

# Australia: Meeting of teachers opposes demolition of Melbourne public housing towers

**Our reporters****25 September 2025**

On September 11, members of the Neighbourhood Action Committee (NAC), formed to fight the demolition of 44 public housing towers in Melbourne, spoke at a meeting of teachers at Footscray High School. The school is in an adjacent suburb to three of the five towers facing immediate demolition in Flemington and North Melbourne.

The Victorian Labor government is carrying out the demolition as part of a broader austerity offensive to force workers to pay for the state budget deficit. The demolitions are a class-war measure, aimed at driving low-income workers and other vulnerable people out of the inner-city suburbs, with the valuable land to be turned over to private developers.

The residents remaining in the three towers near the school have been subjected to increasing intimidation from government agency Homes Victoria in order to force them to move.

Residents reported to the NAC receiving letters from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, threatening that the next offer of relocation "will be the second and final offer as a Priority Access transfer." The letters state that refusal of this final offer may mean removal to the so-called "Register of Intent," which would bar those impacted from other public and social housing.

After the Footscray educators extended an invitation to the NAC, two residents agreed to speak to the meeting to reveal the truth behind the Labor government's lies that residents are happy to move, and to appeal for teachers' support.

At the meeting, attended by about 15 teachers, Margaret Rees, a member of the NAC and of the Socialist Equality Party, said the committee was formed to enable residents to link up and fight the demolition.

In introducing the resident to the meeting, Rees noted that those evicted to make way for the demolition were "in some cases being offered accommodation in far flung suburbs, or with only two years' tenure."

The resident spoke strongly about the close community ties in the towers now decimated by the Labor government demolition operation. She said, "We have all been like a family, every neighbour would help the others. If we needed food, our neighbour would open the door to give it to us. But now no-one is there."

She explained the effect of the Homes Victoria intimidation to force them to move: "Our life is in limbo. We don't know where we are going to end up. We all have anxiety, I can't sleep at night, we have high blood pressure and separation anxiety."

She spoke about families being split up and about "my grandchildren having so many absences and not going to school." She said that she was speaking to the teachers "because we need your help. Please pass on our information to other people. The government doesn't care for us. They say everything is OK. They only want money."

Her speech received a warm response with loud applause. One teacher then spoke and pointed out the connection between the attack on the towers by the Labor government and the cutting of billions of dollars from public education. "We are facing the same government which is attacking both of us," they said.

Another teacher added that she knew residents at the South Melbourne towers who said the government is refusing to carry out maintenance in order to run them down for demolition.

Will Marshall, a member of the NAC and of the Socialist Equality Party, then moved a motion of support that was seconded by a colleague from his campus.

Marshall said that the demolition plan was part of the same agenda as massive cuts to public service jobs. He spoke about students' lives being disrupted. He also related that independent architects had put forward the alternative option of the refurbishment of the towers. This was rejected by the Labor government, which also refused to release the documents that were the basis of the decision to demolish.

The motion stated that "This meeting of Footscray High teachers and education support staff opposes the state Labor government's decision to demolish 44 public housing towers, stripping thousands of families of secure housing and handing the land to private developers for profit.

"This policy is a direct attack on the most vulnerable sections of the working class—immigrants, refugees, and welfare recipients—destroying long-standing community networks that provide safety, stability, and support. It will profoundly disrupt the lives and educational continuity of many young people, through forced displacement.

"We support the residents' decision to build a Neighbourhood Action Committee. We see this as an important step to link their struggle with broader layers of workers—construction workers, teachers and young people—and to advance an independent fight to halt the demolition and defend the right of all families to remain in public housing. We will also call on other local schools to invite speakers from the Neighbourhood Action Committee to speak at their workplaces."

The vote was carried overwhelmingly. After the meeting, a number of teachers came over to warmly greet the residents.

The second resident explained her response to the meeting:

"I think the teachers are very careful people and they listened to us carefully. They don't know what is happening around these towers. That is why they were surprised about what is happening to us.

"But I think teachers know what else is going on with the Labor government. There are billions cut from education and they know what is going on around this area for the students.

"Another teacher spoke about the running down of maintenance in the South Melbourne towers. This is happening to us too. It is not good. We ask for maintenance so many times to fix what happens here and they come and they just take a photo then they go. No one calls us, and no one talks to us about what has to be done. It is a bad thing. Even if I live here for one day, they have

to fix the things that I'm asking to be fixed. But they don't."

The resident spoke of an unsuccessful court challenge by residents opposing the demolition. They said: "In the court challenge earlier this year the government refused to give us the documents. We put all our hope in the court. We hoped the result would be good for us, but when it came this way we didn't feel comfortable and that shook us. I never thought that would happen, because it is our right to know what is happening to these buildings because we have been here a long time.

"They are lying to us, they don't tell the truth. The architects said that this building is good. I don't know why the government doesn't come and talk to the people. There is no information, they just say anything they want to say.

"People like the teachers have to know the truth about what is happening. If they talk to the students, talk to other people about what is happening to us, it will be very good. It will be important for them to know what is going on because teachers are an important part of the country and they have to know what is going on. Because they have many students, some of their students may live in these high rises and it may affect them.

"Homes Victoria is treating us very badly and we are stressed. They put great pressure on us."

The meeting, linking up the fight to halt the demolition with teachers, should be replicated at other schools and workplaces. As the NAC has insisted and experience has shown, the demolitions will not be halted through appeals to the Labor government that is carrying it out.

Instead, what is required is the development of an independent movement of the working class to prepare action, including strikes by demolition and construction workers, to block the attack on public housing as part of the broader fight against austerity.

*We urge all public housing residents throughout Australia, and supporters of public housing throughout the working class, to contact the SEP today to discuss this perspective and how you can build a rank-and-file committee in your workplace or neighbourhood.*



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**