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INQUIRY INTO APARTMENT DESIGN STANDARDS

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BETTER APARTMENTS

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REPORT

December 2015

OFFICE OF THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT

VICTORIA State Government | Environment, Land, Water and Planning

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The way we are living is changing. More and more Victorians are choosing apartments – as an affordable first home, as a way for older people to stay in their local area when they downsize, or simply because they prefer it.

Victoria has experienced successive years of record apartment approvals and development. There are now more apartments being approved for development in metropolitan Melbourne than houses in growth areas.

Guidelines in Victoria for apartment design and quality have not been updated in more than a decade. It is time to clarify our planning and design standards to ensure the next generation of housing in Victoria continues our tradition of high quality liveable housing, supports diverse communities, and delivers lasting economic value for investors and home owners.

In May this year, the Planning Minister Richard Wynne released the *Better Apartments – A Discussion Paper* and invited public participation in a debate around apartment amenity, through the following approaches:

- Written submissions
- Community survey
- Minister's Forum
- Community, industry and local government workshops
- Interviews with key stakeholders.

Overall, there was strong participation in all aspects of the engagement.

Over 1700 people responded to the survey and 145 submissions were received, demonstrating the public's strong interest in this issue.

This report brings together the feedback on the discussion paper and the key issues that Victorians see as important in apartment design.

It will inform the development of new standards for apartments to ensure they meet the expectations of Victorians for quality, accessibility, and affordability.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community survey confirms apartment living is an essential, highly valued living option in Victoria.

There is overall agreement from stakeholders that apartment living offers significant benefits. More than 50% of respondents selected close proximity to all amenities, cheaper transport costs and low maintenance as the leading benefits.

In contrast, the two aspects of apartment living that stand out as the most disliked by respondents are a lack of storage and noise.

All survey respondents agreed there are four main challenges for apartment living in the future:

- Coming up with the right design
- Ensuring apartments are affordable
- Ensuring there are a range of apartment options, and
- Working with industry to achieve the best outcomes.

WORKSHOPS

There is general acceptance about the need to improve some amenity issues related to apartment design. In general, these issues relate to outlook, the design of common areas (entry and circulation), size of apartments, daylight and sunlight, landscaping, adaptability and car parking.

In terms of implementation, there is general support among industry and local government for a performance-based model, which incorporates opportunities to vary planning provisions based on site context and one that allows opportunities for innovation – notwithstanding that some industry respondents do not see a need for regulation.

INTERVIEWS

Some interviewees feel there is a policy vacuum concerning apartment design and a consistent approach is required. Daylight, outlook and the size of apartments are the most widely discussed issues.

There is also general support for a 'performance-based' model. Some respondents are concerned that further regulation could affect development costs and housing affordability, and reduce innovation.

VIEWS OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

COUNCILS

Councils are very supportive of better managing the amenity of apartment living through introducing additional guidance in the planning system and possibly the building system.

They call for a performance-based planning system that will enable design standards to be set while enabling innovation. Several councils claim that high quality apartments can be delivered without substantially affecting development costs and point to the long-term financial benefits of a well-designed apartment.

DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

Development industry representatives broadly support the need for a consistent approach to managing the amenity of apartments to provide greater certainty for the industry.

However, they are concerned that new standards could increase development costs, impact on the development potential of sites and affect housing affordability. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to any new policy that seeks to insert regulation between planning and building systems. If new regulation is required, it should be conscious of the site context and be flexible enough to allow for design innovation, variety and choice.

PLANNING AND DESIGN PRACTITIONERS

Planning and design practitioners support the introduction of new amenity guidance to provide greater consistency in decision-making, but have mixed views around the type of standards that could apply.

Performance-based controls are supported and need to be flexible enough to facilitate design excellence. A thorough site analysis and design response are essential to achieving the best outcomes.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Community members, including existing apartment residents, community groups and the broader community, are focused on ensuring the internal living spaces are better for occupants.

They tend to support mandatory standards to provide greater certainty in development outcomes for the community.

While they generally agree minimising development costs is important, there may be some specific features of an apartment for which they as consumers are willing to accept higher rent or a higher purchase price.

When choosing an apartment, some community members may also be willing to trade off internal amenity for a good location, including proximity of the apartment to local facilities such as public transport, social services, parks and shops.

Community members call for buyers and renters of apartments to have more information available to them when choosing an apartment.

