



PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA
Legal and Social Issues Committee

MEDIA RELEASE

Public Housing Renewal Program

A parliamentary committee report into the Victorian Government's Public Housing Renewal Program has made 28 recommendations focusing on community consultation, advice to tenants, planning issues and reporting of outcomes.

The [report](#) considers the first stage of the Program: the sale of land at nine public housing estates in Melbourne to developers, who will replace the existing public housing stock with a mixture of public housing and private dwelling.

The Legal and Social Issues Committee confirmed that the number of Victorians applying for public housing is increasing and is for the first time publicly identifying the number of people seeking public housing – rather than just the number of applications.

In March 2018 in Victoria, there were 57,877 adults and 24,622 children seeking public housing through 36,742 applications (another 7,286 applications were from existing public housing tenants who are seeking a transfer to another public housing property). The number of people on the Victorian Housing Register increased by around 1,500 people in the first three months of 2018 alone.

“Community consultation has been flawed and often confusing, and many outcomes remain unclear with a promise that they will be addressed by the procurement process – which is confidential,” said Committee Chair, Margaret Fitzherbert.

“We were very concerned by evidence that tenants were given paperwork to sign in relation to moving from their homes but were not allowed to take them away to obtain independent advice before signing.

“We identified that the paperwork that tenants were asked to sign to relocate didn't reflect the pledge that people would have an absolute right to return to estates when completed. The paperwork has now been changed – apparently due to scrutiny in this Inquiry – but this intervention shouldn't have been necessary.

“It also appears that while the number of public housing dwellings will rise in these developments by at least 10 per cent, the number of bedrooms will decline – meaning less public housing capacity when the developments are finished. Given the tendering process is confidential, we were limited in how much we could test this – but it's clear that many stakeholders reject this approach.”

A number of recommendations are directed to the Department of Health and Human Services and planning issues are also addressed in the report.

“Unless the Program becomes far more transparent than it has been to date, it will be difficult for anyone outside of government to assess whether it is successful in achieving its objectives,” Ms Fitzherbert said. “For this reason, several recommendations focus on reporting of outcomes, such as explaining the rationale for the final public–private build ratio at each site.”

The report is available from the Committee’s [website](#).

Media queries

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