conditions outside a household's control (Marcuse, 1986), has serious and enduring impacts, particularly for people already experiencing marginalisation. These harms manifest in declining health, wellbeing, livelihood, education, and social connection. One of the most profound impacts is the grief that follows the loss of home, a trauma documented since the earliest studies of urban renewal (Fried, 1966; Fullilove, 2004; Hartman & Robinson, 2003). Concepts like *domicide*, which is the destruction of home and place, and *placelessness* describe how renewal strips people of rootedness and belonging (Porteous & Smith, 2001; Liu, 2013; Zhang, 2017). Emotional distress, including depression, anxiety, and loneliness, are consistently reported by those watching their homes demolished or being removed from longstanding social networks (Arthurson et al., 2016; Morris, 2017a; Porter et al., 2023; Wynne & Rogers, 2020).

Despite its framing as a tool for social improvement, urban renewal rarely delivers better outcomes for the people it displaces. Even when rehousing results in improved physical conditions, the process of displacement itself produces harm. In one study, a tenant described the experience as being caught in a "blind death machine" (Porter et al., 2023).

Across multiple studies, displaced residents report increased mental and physical health problems, and there is documented evidence of self-harm, suicide, and death following forced relocation (Fried, 1966; Fullilove, 2004; Slater, 2013; Ferreri, 2020; Watt, 2021). Importantly, these harms often begin well before relocation occurs. The uncertainty, lack of control, and perceived indifference from authorities generate a sense of invisibility and dehumanisation (Morris, 2019; Porter et al., 2023). Even those who remain in place can experience *emplaced displacement*, a profound alienation from their changing neighbourhood (Wynne & Rogers, 2020; Ruming & Melo Zurita, 2020; Pull & Richard, 2021).

The relocation process itself is also harmful. Residents often describe feeling rushed, pressured, and overwhelmed, especially those with specific needs related to disability, family size, or health (Porter et al., 2023). Many accept the first available option out of fear, stress, or a ticking-clock dynamic well documented in the literature (Smith, 2002; GoWell, 2011; Kleinhans, 2003). Others spend months living on demolition sites, with measurable health consequences. The harms extend well beyond the moment of the move. Research from Kensington and Carlton found return rates between 14-21%, undermining the myth of "choice" or the promise of return (Shaw et al., 2013). Children, in particular, suffer lasting developmental consequences from displacement, including psychological distress, disrupted education, and increased family tension (Bartlett, 2022; Cutts et al., 2022; Hock et al., 2023). These effects are compounded by longer commutes, social isolation, and, in some cases, increased exposure to family violence (COHRE, 2006). Displacement, in short, creates conditions for cascading harm—not only for the individual, but for whole communities.

Impact of displacement under this plan

Relocation under this plan will most likely produce a wide geographic dispersal of tenants. Based on what we know from previous renewal programs and current distribution of available stock, the result will be fractured communities and severed social bonds, many of them irreparably. Long-established ties of interdependence, the kind that form quietly over years, will be disrupted. The social costs of that rupture are already well-documented. Morris (2019), writing on Millers Point, found that high levels of public transport dependency, long tenancy, and close spatial proximity fostered strong community bonds described by tenants as their primary safety net (Morris, 2017). This is what Morris and other housing researchers term *communicide*, the elimination of community itself (see also Ruming et al., 2004; Ruming & Melo Zurita, 2020). These dynamics repeat wherever large-scale relocation occurs. In complex processes like those proposed here, even before physical moves happen, the slow trickle of information and unequal treatment by relocation officers can seed distrust and division. The impact of this is compounded in

communities already navigating everyday exclusions due poverty, marginalisation and disenfranchisement (Porter et al., 2023).

Beyond the social bonds, displacement disrupts daily survival systems: service access, mobility patterns, schooling routines, local support infrastructure. For people with living with disability, managing chronic health conditions, raising kids on low income, or facing racism, rebuilding those systems is a heavy and harmful burden. It is particularly acute for those who spend more time at home, such as older residents, people with constrained mobility, and primary caregivers. What gets described as a "move" in bureaucratic language is, for these residents, a dislocation from the very conditions that make life manageable. The loss of the immediate locality, the daily ease of getting to a familiar GP, running into a neighbour, walking to school or the chemist—these small routines are often lifelines. Their removal registers as harm.

Displacement will also reorganise Melbourne's social geography along even sharper lines of inequality. Residents will be pushed to outer suburban or regional areas with fewer services, weaker transport access, and already stretched infrastructure. This is classic *locational disadvantage* (Maher, 1994): the uneven spatial distribution of opportunity. In Melbourne, the pattern is well known in the outer growth corridors that lack adequate transport, have fewer green spaces, and more dispersed health and education services (Burke & Hulse, 2015; Fincher & Iveson, 2008). Displacement doesn't just individualise harm, it deepens structural inequality that actively reshapes the material and social geography of the city. The relocation of tenants will erode the social diversity of the inner city, despite stated goals to the contrary. Research from the Centre for Urban Research shows that public housing estates currently anchor social mix at the neighbourhood scale (Capp et al., 2022). The Towers are embedded in well-connected areas, precisely what makes them irreplaceable. Removing tenants and sending them further out only entrenches spatial inequality. That outcome directly contradicts the stated aims of Victoria's Housing Statement, which claims to promote socially mixed and diverse neighbourhoods.

(c) the findings and adequacy of consultations with: i) public housing tower residents and their representatives; ii) relevant local stakeholders, such as health, community and education service providers, residents and councils; ii) state and federal government departments and agencies;

Participation in urban governance

The Empowered Renter Decision-Making Model (ERDMM) and the accompanying Paving the Way Framework (PTWF) are consultation plans for the public housing communities of North Melbourne and Flemington, set up by DFFH in 2021 in response to hard lockdown in 2020 that breached the human rights of tenants there.[3] These frameworks propose a shift in how decisions affecting tenants are made, however, uptake has been modest. In North Melbourne and Flemington, only 70 participants were engaged across all estates—around 2% of the population. Scaling this model to meaningfully engage those most excluded, disenfranchised, or mistrustful requires a serious reckoning with both structure and practice. Participation must move beyond consultation-as-performance to become something structurally embedded, especially for communities that have long been ignored or actively harmed by housing authorities.

The literature on participation in urban governance is extensive and critical. While often framed as an inclusive tool, participation is not neutral. Scholars like Cooke and Kothari (2001) have described participatory processes as a "new tyranny" with rituals of inclusion that legitimise predetermined outcomes, often entrenching disempowerment. Evidence shows that unless participation is underpinned by genuine shifts in power and governance design, it tends to reproduce the very hierarchies it claims to dismantle (Fainstein, 2010; Goh, 2023; Lees, 2004; Mitchell, 2003). Most government-led participatory schemes fall short because they engage only once decisions are already in motion, without challenging the fundamental structures that drive inequality. DeFilippis (2004), writing on community control, found that productive gains came from housing models built and managed by communities themselves, not those designed by external actors offering token participation.

Internationally, evaluations of large-scale participatory programs, such as the UK's New Deal for Communities, reveal the limits of such approaches when they are under-resourced or poorly representative. Studies found that without adequate support, time, and broad community inclusion, participatory efforts can even erode wellbeing in the places they are meant to strengthen (Robinson et al., 2005; Dinham, 2007). Arthurson (2003) likewise noted that neoliberal logics of efficiency and privatisation directly undercut

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[3] https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/our-impact/news/public-housing-tower-lockdown/

participatory ideals. In this context, a renter-led process resourced by the current landlord (DFFH in its ERDMM, or others), would play a role in reducing harms. While it cannot eliminate the trauma of forced relocation itself, it may provide resources to the damage caused by opaque processes and total exclusion. That is, even within a fundamentally harmful process, the possibility exists to reduce some of its worst impacts.

