

Reforming the Housing System Bill 2022

A Bill for an Act to reform the housing system for people experiencing homelessness in Victoria. The Bill exists because the rate of people experiencing homelessness in Australia has been steadily increasing and as housing prices rise more people become at risk of homelessness. Housing and shelter is a basic human right and too many people are being denied it. The current housing system is not keeping up with the rising demand for affordable and accessible housing and it is also not properly supporting the people who require these things, both during and after their stay.

This Bill will resolve these issues by establishing liveable and accessible accommodation to those who may not be able to have access to safe or stable accommodation. Additionally, this Bill will also resolve these issues by creating a system of support across various aspects of life, to reduce likelihood of those people experiencing homelessness again once they have left the system.

**A Bill for an Act relating to Reforming the Housing System to be enacted by the YMCA
Victoria Youth Parliament;**

PART I—Preliminary

Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this Act are—

- (a) To provide stable and adequate accommodation, support and rehabilitation for people experiencing homelessness;
- (b) To improve quality of life for people experiencing homelessness while in the system;
- (c) To provide an assurance of stability after people have left the system.

Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence three years after receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill—

- (a) *People experiencing homelessness* means anyone who does not currently have access to stable, safe and adequate form of housing or shelter for any reason;
- (b) *Housing sites / houses* means buildings that serve as a safe place for people to live in;
- (c) *Residents* means people living within the houses set up in this Bill;
- (d) *Significant and reasonable predicted risk* means that there is a history of serious and/or violent crimes or that there is reasonable concern for recidivism of behaviours that will inflict harm on the community;
- (e) *Visual paper advertisements* means a piece of media created with the intention of highlighting a product or service that is printed or crafted on paper or similar material.

PART II—Establishment

Clause 4 Outline of Site Location, Physical Infrastructure, and Building Standards

- 4.1 Housing sites shall be located in the Melbourne Central Business District (CBD).
- 4.2 Housing sites shall be made accessible for residents through the inclusion of the following accommodations;
 - (a) Ramps and elevators that shall be in line with Building Standards;
 - (b) Quarterly evaluations of the accessibility of the housing site which shall;
 - (i) Assess and identify any changes that need to be made;
 - (ii) Incorporate additional accessibility criteria based on circumstances of residents;
 - (iii) Be made by professional inspectors.
- 4.3 Housing sites shall be located in a general area of the Melbourne CBD that is easy for all members of the community to find and access, and nearby to;

- (a) Hospitals;
 - (b) Shopping centres;
 - (c) Entertainment;
 - (d) Central community facilities.
- 4.4 Housing sites shall include enough space for residents by ensuring the provision of;
- (a) Appropriate housing arrangements for households of different sizes, including;
 - (i) Single residents;
 - (ii) Parents and children;
 - (iii) Multiple family generations.
 - (b) Appropriate amenities relative to the number of residents in the house;
 - (c) House size which is in line with building standards.
- 4.5 Houses shall be equipped with necessary security equipment to maintain safety, including;
- (a) Traditional home security devices such as;
 - (i) Burglar alarms;
 - (ii) Surveillance cameras;
 - (b) Environmental security devices such as;
 - (i) Smoke detectors;
 - (ii) Carbon monoxide detectors;
 - (c) Functioning locks on doors;
 - (d) Security device functionality evaluations which shall be included in quarterly building evaluations.
- 4.6 The Managing Overseer shall ensure residents' everyday needs are met by ensuring houses receive weekly deliveries of adequate resources, which shall;
- (a) Be administered by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing;
 - (b) Include the following;
 - (i) Adequate food that meets residents' nutritional needs and dietary requirements;
 - (ii) Different types of clothing, suited for both hot and cold temperatures;
 - (iii) Sanitary items such as toiletries and period products.
- 4.7 Buildings shall be modernised such that;
- (a) They fulfil residents' necessities;
 - (b) They minimise the effects of natural disasters such as interpolate earthquakes;
 - (c) They maintain energy efficiency;
 - (d) They minimise operating expenses and can promote cleaner energy;
 - (e) They consist of modern technology to uphold efficiency and convenience.
- 4.8 Housing sites shall minimise noise pollution and restrict sound levels to below 55 decibels (dB).

