

Australian public housing residents speak out against Labor demolition plan

Our reporters
25 July 2025

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) has stepped up its campaign against the Victorian Labor government's plan to demolish 44 public housing towers across Melbourne, ahead of an important public meeting being held tomorrow.

The planned destruction will displace around 10,000 people, among the most vulnerable layers of the working class. Labor's agenda is being driven by the profit interests of property developers and the banks, and represents the largest destruction of public housing in Australian history.

Preparatory work for the demolition of the towers is continuing in North Melbourne and Flemington. Yesterday, work crews were due to take soil samples with a large drill in the car park between the Flemington towers, but this was interrupted by a protest of around 50 people. Some were residents, others members of the Greens and housing activist groups. A large police presence was clearly aimed at intimidating public housing residents, and one man was arrested and charged after he locked himself to the drilling machine.

The protest included Greens member of parliament Gabrielle de Vietri, who has postured as an opponent of the demolition plan while asserting that it is merely a product of the government's "botched decision-making." Such statements serve to conceal the real agenda behind Labor's housing policies, which are part of a broader profit-driven assault on the entire working class. The Greens are striving to divert widespread opposition to the towers' demolition into symbolic protests and toothless parliamentary appeals.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on residents and workers to form rank-and-file committees, independent of the trade union apparatuses and the capitalist parliamentary parties, to stop the destruction. The SEP and Neighbourhood Action Committee's public meeting tomorrow will provide an important opportunity to discuss this socialist and internationalist perspective.

Robert, a public housing resident in Flemington, told the *World Socialist Web Site*: "Many of the new apartments that are being built will be called 'affordable' homes—they are dearer than social housing, so they are not affordable. I think

that the 'affordable' homes will have a grace period where they keep the rents low for a while—to get people to move in and then the rent will be increased later. Homes Victoria are always lying, so I wouldn't be surprised."

He continued: "The report that the government based its decision on to demolish the towers hasn't been given to the public. There must be something there, given that the government wants to hide the documents—the report probably doesn't justify their case."

"The flats in Carlton are now empty and have scaffolding all around the building already. Here there are still residents in both the Flemington towers. Are they going to get the sheriff to get them out? I'm thinking that is what might happen. The building workers should help, but they have been told the same story as everyone else—that the buildings are old, the new ones will be better, everybody will be happy.

"It is the media as well—they want everybody moved to the outer suburbs, and inner Melbourne only for the wealthy. It shouldn't be like that. You need a mixture of everyday people. But the land is valuable, and the state is broke. They want rents of \$500-\$600 a week from residents—otherwise it is 40 kilometres, 50 kilometres out of the city. And good luck, then you're stuck, with even more in poverty. It is all about big business—profit over people."

Zainab has been living in the public housing towers for 20 years. She explained that she has been told she has to vacate by September, but has not been offered appropriate alternative housing.

"One of the places was a walk-up location on the third floor, with no lift," she said. "I can't do that as I have asthma, so for medical reasons I can't accept that. Another place offered was in Essendon, and that is too far away from my workplace. We are being offered 'community,' not public housing, with a lease of just three years. So after that I would have to move again."

The Socialist Equality Party held a speak out in Flemington last Saturday. **Jackson**, a 26-year-old public servant, explained that he opposed the demolition of the

towers and was keen to attend tomorrow's public meeting organised by the SEP and the Neighbourhood Action Committee.

He said: "I think the demolitions are unfair and very upsetting. There seems to be huge hypocrisy by the government. I have lived in this area for about three years and I definitely think the towers should stay. We need more public housing not less. The Labor government keeps talking about how we need more housing but in fact they are pulling them down. The lies are typical of them."

Also at the speak out, **Lady**, who works in Flemington, spoke with SEP campaigner and former Senate candidate Taylor Hernan.

She said: "I think the demolition plan is very bad for not only the environment but also the innocent people living there. It's taking away their housing, and some of them might end up homeless, because they depend on this housing to be able to go to work and do things like take their kids to school. I know that the people in those houses really depend on this area, because there's job opportunities here. If they're not able to be in this area, I'm not sure where they'll go."

Asked why she thought the Labor government was tearing down the towers, Lady replied, "I think it's for money. That's it—it's just the money. Greed."

Peter, a welfare worker, denounced the government's efforts to force residents to leave their homes: "I think it's almost psychological warfare." Speaking on the forces behind the demolitions of the towers, he said, "They own the Monopoly board. So the games are much bigger than what I think people are realising."

Peter supported the public meeting organised by the Neighbourhood Action Committee: "The point is to bring people together to realise a basic truth—that these people who are considered to be powerful are only powerful because of the mechanisms that they use."

John, an IT worker, has joined the Neighbourhood Action Committee and participated in several campaigns at the public housing towers.

He spoke of his discussions with residents: "They desire to stay in these houses that they are living in, and they don't want to move. They have raised concerns about the neighbourhoods that they are being asked to move into, the size of the homes, and they have expressed that they have had to throw away furniture and other belongings. Overwhelmingly, I sense that this is a group of people whose very existence is political, in that they have consistently been used as political scapegoats, as politically expendable. Now they are reaching a point where the most common question I hear is, 'yes, we want to fight but what can we do?'"

John continued: "The Victorian government is pursuing this policy as part of a broad range of austerity measures. However, this is not something unique to the state of Victoria or even federally. All the governments in Australia, and those across the world, are pursuing austerity measures that are targeting social programs such as public housing."

"The decision to demolish the towers and redevelop them into private developments is purely a financial decision for the Victorian government to save money on the maintenance of the properties and offload them onto private developers, who will profit. The redeveloped social housing will leave vulnerable residents with higher rents and higher expenses, alongside a large number of purely private housing units."

John spoke on the importance of the working class intervening in defence of public housing residents: "It is through the working class and their actions that this redevelopment of the public housing will happen or not. And it's not just this demolition, but the very existence of public housing that is at stake—it is only through the organisation of the working class that this can be defended."

The Socialist Equality Party is holding a public meeting, in Melbourne and online, to discuss how to take forward the struggle against the Victorian Labor government's plan to demolish 44 public housing towers. It is titled: "Ban Labor's demolition of Melbourne's public housing towers! Fight for a socialist housing program!"

Register today to attend!

WHEN: 3:00 p.m., Sunday 27 July

WHERE: Supper Room, Kensington Town Hall, 30-34 Bellair Street, Kensington VIC 3031

Or join online on Zoom.



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