



MEDIA RELEASE

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Victoria urgently needs more social housing to avoid a post-COVID homelessness spike, and begin rebuilding the economy.

Victoria faces a looming resurgence of rough sleeping unless the Victorian Government immediately delivers long-term social housing options for more than 2,000 Victorians without a home who are staying temporarily in hotels, according to Victoria's housing and homelessness peak bodies.

The warning of a post-COVID homelessness spike comes as the group launches **“Make Social Housing Work” — a new blueprint for Victoria to increase its proportion of social housing to the national average.**

Victoria currently trails the nation in social housing, with just 3.2 per cent of all housing stock identified as public and community housing. The new framework would increase Victoria's social housing share to the national average of 4.5 per cent of all housing stock.

To get there, the housing groups calculate the Victorian Government must commit to creating 6,000 new social housing properties each year for ten years, with at least 300 Aboriginal housing units a year.

In addition to keeping people safe and housed after the COVID pandemic, a social housing construction blitz would provide much needed stimulus to the Victorian economy.

Council to Homeless Persons CEO Jenny Smith says, “We have an opportunity right now to end homelessness for people who were sleeping rough before the pandemic and have now moved into temporary accommodation. If the Victorian Government doesn't urgently deliver more social housing these vulnerable people will have nowhere to go but back to rough sleeping when restrictions ease.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in hundreds of thousands of Victorians living a new reality of unemployment, rent stress, and homelessness.

“Victoria spends less on social housing per person than any other state or territory, and years of underfunding has created a perfect storm for Victorians unable to afford private rental and who find themselves without a home.

CHIA Victoria CEO Lesley Dredge says, “Building and investing in a stronger social housing safety net will protect all Victorians who are struggling in the private market.

“With over 80,000 people already on the social housing waitlist in Victoria, people can be waiting to secure stable housing for years. An additional influx of people who have lost income or their current homes during this pandemic, will only make matters worse if the Government doesn't urgently invest to create more social housing.

VCOSS CEO Emma King says, “These two thousand people in hotels are just the tip of the iceberg.”

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The Housing Peaks Alliance comprises: Aboriginal Housing Victoria, the Community Housing Industry Association (Victoria), the Council to Homeless Persons, Domestic Violence Victoria, Justice Connect, Tenants Victoria, the Victorian Public Tenants' Association and the Victorian Council of Social Service.



Unless we move fast to build more social housing, tens of thousands of Victorians risk being homeless again, or thrust into homelessness for the first time.

“Social housing is a smart investment. It saves lives, saves jobs and saves money in the long-run,” Ms King said.

The Housing Peaks Alliance is calling on Victorian Government to develop a 10-year social housing plan. This will not only address the backlog of housing infrastructure and keep up with population growth but demonstrate a commitment to a stronger, fairer Victoria for future generations.

You can view the full framework [here](#)

Quotes from Housing Peaks Alliance spokespeople

Aboriginal Housing Victoria CEO, Darren Smith

“Ten per cent of all homelessness service users in Victoria are Aboriginal, but we are less than one per cent of the Victorian population. Investing in at least 300 community-controlled social housing properties a year for a decade, will show a genuine commitment to achieve better housing outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Now, more than ever, we need to make sure that everyone in our community is protected and housed as we deal with the pandemic.”

Tenants Victoria CEO, Jennifer Beveridge

“The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how vulnerable renters in the private rental market can be - every day of this crisis, we’ve heard stories of distress from tenants who’ve lost their jobs. Across generations, people have told us at Tenants Victoria that they fear they are at greater risk of homelessness because they can’t afford to pay their bills, including housing costs. Providing more social housing must be an important part of the solution for the challenge of providing affordable housing for all in our community. “

Victorian Public Tenants’ Association CEO, Mark Feenane

“People in desperate need can wait ten years or more to access public housing. Victoria must build public housing as a priority, so people can live with dignity, in a decent, affordable home.”

Justice Connect CEO, Chris Povey

“Every day, we see vulnerable Victorians on the brink of homelessness or without a home because they simply can’t afford the rent. If the Victorian Government builds more social housing, people can exit homelessness for good.”

Domestic Violence Victoria Acting CEO, Alison MacDonald

“Family violence is the most common reason women and children experience homelessness, and they often return to violent homes because they cannot find alternative long-term, secure and affordable housing. More social housing means more women and children will be able to have a safe place to live, free from violence and fear.”

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