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City of Melbourne Draft Housing Strategy (*Homes for People*) 2014-2018

The Tenants Union of Victoria (TUV) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on *Homes for People*, the City of Melbourne's Draft Housing Strategy 2014-2018.

Access to affordable and appropriate housing remains a critical issue that must not be placed in the 'too hard basket'. Addressing these issues relating to rental housing will go a long way to dealing with the perennial issue of social exclusion, whilst stimulating a thriving and diverse community. Current trends are leading to a homogenisation of the residential population – in terms of age, income and employment - of inner city areas, including the City of Melbourne. Business-as-usual will only intensify a situation of spatial segregation already gripping Melbourne, where low-moderate income households are consigned to outer suburbs, often with poorer access to employment and transport options.

The TUV was established in 1975 as an advocacy organisation and specialist community legal centre, providing information and advice to residential tenants, rooming house and caravan park residents across the state. We assist about 16,000 private and public renters in Victoria each year. Our mission is to inform and educate tenants and residents about their rights, and improving the conditions in which they live. The TUV's social change agenda is based on four broad areas in the rental sector:

- *legitimacy*: to address the often negative portrayal of issues affecting tenants and the rental sector in the public domain;
- *accessibility*: to address non-financial barriers to housing in the rental sector including discrimination;
- *affordability*: to address the poor financial situation of many tenants, particularly in the private rental sector; and
- *appropriateness*: to address the poor standard and location of rental housing, poor management practices and the limited legislative protections for tenants.

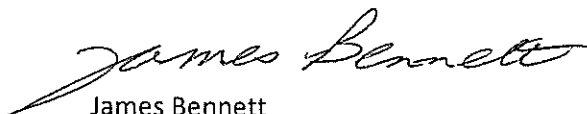
While the TUV broadly supports many of the key strategies put forward in *Homes for People*, we would like to stress the following issues:

1. Renting in inner city Melbourne continues to be extremely unaffordable for households earning the minimum wage and average weekly earnings, let alone households reliant on income support. The TUV endorses the provision of 1,721 affordable homes forming a key plank of the City of Melbourne's Housing Strategy; a target of 15 per cent of new construction to be affordable housing is supported and ideally should be raised further to address the already significant exclusion of low-moderate income households from renting in the City of Melbourne.

2. The TUV understands the City of Melbourne's focus on apartment construction in its strategy given the constraints on available land projections for population growth over the coming decades. However, we believe that this must take into account the differing needs and life stages of households. We agree with the City of Melbourne that there is a glut of one and two bedroom dwellings and a need for housing options with three or more bedrooms. The primary targets for rental apartments to date have been the single person and couple household. Households with dependent children remain largely excluded as there are limited housing options appropriate for families. Apartment sizes are inadequate and seem to be getting smaller. This lack of space, coupled with a lack of access to other amenities such as schools, continue to prohibit the City of Melbourne from nurturing the diversity it craves.
3. The TUV is welcomes the strategy of inclusionary zoning. Inclusionary zoning helps ensure low-middle income households are not priced out of the inner city and can still access services and employment opportunities offered by the inner city. Further, inclusionary zoning provides the necessary framework for the creation of mixed income neighbourhoods and potentially reduces waiting lists for public and community housing. Inclusionary zoning's relatively long history in Europe and its recent implementation in South Australia illustrate the strength of the strategy. Indeed, South Australia's policy of 15% of new houses being affordable has been very successful in increasing the supply of affordable housing in Adelaide.
4. Finally, the TUV believes that all rental properties should be governed by a set of minimum standards that ensure renters have access to not only affordable housing, but housing that is safe, healthy, energy efficient and financially manageable.

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Yours Sincerely



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