



Hon Richard Wynne MP

Minister for Housing

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BAC-CO-3100

Ms Leilani Farha
leilani@maketheshift.org

Dear Ms Farha

I write in response to your letter of 26 August 2020 addressed to the Premier, the Hon Daniel Andrews MP, regarding your concerns about the Public Health Detention Directions for residents of public housing estates at Flemington and North Melbourne in July 2020. As the matter you raise falls within my portfolio responsibilities, your letter has been referred to me for my consideration and response.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your considered contributions and for detailing the experiences of some of the residents at the Flemington and North Melbourne public housing estates. This was understandably an incredibly stressful time for everyone involved, and I am committed to ensuring that we have listened to residents' experiences so that we can learn from them.

The decision to place the buildings across Flemington and North Melbourne public housing estates into quarantine was made on the basis of public health advice, including that they were high-risk settings due to density of living arrangements, shared facilities and vulnerable people living at these locations. This decision was not taken lightly but was necessary to facilitate the immediate containment of the spread and allow rapid testing and contact tracing to occur. Urgent action was essential to prevent the ill-health and death of residents. This outbreak has now been contained, and as at 16 October 2020 there are no active cases across these nine buildings. This decision, and the work that took place following it, has successfully contained the initial outbreak, and it has saved lives.

We understand the importance and value of community engagement when responding to such events. A community designed and participatory approach has been established across these estates to ensure that public health messages are heard and actioned, and that the Government is able to be more responsive to residents' needs.

An onsite team at North Melbourne and Flemington continues to provide support and health services including testing and health promotion and follow up services for those in need. As we transition from an acute emergency response to a recovery phase, we will continue to offer this range of supports and testing through our Health Concierge model across North Melbourne and Flemington, as well as all other public housing high-rise towers in Victoria.

As you indicated in your correspondence, the Victorian Ombudsman is currently conducting an investigation into the Public Housing Detention Directions. You may be aware that the

Department of Health and Human Services is fully supporting the Victorian Ombudsman with its enquiry, and is committed to learning from the Ombudsman's findings and recommendations.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Ms Marina Henley, Deputy Commander, Operation Benessere – Planning and Coordination at the Department of Health and Human Services on 9096 9882 or Marina.Henley@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

I hope this information has been of assistance to you and thank you again for taking the time to write about this matter.

Yours sincerely



Hon Richard Wynne MP
Minister for Housing

18/10/2020