Consultation with community

Primary ethnographic data gathered in resident consultation meetings immediately after the announcement of the Housing Statement, reveal a consultation process marked by confusion, mistrust, and a lack of meaningful engagement. Across multiple sites including North Melbourne, Carlton, and Flemington, tenants repeatedly raised concerns about the absence of timely information, unclear timelines, and the failure to explain critical differences between public and community housing. Government representatives relied on vague reassurances ("we hope" "we'll work with you individually") while declining to offer substantive answers to questions about relocation, housing availability, or tenancy rights. Meetings were described as performative, offering little in the way of actual detail. In some cases, residents only learned about the redevelopment plans through media reports or pamphlets shoved under their doors. Others were asked to begin relocation processes, signing paperwork and providing personal details, without interpreter support or any clear explanation of what the documents entailed.

Insights also highlight how the structure of these consultations deepened tenants' sense of disempowerment. The reliance on one-on-one engagement, rather than collective forums, fragmented tenant voices and precluded any shared negotiation. Despite claims of participation, the process was experienced by residents as top-down and extractive. Department staff observed stationed in front of lifts, approached tenants at random with relocation paperwork, often without interpreters present, and without translated materials available. In Carlton, Arabic-speaking residents were left without language support. The strategy seemed designed to move people quickly and quietly through individualised channels rather than enabling a community-led process. This was particularly troubling for older, culturally and linguistically diverse tenants, who remained trusting of government but lacked access to critical information about what was happening—and what rights they might be giving up. In this context, observations describe a consultation process not only ill-conceived, but actively harmful in its failure to respect residents' agency, language needs, and right to remain informed.

As per the testimony of Simon Newport (Feb 2025) given in the Supreme Court of Victoria, no consultation with public housing tenants was undertaken by government or its sector

partners. Tenants of high-rise towers were notified of their displacement via news media. For tenants in tranche one sites, this announcement was followed soon after by an introduction to their relocations officer. In practice, the relocation process initiates first contact with residents and provides the first opportunity to seek clarification about the process. Tenants are not afforded the opportunity to participate prior to their relocation and as such have not had the opportunity to engage in any consultation about 'the plan'.

(d) the efficacy of the proposed financial, legal and project delivery models (including the ground lease model) to be used for the plan, versus alternative models to improve and increase the number of public and community homes on the sites in question and in Victoria;

The Ground Lease Model (GLM), now in its second iteration, is central to the Victorian Government's approach to public housing redevelopment and is likely to underpin the delivery model for the 44 towers. GLM1 and GLM2 have both involved long-term leasing of public land to a third party, typically a Community Housing Organisation acting through a Special Purpose Vehicle, for the design, construction, and management of sites comprising both community housing and private dwellings. While the government retains nominal ownership of the land, the 40-year lease period, combined with service payments to the operator, effectively locks public land into quasi-private arrangements for decades.

The Ground Lease Model distinguishes itself from earlier renewal schemes by retaining nominal public ownership of land and introducing a profit-sharing arrangement, allowing the government to present it as progressive and non-privatising. However, the dwellings delivered under this model are community housing—not public housing—with tenancies managed by Community Housing Organisations for the full duration of the 40-year lease.

The financial structure of the model is also significant. Instead of profiting from sales, the Special Purpose Vehicle receives income through social and private rents, rent assistance payments, access to federal finance schemes, and quarterly availability payments from the Victorian Government. While this is framed as a build-to-rent model that could theoretically generate an operating surplus for reinvestment, there is no formal guarantee of that reinvestment or public benefit beyond the lease term.

Moreover, the model's long horizon raises concerns about democratic oversight and the quiet erosion of public accountability. In the four estates currently being redeveloped under GLM2, the justification for demolition rests on the claim that the buildings are no longer "fit for purpose"—yet all were built only 40 years ago and have remained under the maintenance responsibility of the Director of Housing throughout. This raises serious concerns that disinvestment and neglect were deliberate or systemic, creating a policy justification for demolition that could now be extended across the 44 towers, thereby expanding the GLM model at the expense of both public housing stock and tenant security.

A full analysis of the GLM model is attached as an appendix.

