

Australia: A socialist perspective to fight the destruction of public housing

Taylor Hernan, SEP candidate for the Senate in Victoria
10 April 2025

As one of the Socialist Equality Party's candidates in the 2025 federal election, I am proud to extend the warmest solidarity with those public housing residents who recently helped form a Neighbourhood Action Committee in Melbourne to oppose the planned demolition of 44 towers.

The stand taken against the state Labor government's housing privatisation drive provides an important lead for public housing residents throughout Australia, as well as internationally. It is imperative that the entire working class—the only social force that can stop this wrecking operation—now intervenes in defence of the residents.

Last weekend I participated in an important meeting of the Neighbourhood Action Committee (NAC). I spoke with courageous residents of the first towers that are threatened with demolition. Despite intimidation and a lying disinformation campaign waged by the Victorian Labor government's agency, Homes Victoria, these residents have refused eviction as they want to save their homes and their communities.

Every effort is being made to present the housing towers sell-off to corporate developers as a done deal. Authorities have already forced some residents of the first five towers targeted for demolition to relocate, many to outer suburbs where residents have no family or cultural connections.

Communities are being smashed up that have supported refugees from countries such as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Vietnam, South Sudan, and Somalia, as well as single parents and others among the most disadvantaged in society. Children recovering from war-torn childhoods will be forced to move schools. Vegetable gardens, playgrounds and community groups will be destroyed.

We met an Eritrean teacher who teaches English to residents of the North Melbourne estate to assist them gain employment. They have been told by Homes Victoria they have to vacate by September, with no offer of an alternative space.

statement published on MarchIn9 calling for the formation of neighbourhood and workplace committees to fight the public housing tower demolitions, the Socialist Equality Party explained:

The Victorian state Labor government's planned destruction and effective privatisation of 44 public housing towers is a major attack on the most vulnerable sections of society and on the entire working class. If this assault is not defeated, some 10,000 residents will be displaced from their homes, public housing will be on its deathbed and the housing crisis afflicting all working people will deepen.

Homes Victoria CEO Simon Newport said that renovating the towers would be like putting "lipstick on a pig." Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan has likewise claimed that they are unfit for habitation.

These are bare-faced lies. An independent report prepared by OFFICE Architects titled "Retain Repair Reinvest" has detailed how the towers could be renovated to a high standard and new infill apartments built on the estates at a lower cost.

The real agenda being hidden from the public is the Victorian government's aim of ridding itself of public housing and handing hundreds of millions of dollars in profit to the property developers and financial institutions that the Labor Party represents.

We are in an election campaign featuring a litany of phoney promises from the major parties on the cost-of-living crisis. Homelessness and housing unaffordability are at an all-time high and yet state and federal governments alike are demolishing and privatising public housing across the country. In New South Wales, to take

just one example, the Minns Labor government is planning to demolish Sydney's largest public housing estate in Waterloo and replace it with private and social housing.

In the federal election campaign, the Socialist Equality Party advances the only means of addressing the long-developing housing crisis. This is a socialist program, directed to overturning the power of the banks, property developers and landlords that are responsible for a housing "market" that has plunged countless people into poverty, rent- and mortgage-stress, and homelessness.

Secure, high quality, and affordable housing ought to be a basic social right for all. But this right will never be granted by the capitalist class and its political hirelings in parliament—it must be fought for!

Ample resources exist to provide public housing for all who need it. These resources, however, are hoarded by the ultra-wealthy oligarchy at the top of society. Governments of all stripes, Labor and Liberal, have committed hundreds of billions of dollars to nuclear submarines and other instruments of war that are being readied ahead of the planned US-led attack on China, and which have already been directed to imperialist conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

An internationalist and socialist perspective is not some far off ideal, but rather the only practical program for the working class today. A workers government will liberate the productive forces of society, organise economic life not on the basis of maximising profit but rather satisfying social need, and oversee a massive redistribution of wealth to workers, youth and the oppressed.

This is why the SEP explained, in its statement calling for the formation of the NAC, that it would need to be "independent of all pro-business parties, including the Greens and the so-called 'left' groups like Victorian Socialists and Socialist Alliance, which falsely claim that Labor can be pressured to reverse course."

The Greens have sought to channel opposition to the public housing demolitions behind parliament and the court system. They have said nothing about the towers' demolition through their federal election campaign, which is centrally aimed at presenting themselves as a reliable coalition partner for the Labor Party in the event of a hung parliament.

A recent legal case backed by the Greens was dismissed by a judge, effectively on the grounds that the residents' right to a home is trumped by the rights of home buyers and investors who will purchase the newly privatised apartments. In the court hearings, Homes Victoria and the

Victorian Labor government refused to divulge the real reasons they are demolishing the towers. The judge blocked the residents' request to make public the documents used to justify the demolition of their homes. At every step, the government and its backers have lied to residents to cover up the fact that this is all about enriching their corporate backers and reducing the state's ballooning debt.

The NAC has made an important start. Residents and campaigners have organised actions at the local mosque, supermarket and the building site adjacent to the Flemington estate, where 300 construction workers are building more so-called social housing units.

The turn to the working class must be deepened, with NAC delegations organised to speak with other building workers, factory workers, healthcare workers, teachers and educators, transport and other public sector workers, as well as young people in their workplaces, schools, and universities.

The fight of the public housing towers residents must advance as the fight of the entire working class! This will only develop independently of, and in opposition to, the trade union bureaucracies that are tied by a thousand strings to the Labor Party, the property developers, and finance capital. Not a single union bureaucrat has said a word about the towers' destruction, while the CFMEU apparatus has rushed to secure coverage over the regressive construction projects.

The Socialist Equality Party pledges every assistance in developing the work of the NAC. I strongly encourage public housing residents and supporters to also become active in our election campaign—read and help distribute our statement, join our campaigns in working class communities, financially support our work. And above all, give serious consideration to joining the SEP and taking your place in our fight to build it as the new mass party of the working class.

Authorised by Cheryl Crisp for the Socialist Equality Party, Level 1/457-459 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010, Australia.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact