1.0 WHO WE ARE

Hands Off Public Housing is a coalition of progressive forces - groups and individuals - founded to protect and expand public housing in Victoria and to fight against the privatisation of public land and some public housing on 9 public housing Estates identified under the current Victorian government’s Stage 1 Public Housing Renewal Program (PHRP).

HOPH is part of the broad movement growing fast to fightback on this critical and urgent social issue. It includes People Before Profits an alliance founded by 3 local government Councils, Fair Go for Pensioners Coalition, Friends of Public Housing, Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church, Public Housing Defence Network, retired union members, public housing resident action groups, local residents and academics and other individual supporters of public housing.

2.0 HOUSING CRISIS

2.1 AUSTRALIA

There is an affordable housing crisis in Australia and homelessness is on the increase. Fewer households are able to afford a place of their own with 1.3 million people on low incomes in Australia living in housing stress either rental stress or mortgage stress. Jon Faine 774 ABC Morning Program, 23 May 2018.

Renting will become permanent not a temporary housing tenure option for fast growing numbers of Australians including Victorians.

The Victorian rental housing experience is the concern here.

2.2 VICTORIA - PRIVATE RENTAL MARKET

The private rental housing market has failed renters but NOT investors:\footnote{Housing rental stress has reached historically high levels In Victoria}

About

The private rental housing market in Victoria fails to provide affordable and appropriate shelter for tens of thousands of Victorians who will rent throughout their lives.

Some Facts:

- 10 years ago, 30 per cent of rental properties considered affordable
- Now just 5.7 per cent are considered affordable for struggling families
- Less than 1% of private rental properties around metropolitan Melbourne are affordable for single parents and single older women on low incomes
- Only a mere 0.4 per cent of one-bedroom rentals affordable for low-income singles.
- Low-income households are being priced out of the private rental market or paying up to 70% of their incomes in rent.

The Victorian housing system is broken and the current Federal Government has imposed unacceptable conditions on any further funding for public housing in Victoria while encouraging the growth of the community housing sector.

The current Federal Government does not even have a Housing portfolio.

### 3.0 AFFORDABLE PUBLIC HOUSING - VICTORIA

It is estimated that between **75,000 and 100,000 vulnerable low-income households do not have access to affordable housing** and this did not include future unmet demand.²

**About**

In Victoria, public housing is owned and/or managed by government and used to provide long-term affordable accommodation to low-income and disadvantaged households paying no more than 25 per cent of income on rent.

There is no other title for public housing. It is not community housing, it is not social housing it is public housing – a public asset owned by all Victorians.

**Some Facts**

- DHHS manages the state’s 64,663 public housing residential tenancies
- Public housing is home to around 165,000 Victorians through 17 local housing regions across the State.
- Public housing stock declined by 581 dwellings between 2006 and 2016.
- The severe shortage of public housing stock is exacerbated by governments neglect over the years of the expansion required to meet needs.
- 37,000 Victorians are on the public housing waiting list
- Households in private market rentals that would be eligible for public housing remain in rental stress paying up to 70% of their income on rent, or
- 22,772 are homeless.³
- Over 100,000 people seek assistance from specialist homelessness services in Victoria each year.
- In 2015-16, some 275 requests for assistance each day could not be met.

It is estimated that to reach the 4.5 per cent national average for ‘social housing’ – meaning both public housing and community housing – would require up to 3,400 new dwellings each year to 2036.

To increase supply of public housing which is affordable housing for vulnerable Victorians, the Victorian State Government must start by releasing more public land not less and decide to huge public housing-building program at a time of extremely - low interest rates.
4.0 PUBLIC HOUSING RENEWAL PROGRAM (PHRP)

The PHRP is flawed

About
The Victorian Government’s response is outlined in *Homes for Victorians released March 201*. In this document ‘social housing’ is defined as an umbrella term covering both public housing and community housing.

These terms are then used interchangeably along with ‘affordable housing’ and ‘social housing’ also used to mean 70-80 per cent of private market in Government information both written and in delegations which is confusing, misleading and inaccurate.

The PHRP is part of the Government’s reform response in *Homes for Victorians*.