(f) how different development and ownership models will be integrated within each site to enhance community integration and achieve a diversity of tenants;

Recent government announcements confirm that the plan will be delivered as mixed-tenure communities, with a majority build-to-rent component, following previous policies on social mix. International and Australian research shows that social mix, as a policy framework, consistently fails to deliver improved outcomes for low-income tenants. Instead, it tends to benefit higher-income households, while producing significant negative effects for those on the lowest incomes—particularly in terms of displacement, social cohesion, and housing stability.[4] Although social mix is typically introduced to reduce poverty concentrations and improve neighbourhood amenity, it is often achieved through the reduction of low-income households and the introduction of higher-income tenures, a process that aligns housing estates demographically with their surrounding suburbs[5] but undermines diversity at the neighbourhood scale.[6]

This form of urban renewal has become standard practice in post-welfare states, despite little consensus on how social mix should be evaluated and a near-total absence of longitudinal studies measuring its outcomes for low-income communities.[7] Existing evaluations focus almost entirely on tenure mix rather than lived experience, failing to assess whether displaced residents benefit from the transformation. The evidence to date does not support claim that proximity to higher-income residents results in population-level improvements for lower-income communities.

Further analysis (attached as appendix) has demonstrated a likely significant reduction in racial, religious and cultural diversity in the suburbs of Flemington and North Melbourne, as a direct result of the tower demolition. Assuming a zero percent return rate and if 'the plan' proceeds as programmed, the following scenarios will occur.

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[4] August, M. (2019). Social mix and the death of public housing. In M. Moos (Ed) A Research Agenda for Housing. London: Edward Elgar Publishing. (pp. 116–130)
Bucerius, S. M., Thompson, S. K., and Berardi, L. (2017). "They're colonizing my neighborhood":(Perceptions of) social mix in Canada. City and Community, 16(4), 486-505.
August, M. (2014). Negotiating social mix in Toronto's first public housing redevelopment: power, space and social control in Don Mount Court. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 38(4), 1160-1180.
[5] Capp, R., Porter, L. and Kelly, D. (under review). Re-scaling social mix: public housing renewal in Melbourne. Journal of Urban Affairs
[6] Kelly, D., and Porter, L. (2019). Understanding the assumptions and impacts of the public housing renewal program. Melbourne: RMIT University. Retrieved from https://cur.org.au/cms/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/understanding-the-assumptions-and-impacts-of-the-phrp-final-report-28-5-19.pdf
[7] Morris, A., Jamieson, M., and Patulny, R. (2012). Is social mixing of tenures a solution for public housing estates. Evidence Base, 1(2012), 1-21.

Flemington as a suburb will lose:

- 81% of people born in Sub-Saharan Africa and 80% of Sub-Saharan ancestry
- 38% of people born in North Africa and 48% of North African ancestry
- 38% of people of North African and Middle Eastern ancestry

North Melbourne as a suburb will lose:

- 61% of people born in Sub-Saharan Africa and 65% of Sub-Saharan ancestry
- 24% of people born in North Africa and 33% of North African ancestry
- 21% of people of North African and Middle Eastern ancestry

(g) the likely impacts of the plan on: (i) the number of bedrooms currently at each location versus the proposed number of new bedrooms per site; (ii) the number of public and community housing homes at each location and how remaining public land will be used; (iii) the Victorian Housing Register and homelessness while the plan is being delivered; (iv) the future of public housing in Victoria;

Across existing renewal projects, publicly available information suggests a net loss of larger apartments and a shift toward smaller dwellings, particularly one- and two-bedroom units. Ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with residents at several sites reveal ongoing struggles to secure three- and four-bedroom homes, especially among larger families, multigenerational households, and those with non-nuclear family structures.

Overcrowding remains a systemic issue, compounded by the failure to design or allocate housing stock that reflects the realities of diverse public housing tenancies. While Homes Victoria claims that bedroom numbers are being maintained or increased, there is no clear, site-by-site accounting of bedroom mix or future need, and certainly no guarantee that redeveloped towers will accommodate the same diversity of household types. The recent fight by residents to secure more bedrooms and retain 100% public housing at 141 Nicholson Street and 20 Elgin Street, Carlton underscores just how uncertain these outcomes remain.

(h) any other related matters.

