UNION OF ARCHITECTURAL WORKERS
THE ARCHITECTS' DIVISION OF PROFESSIONALS AUSTRALIA · UAW.ORG.AU

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UNION OF ARCHITECTURAL WORKERS STANDS WITH RESIDENTS: NO DEMOLITION WITHOUT EVIDENCE

The Union of Architectural Workers, the architects' division of Professionals Australia, has endorsed Building Action Now's open letter calling on the Victorian Government to halt the demolition of Melbourne's 44 public housing towers. The towers stand on unceded Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Country and are home to about 10,000 people.

In December 2025 a Legislative Council committee found that the Government had not released the condition reports, feasibility studies or cost-benefit analyses needed to justify demolition over retrofit. It recommended that works pause until they were released. Demolition has continued.

The case for retrofit is public. Independent studies by architects, engineers and academics, and a study commissioned by Homes Victoria itself, show the towers can be brought close to contemporary standards without demolition. The case for demolition has not been made public.

What replaces the towers matters too. The Government's first completed Ground Lease Model redevelopment, at Victoria Street, Flemington, replaced public housing with 359 community and affordable dwellings. None of them are public housing.

Our members are asked to design and deliver this work, and our duty runs to the public and to the people who live in what we build. We cannot meet that duty while the evidence is withheld.

This is not the first time Melbourne has been asked to take demolition on trust. In 1969 the Housing Commission set out to clear a Carlton block it called a slum. Residents demanded proof, builders' labourers refused to do the demolition, and the houses still stand. Today the Government says the towers are at the end of their useful lives, and among the first to come down were those at Elgin Street, Carlton. The question is still the same: where is the proof?

Victoria has legislated a Treaty with First Peoples. Clearing homes on this Country without evidence, and without the agreement of the people who live there, is inconsistent with that commitment.

We back BAN's four demands:

- a pause on demolition, relocations and tenders until a transparent assessment is made public;
- release of all evidence used to justify demolition;
- independent assessment of every tower, with the Government's response tabled in Parliament;
- consultation and co-design with residents of each estate.

We read the last demand as meaning that residents hold real decision-making power over their homes, including the right to remain or return.

This statement is non-partisan and is not a call for industrial action. It is addressed to whoever forms the government in Victoria after 28 November.

> *"One day someone will ask what architectural workers did when these towers were marked for demolition and residents were being displaced. I want our union's answer to be that we stood with residents and demanded transparency. You don't demolish homes in a housing crisis. You don't send to landfill what could be repaired in a climate crisis. You listen to the people who live in these thriving communities, and you do everything you can to make their homes the best public housing in the world."*

Carey Landwehr, Vice President, Union of Architectural Workers

Sign the letter: buildingactionnow.org

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