Some Facts
- Handing over development rights of public housing sites to developers.
- Developers need only to build 10% more public housing dwellings than currently on each of the 9 public housing sites identified under the PHRP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 1 - At a public meeting to discuss the PHRP organised by the Boroondara Council it was reported that the net community benefit is the delivery of <strong>only an additional 11 units across the municipality</strong>. Meeting held Wednesday 9 August from 7pm at H A Smith Reserve, Hawthorn, with about 100 people mostly locals in attendance.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developers to replace existing public housing by increasing the supply of smaller one-and two-bedroom ‘social housing’ dwellings with a reduction in larger family units and a substantial decease in public housing bedrooms and therefore people overall.</td>
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<td>Example 2 – At Gronn Place, West Brunswick we have been told that the current forty plus 3-bedroom units will be replaced with only 4 leaving those families unlikely to ever return to this community and neighbourhood</td>
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<td>Increasing and renewing ‘social housing’ dwellings by selling-off public land on those estates to private developers is a short-term economic fix and unsustainable development model through private-public partnerships.</td>
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<td>Developers allowed to cram new apartments on the sites to sell for profit on the private market.</td>
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<td>Sale of public land is shortsighted and once gone it is no longer available for its public purpose, or in fact any public purpose</td>
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<td>Sale of public land for private gain</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘giving-away’ public land for little community benefit - a delivery of a mere additional 10% increase in ‘social housing’ on each estate development model makes little or no inroads into the current public housing waiting list not too mention estimated future unmet demand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of private developers means profits from private housing sales on the estates goes to the developers’ rather than reinvested into expansion of</td>
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public housing to actually make inroads into unmet demand for affordable housing for vulnerable low-income households

- The development model negatively impacts upon income support recipients, especially older retirees, single older women, people with disabilities, unemployed workers, migrants, workers on low-incomes and their families and other disadvantage people causing high levels of stress as tenants are left uncertain about the relocations and returns to future ‘homes’, basis of tenancy and income security, destruction of their Estate communities and disruption to their children’s schooling, use of their local churches, medical centres, recreation centres and access to public transport and employment.
  - Government lack of transparency and accountability hiding behind “commercial-in-confidence”.
  - Government is abandoning its responsibility for public housing and handing it over to private operators.

5.0 COMMUNITY HOUSING SECTOR - ROLE
Growth of the private community housing sector at the expense of public housing with the increasing privatisation of public housing in Victoria.

About
There are 19,000 dwellings owned and/or managed by private community housing agencies providing long and short term accommodation to people in need.4

The growth in this sector over the decade to 2016 was largely “due to state and Commonwealth investment to fund acquisition of community housing”.5

Homes for Victorians clearly outlines the future role of the community housing sector:
- to reduce unmet demand for public housing; increase supply of 1 and 2-bedroom units, and reduce the level of ageing public housing stock.

Some Facts
- Building is now centre stage in these reforms.6
- financial backing for the private community housing sector to construct new dwellings including access to $1 billion capital fund
- $100 million revolving loan facility and up to $1 billion for a loan guarantee program to help housing associations access finance at affordable interest rates
- increasing capacity of the private community housing sector by transferring management of a further 4,000 public housing properties and $3 million to assist private housing agencies establish services and business support system as part of the transfer.

6.0 HOPH CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION
HOPH continues to express bitter disappointment regarding the current PHRP for these reasons outlined above and continues to call for the Victorian Andrews State Government to:

i halt any further implementation of the PHRP until both the final report with recommendations of the public inquiry into PHRH are publicly released and considered by the public and alternative approaches for the PHRP can be considered by the public.
ii revise PHRP to put people before profits and provides more public housing not less, respects neighbourhood character and complies with planning controls.

iii reconsider its ‘affordable housing’ policy position recognizing that public housing is the only affordable housing option for vulnerable Victorians.

iv advocate for public housing with the current Federal Government including the need for a Housing portfolio at cabinet Ministerial level?

v call for an urgent Federal Summit on the housing crisis to develop an alternative policy and program to privatisation.

Endnote

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Citations
3. A common measure for affordable housing (in relation to Area Median Income) means housing costs do not exceed 30% of income paid on rent and 35% paid on mortgage and related costs. https://dldztak330v8c.cloudfront.net/cdn/farfuture/qPbNpVg9a-nESG7FExyi9lKSQnulidht12pqU5eyh1/mtime:1481254086/sites/default/files/docs/Transforming%20Housing%20Dec%202017.pdf.
4. The provision of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is available to tenants currently renting in the private market. Eligible tenants living in community housing also receive CRA but this assistance goes directly to the community housing provider.
5. Statistical data drawn from Justice Connect Homeless Law submission 170 to Public Inquiry into PHRP; Hands Off Public Housing submission 130 to the same Inquiry and the Auditor-General’s June 2017 report.