There are notable differences in the views of current apartment residents compared to other stakeholders around issues of car parking, noise minimisation and natural ventilation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This Public Engagement Report summarises the feedback received on the *Better Apartments – A Discussion Paper* that was released in May 2015. It adds to the evidence base that will help determine the right mechanisms to promote high quality apartment living opportunities in Victoria.

1.2 CONTEXT

The Better Apartments project is a joint initiative of the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Office of Victorian Government Architect (OVGA). It aims to deliver on the Victorian Government's commitment to better manage the amenity of apartment living and maintain Victoria's liveability.

Victoria's population is expected to grow from 5.8 million in 2014 to 10 million in 2051. Most people will live in Melbourne, with its population growing from 4.3 million in 2014 to 7.7 million by 2051. Current estimates show that apartments could make up one third of the new housing stock by 2051.

Victoria has a long history of suburban detached housing development and more recently medium-density housing (since the 1990s). Apartments are a relatively new part of the housing sector. The number of apartments currently approved and built in Victoria make up nearly one third of all new dwellings approved across the state – more than at any time in our history.

There are now more apartments being approved for development in metropolitan Melbourne than houses in growth areas. The design quality and internal amenity of apartments is therefore an issue of public significance.

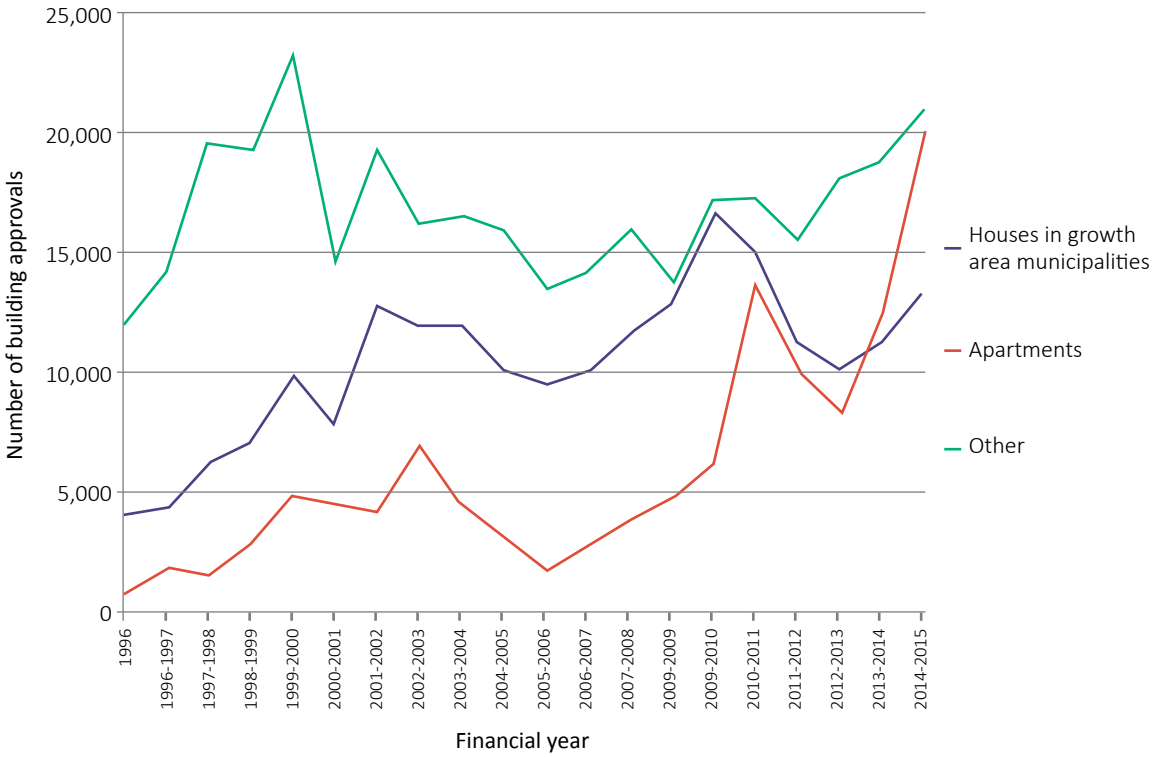


Figure 1: Annual number of residential building approvals in Melbourne, 1996-2015
Source: ABS Building Approvals, cat. no. 8731.0

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

This report summarises the feedback received on the discussion paper.

Following this introduction, **Section 2** provides an overview of the engagement approach.