The process of establishing the public inquiry has been marked by a lack of clarity and poor design, raising serious concerns about accessibility, inclusivity, and procedural fairness. From the outset, the Secretariat has provided limited and inconsistent information about how submissions will be received, with uncertainty around whether non-written formats (e.g. audio or video) will be accepted and how they will be processed. This lack of clarity disproportionately impacts public housing residents, particularly those with low digital literacy or those who primarily speak languages other than English. To date, there has been no public confirmation that adequate resources have been allocated to translate or transcribe submissions from residents in community languages, undermining the capacity for meaningful participation. Further concerns have been raised about the location and timing of hearings, with no indication that these will be staged in ways that prioritise resident accessibility. These shortcomings risk excluding precisely those most affected by the redevelopment and reinforce existing patterns of marginalisation and silencing.

Relocations

In 2017, the DFFH centralised the relocations functions of housing offices by creating a dedicated relocations team to operate across the state as a specialist function. In 2023, the team were interviewed as part of a research project led by two of the authors of this submission (Porter and Kelly) exploring the policies and practices of public housing relocation in Victoria, NSW and Tasmania (Porter et al. 2023). At the time of interview, this team were actively decanting and relocating residents at 141 Nicholson Street, and 20 Elgin Street, Carlton[8]. The following list outlines the relocation policy in Victoria, as understood by the relocations team leading its implementation, at the time of the study:

1. Development of a centralised relocations team and service model
   - team creation: a new dedicated relocations team was formed in 2017, in the wake of the announced redevelopment of 11 public housing estates (about 26 staff, including 23 relocations officers)
   - purpose: replace prior ad hoc local office-led relocation processes with a consistent, state-wide model
   - recruitment criteria: preference for staff with housing system knowledge and a collaborative, renter-respecting ethos
2. Announcement to renters and first contact
   - initial contact point: when projects are officially announced, relocations staff are introduced to renters

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[8] Unknown to the researchers at this time.

- messaging: emphasis that renters will be supported by relocations officers
- door-knocking: staff meet renters face-to-face to explain the process

3. Relationship building and needs assessment
   - interviews: ongoing discussions with renters and their households
   - negotiated model: relocation negotiated with tenant
   - relocation plans: individualised plans developed based on agreed-upon needs (e.g., proximity to school, medical access).

4. Property matching and informal offers
   - property search: staff source properties that meet as many criteria as possible
   - informal property viewings: renters are shown potential properties without formal offers to gauge fit
   - flexible approach: staff provide time, revisit options, and involve family/supports in the decision-making process

5. Transparent negotiation and expectation management
   - realism about stock availability: renters are informed about limitations (e.g., no garages or limited area stock)
   - exploring alternatives: staff often help renters reframe needs (e.g., instead of pool access, proximity to a park)
   - multiple touchpoints: communication continues throughout to adjust and clarify expectations

6. Final offer and relocation
   - formal offer made: once a property is suitable and agreed upon, a formal relocation offer is made
   - support with the move: the team assists with logistics, connections to local housing offices, and follow-up
   - transition period: staff continue to check in with renters for a few months post-move to ensure successful settlement

7. Handling complex needs
   - modifications and specialist housing: in rare cases (e.g., ceiling hoists for care), modifications are arranged
   - support for broader needs: issues beyond housing (e.g., wellbeing, access to services) are addressed or referred

8. Coordination with other teams
   - internal negotiations: relocations staff liaise with local housing offices to secure appropriate stock

- property supply issues: where stock is limited, acquisitions or head leasing were sometimes used — though purchasing was constrained by limited budget.

It is understood, however, that most relocations will not be conducted by this team, and instead will be co-ordinated and implemented by community housing providers, as per government expenditure figures,[9] represented in the table below.

Attachment 3. Proposed Community Service Organisation Funding

Provider Allocations	No. of High-Rise Sites in Catchment	Total
cohealth	23	$910,144.50
Better Health Network	10	$395,715.00
NRCH	5	$197,857.50
MOSS	2	$50,000.00
Salvation Army	1	$50,000.00
Unison	1	$50,000.00
	42	$1,653,717.00

Note: The $2.5 million funding required to support the relocations engagement program consists of $1,653,717 to community service organisations and $846,283 for DFFH workforce capacity.

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[9] https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/49606d/globalassets/tabled-paper-documents/tabled-paper-8310/document-9.pdf

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