Clause 5 Support People and Systems Accessible for Residents

- 5.1 Support people shall be available to offer mental health support for residents, providing;
 - (a) A person with whom to talk;
 - (b) Help with getting back into the community;
 - (c) Weekly check-ins.
- 5.2 Accountants shall be made available to offer free financial advice and support to residents.
- 5.3 Residents shall receive targeted support dependent on their age group, including;
 - (a) The following supports for young people;
 - (i) Ongoing access to education;
 - (ii) Constant security stationed near to houses.
 - (b) The following supports for older people;
 - (i) Regular check-ups;
 - (ii) Daily recreational activities.
- 5.4 The consideration of religious needs of potential residents shall be reflected in the houses in the following ways;
 - (a) Provision of information about local religious groups and places of worship such as;
 - (i) Addresses;
 - (ii) Days of upcoming activities;
 - (iii) Where to find further information.
 - (b) Specific arrangements for cultural and religious items provided in houses;
 - (c) Options for food which reflect residents' religious needs.
- 5.5 An Overseer shall be appointed for each housing site, whose role shall be;
 - (a) To support and look after residents living in the houses;
 - (b) To conduct the monthly evaluations on occupancy and capacity for their respective site;
 - (c) To issue complaints to the Managing Overseer on behalf of the residents;
 - (d) Ensuring that resources are used appropriately within houses.
- 5.6 A Managing Overseer shall be appointed, whose role shall be;
 - (a) To supervise conduct of individual Overseers;
 - (b) To make and enforce changes based upon residents' complaints;
 - (c) To manage the allocation of resources to houses;
 - (d) To monitor trends collected by the monthly evaluations.
- 5.7 Residents shall be provided with educational sessions on the following topics;
 - (a) Reading & writing skills;
 - (b) Budgeting and money-management.

Clause 6 Oversight and Tracking Surrounding Homelessness

- 6.1 Houses shall be routinely evaluated for capacity and occupancy.
- 6.2 These evaluations shall occur monthly, monitoring trends such as;
 - (a) Number of houses occupied;
 - (b) Number of houses unoccupied;

- (c) Number of residents;
 - (d) Number of people waiting for an available house.
- 6.3 Data shall be used to determine how resources are allocated in the following month, including;
- (a) Whether more houses should be built;
 - (b) Whether certain houses require more basic necessities.
- 6.4 These evaluations shall be conducted by the Overseer.

Clause 7 Entering and Exiting Housing and Post-Stay Services and Support System

- 7.1 An efficient procedure for entering and exiting the housing system shall be established by the Managing Overseer.
- 7.2 Through the entry system, residents shall inform the relevant Overseer of the following;
- (a) The type and size of accommodation that they require;
 - (b) The approximate predicted length of their stay;
 - (c) Which services or supply systems they require access to.
- 7.3 Potential residents shall be required to provide any certificates, but shall;
- (a) Submit to, or provide evidence of, a criminal background check, wherein residency shall not be denied unless both the following criteria are met;
 - (i) There is a criminal history;
 - (ii) There is a significant and reasonable predicted risk to the greater community.
 - (b) Undergo a mental health evaluation to determine necessary support services or medications for the resident.
- 7.4 Through the exit system, residents who intend to exit the system shall inform the relevant Overseer of the following;
- (a) The resident's intention to leave;
 - (b) A negotiated date of exit from the housing system.
- 7.5 In the case that a resident expresses an intention to leave but later decides to remain within the system, they resident shall;
- (a) Inform the Overseer of their intention to stay at least four days prior to the negotiated date of exit.
- 7.6 The resident shall move into a different house in the system in the case that their house has been committed to a new occupant as a result of;
- (a) The resident's failure to give note of an intention to stay at least four days prior to the negotiated date of exit;
 - (b) The resident's failure to vacate on the negotiated exit date without notice, wherein they shall;
 - (i) Meet with their Overseer to discuss the reason for failure to exit;
 - (ii) Be given the opportunity to negotiate a different date of exit.
- 7.7 Residents of the housing system shall receive regular check-ins from a designated member after they have exited, which shall;
- (a) Be conducted in-person;
 - (b) Assess the following;

- (i) That the former resident can provide financially and mentally for themselves and their dependents;
- (ii) That the former resident has a steady form of income;
- (iii) The former resident has a stable form of housing.
- (c) Occur once every two months at minimum;
- (d) Determine whether the former resident requires any additional support, which shall:
 - (i) Be provided to them as necessary;
 - (ii) Not be withheld for any reason.

Clause 8 Promotion and Availability of the Housing System

- 8.1 This service shall be promoted by visual paper advertisements within public areas.
- 8.2 Paper advertisements shall include information such as;
 - (a) Contact information of the local Overseer and Managing Overseer;
 - (b) How the housing system operates;
 - (c) What the housing system provides to people.
- 8.3 Paper advertisements shall be set up in the following areas;
 - (a) City centres;
 - (b) Outside supermarkets;
 - (c) Parks.
- 8.4 The service shall be advertised on social media;
 - (a) Through a variety of popular apps;
 - (b) With clear information relating to;
 - (i) Contact information of the local Overseer and Managing Overseer;
 - (ii) How the housing system operates;
 - (iii) What the housing system provides to people.
- 8.5 A virtual and in-person communications system shall be established wherein;
 - (a) Potential residents shall have their interest registered;
 - (b) Potential residents shall be connected to the relevant Overseer for their area;
 - (c) Information about potential accommodations shall be shared with potential residents;
 - (d) Residents shall be able to lodge requests or further requirements during their time in the housing system, such as;
 - (i) Additional services or supports;
 - (ii) Change in daily needs.
 - (e) Residents shall be able to advise as to changes to the number of residents in their household so that appropriate accommodation can be provided to meet these needs;
 - (f) Residents shall be able to provide feedback.
- 8.6 A volunteer program shall be established for volunteers to provide support for residents including;
 - (a) Any additional support that is not already in place within the housing system;
 - (b) Help with reconnecting residents with the community and community groups.