Section 3 presents the results graphically and provides an overview of observations from the engagement processes and stakeholder groups.

Section 4 explains the results, including responses to the 14 issues affecting apartment amenity identified in the discussion paper.

Section 5 summarises the feedback received on getting the implementation tools right.

Section 6 outlines the next steps for the Better Apartments project.

A **glossary** of key terms is provided at the end of this report.

2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

DELWP and OVGA developed a comprehensive approach to public engagement.

The objectives were:

- To inform the community of the Victorian Government's intention to improve the design and amenity of new apartments to sustain and improve Victoria's liveability
- To understand the views of a variety of people and organisations on the issues raised in the discussion paper relating to the amenity of apartments
- To encourage constructive feedback on how the development of apartments could be improved through planning and building systems
- To reach a broad range of people within the community including apartment residents and from the development industry and government sectors.

The approach comprised an invitation to prepare a written submission in response to the discussion paper, a community survey, a Minister's Forum, workshops and interviews with key people and organisations (see Table 1).

A range of techniques were used to reach a variety of people and encourage participation. The public engagement process was advertised through the media, the DELWP website (www.delwp.vic.gov.au/better-apartments) and through general email and postal correspondence.

Participants included representatives from the development industry (including developers and planning and design practitioners), officers from local and state government, current apartment residents, people who have lived in apartments, representatives from peak planning and building practitioner bodies, resident associations and members of the wider community.

The public engagement process commenced in May 2015 with the release of the discussion paper, which called for feedback on 14 design issues and the most appropriate implementation tools. The discussion paper was supplemented by *Better Apartments: Minister's Forum Context Report* (July 2015) outlining the market conditions and regulatory context of the project. The public engagement phase concluded in October 2015.

Table 1: Public engagement responses and participation

Date	Public Engagement	Number of Respondents or Participants
May-July 2015	Submission to the *Better Apartments – A Discussion Paper*	145 Submissions
May-July 2015	Community Survey	1701 respondents
July 2015	Minister's Forum – Local government and peak industry bodies	46 participants
August 2015	Local Government Workshop	55 participants
September 2015	Community Workshops	44 participants
September 2015	Industry Workshop	56 participants
September 2015	Community Workshop (evening)	22 participants
September-October 2015	Interviews with key stakeholders	12 participants

2.1 WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

An online submission form was used to invite written submissions on the discussion paper (see Appendix A).

People were invited to rank the 14 issues affecting apartment amenity in order of importance.

A total of 145 written submissions were received with the majority of responses from individuals followed by metropolitan councils.

A full breakdown of the rankings of the 14 issues affecting apartment amenity is outlined in sections 3 and 4.

Those who responded via the online submission form are referred to as 'written respondents' for the purpose of this report. *This report includes a number of quotes drawn from the written submissions. '#' means written submission respondent number.*

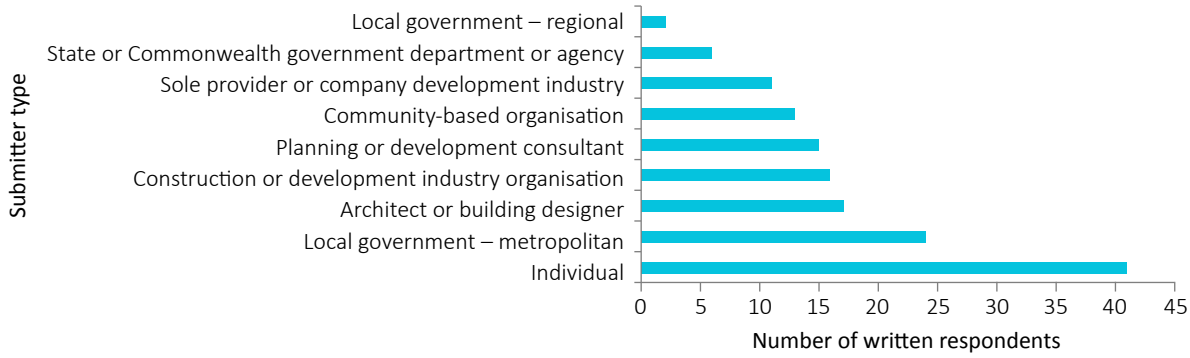


Figure 2: Number of written respondents by submitter type

2.2 COMMUNITY SURVEY

A short community survey was devised to invite community members to comment on their expectations and thoughts about apartment living, including likes and dislikes, overall attitudes towards apartment living and their opinions about apartment living in the future.

