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No room for NIMBY-ism in the battle against homelessness

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The peak body for homelessness in Victoria has responded to community groups objecting to social housing developments being built in their neighbourhoods.

“Using vacant Government-owned land to build houses for those with no home makes sense. Making sure that land is located near transport, support services and jobs is a no-brainer. Wrapping intensive support around some housing to prevent vulnerable tenants falling back into homelessness, is the perfect formula for ending homelessness,” said Ms Jenny Smith, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons.

CHP says that the five sites across Melbourne being used in the Victorian Government’s Towards Home program tick all these boxes, and replicate the successful ‘supportive housing’ models that have drastically reduce homelessness in parts of Canada and the United States.

“As a community we need to be supporting these projects, not protesting against them,” said Ms Smith.

“With 35,000 people on the waiting list for public housing in Victoria, we must seize every opportunity to create more housing that people can afford and peppering this housing across well located areas, and teaming it with support, is good social policy.

“Warehousing the homeless on the outskirts of Melbourne does not solve homelessness, it simply tries to hide it from public view, and pushes the most vulnerable into areas with the least ability to support them with jobs and services.

“The women and men sleeping rough in Melbourne are unarguably our most vulnerable citizens – women and men experiencing poverty, fleeing family violence, recovering from trauma and abuse, battling mental illness.

“They deserve a home from which they can start to regain control of their lives. They deserve our respect, and they deserve our compassion.

In a recent article in The Guardian, writer and editor David West, who has experienced homelessness, wrote, *“Given a little assistance I feel that I could still have a future where I could contribute, but without somewhere to live there are too many rungs missing from the ladder and I am left to peer in through the window from out here.”*