

Australia: Halt the demolition of Melbourne's 44 public housing towers!

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)

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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) calls for an immediate end to the Victorian Labor government's plans to knock down 44 public housing towers in Melbourne. The destruction of the towers, for which works have already begun, is the greatest assault on public housing in Australia's history.

At least 10,000 people—from the most disadvantaged sections of the working class including immigrants, low-income families, the elderly and people living with disabilities—will be forced from their homes and communities established over decades.

The purpose of Labor's scheme is to rid Melbourne's valuable inner-city suburbs of the poor, to make way for property developers and financiers—who the government represents—to make billions in profits through selling off the prime real estate on which the towers sit. This would come on top of the massive boon for the finance capital that has reaped enormous profits from soaring housing prices while creating unaffordable rents and mortgages for working-class families.

While far advanced, Labor's plans to demolish the towers can and must be stopped by the working class.

There is broad opposition to the destruction of the towers. But anger alone, without a clear political strategy, is not enough to stop Labor's assault. The SEP calls for the mobilisation of workers to defend public housing, above all construction workers, who should down tools, stop all work related to the demolition and come to the defence of the residents.

Such actions must become part of a broader movement drawing in other sections of the working class in a struggle to defend basic social rights, including the right to high quality, affordable housing for all, against their profit-driven evisceration.

Only the SEP fights for this perspective.

All other political tendencies who profess to defend the residents, including the Greens and pseudo-left groups

such as the Victorian Socialists and Socialist Alliance, falsely claim that the Labor government can be pressured to modify—but not halt—its plan. Their aim is to prevent a direct confrontation with the Labor government, with which all of them in one way or another are politically aligned.

A meeting in Melbourne this Thursday, titled "Standing together for Victoria's public housing," has been endorsed by a collection of residents' groups, church and community groups, and associations of architects and engineers. However, the politics of the meeting has been set by the Greens, pseudo-left groups and unions that have endorsed the event.

In a flyer advertising Thursday's meeting, the organisers make clear they do not oppose the demolition of the towers at all.

Instead, they call on the government to: "Commission and release detailed evaluations of the structural conditions of each one of the towers. If and only if a strong economic, environmental and social case is made for demolition, then build replacement public housing first, nearby or elsewhere on the estate, and relocate the tenants when complete."

This opens the door for Labor to continue the campaign of lies, misinformation and intimidation it has used to justify its plan since it was first announced two years ago.

Chief among these is Labor's claim that Melbourne's public housing towers are beyond repair, structurally obsolete, energy-inefficient and fail to meet modern standards. Premier Jacinta Allan and Homes Victoria officials insist that refurbishment would be prohibitively expensive and ineffective.

A report by OFFICE Architects—a sponsor of Thursday's meeting—already dismantled this claim. Their alternative proposal shows the towers can be refurbished at a fraction of the cost and with minimal disruption to residents compared to the government's demolition plan.

Labor's plan to bulldoze and privatise public housing is not a matter of mistaken decisions, as the Greens and pseudo-left claim. It is an expression of the all-out assault on the social position of the entire working class amid a deepening global crisis of capitalism.

Only one industrial trade union has backed the event, the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA). The MUA will do nothing to mobilise its members against the razing of the towers, just as it has done nothing during Israel's genocidal assault in Gaza. The MUA has propped up the federal Labor government which has supported Israel's onslaught, while preventing its members on the docks from taking industrial action to stop the loading of ships transporting war materiel to Israel to carry out war crimes.

The Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) is glaringly absent from the list of endorsers. The CFMEU has postured as an opponent of the demolition, presenting token criticisms in a submission to a state parliamentary inquiry in February. The CFMEU's main role, however, has been to do everything in its power to block its members from taking any industrial action to stop demolition.

The unions' treacherous role has gone unmentioned by the Greens and pseudo-lefts, who seek to funnel opposition behind appeals to the same state Labor government carrying out the demolition.

In a protest on August 2, Greens member of state parliament Gabrielle de Vietri called for the de facto promotion of Labor in the 2026 Victorian election, claiming that Labor could be made to "listen to their voters." De Vietri admitted the Greens' perspective is not to halt the demolitions, but to delay them so residents could be moved out first.

At the same protest, Socialist Alliance's Sue Bolton simply called for "more protests" to "put pressure on the politicians." But the Labor government in no way represents working people but rather the banks, financiers and property developers that plan to reap rich rewards from the demolitions.

Public housing has been under assault throughout the country for decades. In New South Wales, the Labor government is evicting 3,000 residents of the Waterloo South public housing estate in Sydney to make way for accommodation to be sold on the private market.

While saying there is no money for public housing, Labor is siphoning billions of dollars from education, housing, health and welfare to fund corporate handouts and, at the national level, a massive military expansion in preparation for a US-led war on China.

Against this social retrogression, the SEP issues an urgent call for the working class to take matters into its own hands to halt the destruction of public housing. We have already helped establish a Neighbourhood Action Committee (NAC) to oppose the destruction of public housing towers and are calling on other workers to join this struggle. This means building independent rank-and-file committees of workers, residents and their supporters to take action against the companies involved in the demolition and the Labor government itself.

The SEP advances the following demands:

- Halt the demolition! Hands off public housing! Invest public funds to upgrade and refurbish all public housing.
- Expropriate vacant investment properties that are being hoarded for profit—make these available to the homeless.
- Cap rents and mortgage repayments to 25 percent of a family's income.
- Allocate billions of dollars for the construction of new high-quality public housing to provide for those currently on waiting lists and everyone in dire need of secure housing.

These demands necessitate a political struggle by the working class against the capitalist profit system and the refashioning of society from top to bottom on socialist lines. The vast resources created by the working class must be used to meet the pressing social needs of the majority, including for decent affordable housing, not the profits of the wealthy few.

We urge all public housing residents throughout Australia, and supporters of public housing throughout the working class, to contact us 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