

Blessing Bags Budget Response



Blessing Bags welcomes the 2020-21 Budget but more funding towards public housing is needed.

Blessing Bags believes in equality for all. Our primary focus is to offer people in need with essential items that most of us take for granted. Blessing Bags welcomes the purpose and heart of the Victorian 2020-21 State Budgets investment in social services. The Budget provides for the biggest investment in the state's history and has been designed to respond to multiple needs of the community.

The Big Housing Build Program has committed a 5.3-billion-dollar investment to build over 12,000 social housing homes over the next four years. This is a historic investment in social housing being the largest our state has ever seen. It is estimated that the 5.3-billion-dollar investment in social housing will support 100,000 jobs for the next four years and increase economic activity across the state. The Budget also includes funding to accelerate the public housing capital upgrade program and to make housing more affordable.

The budget includes:

- \$5.3 billion-dollar investment in funding to construct more than 12,000 new dwellings, including:
 - 9300 new social housing dwellings replacing 1100 old housing units
 - 2900 new mainly affordable low-cost homes in locations close to jobs and transport
- The Victorian Homebuyer fund provides 500 million to accelerate Victorians into home ownership
- 75-million-dollar investment over the next four years to extend the right to every young person in out-of-home care to continue to receive support beyond 18 until 21 years of age

While we welcome these changes, we also hope to see more funding towards Public Housing and call to end the Public Housing Renewal Program. This budget supports the community housing industry, a private non-for-profit housing provider that prefers to allocate long-term housing options to employed households with no history of chronic homelessness.

In 2017, there was a parliamentary inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program that has yet to be acknowledged by the Victorian Government. The program has faced great criticism over selling off public land to private developers and reducing the amount of public housing stock available. While there is no doubt that the ageing public housing stock in Victoria needs to be repaired, the current goal of the program to provide a 10% increase in public housing stock was found to be insufficient during the 2017 inquiry into the program. Moreover, The Public Housing Renewal Program absolves the state of the ongoing maintenance costs of housing, these costs could be replaced with the provision of more physical and mental health services. This is because of the growing concern of the psychological and health impacts of tenants being displaced due to the renewal, as people are being unnecessarily displaced from their homes, schools, friends, jobs and community. [Our Submission to the Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria](#) further explores the differences between social and public housing and why public housing is the most effective way to get people out of homelessness.