The surveys also asked respondents to rank the 14 issues affecting apartment amenity in order of importance. All members of the public were invited to complete the survey.

In addition, a 'boost' survey targeting 300 people who currently live in apartments throughout metropolitan Melbourne (post codes of 3000-3207) was undertaken. The survey was open to members of the public, government and industry groups.

Respondents to the community survey are referred to as 'survey respondents' for the purpose of this report.

A total of 1701 survey respondents completed the community survey with:

- 955 respondents from the community and 446 respondents from industry, totalling 1401
- 300 community respondents from the 'boost' survey (all of whom live in an apartment).

*People working in the industry include government, planning and development consultants, architects, building designers and property developers.

Figure 3: Number of survey respondents by segment category

2.3 MINISTER'S FORUM

A Minister's Forum was held on 9 July 2015 with 46 people including the mayors and chief executive officers of metropolitan and regional city councils and executive officers of relevant peak bodies. At the Forum the Minister for Planning called for constructive feedback on the issues of internal apartment design and amenity. The Forum was facilitated by David Klingberg, urban designer and strategic planning specialist, and comprised a panel of industry representatives including:

- Thomas Alves, OVGA
- Tamara Brezzi, Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association (VPELA)
- Leanne Hodyl, City of Melbourne
- James Mansour, Charter Keck Cramer
- Mark Marsden, City of Moreland.

2.4 WORKSHOPS

Four workshops were held in August and September 2015 with a broad range of community, industry and local and state government stakeholders. The workshops provided an opportunity for those who had written a submission to identify solutions to the internal amenity design issues. All written respondents and survey respondents who expressed an interest in receiving more information, were invited to participate in the workshops. Each workshop was attended by 20 to 55 people. A total of 223 people participated in the workshops. Participants at the workshops are referred to as 'workshop participants' for the purpose of this report.

2.5 INTERVIEWS

Twelve interviews were undertaken with a variety of representatives from industry peak bodies and community stakeholders that had lodged written submissions.

Interview participants included:

- Australian Institute of Architects (AIA)
- Building Designers Association of Victoria (BDAV)
- Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE)
- Docklands Community Association (DCA)
- Housing Choices Australia (HCA)
- Housing Industry Association (HIA)
- Master Builders Association of Victoria (MBAV)
- Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)
- Property Council of Australia (PCA)
- Urban Development Industry Association (UDIA)
- Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association (VPELA)
- Scott Wiley, Architect.

Interviewees were asked to speak openly about their submissions and expand on any key points, followed by a series of structured questions, which were designed to compare and contrast views among respondents. The questions were:

- Some submissions have said that apartment standards will erode affordability and increase costs. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Some submissions have said that apartment guidelines will limit architectural expression and reduce innovation and design excellence. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Is the quality of internal amenity for apartments in the inner city 'acceptable' now? Why or why not?
- Do we currently have the right 'tools' in Victoria to deliver an acceptable level of amenity for apartment occupants? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the current *Guidelines for Higher Density Residential Development* (former Department of Sustainability and Environment) provide an appropriate mechanism to deliver apartments with an acceptable quality of internal amenity? Why or why not?
- Some submissions say that the market will address concerns that people have about the quality and amenity of apartments. Do you agree? Why or why not?

3 FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

This section provides some general observations arising out of the public engagement processes and an overview of views from different stakeholder groups.

3.1 COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community survey confirms that apartments are an essential, highly valued living option in Victoria. The high response rate and the quality of comments shows there is a keen interest in ensuring apartments meet the needs of the community into the future.

There is overall agreement that apartment living is highly beneficial. The three benefits of apartments selected by a large portion (over 50%) of the respondents included: close proximity to everything residents need; it cuts down on transport costs; and is low maintenance. In contrast, two key disadvantages of apartment living include a lack of storage; and the impact of noise.

Respondents point out two key issues facing apartment living for the future:

- Reasonable apartment sizes to ensure sufficient space and storage to suit any household type and life stage, and
- Quality of air, ventilation and natural daylight, because it is important for health and wellbeing.

There are some areas where respondents working in the development industry differ from people living in apartments. While all segments agree that adequate space and daylight are important, natural ventilation is considered of greater importance by those working in the industry, as is access to outdoor space.

People who live in an apartment value natural ventilation and believe noise minimisation is important. A quality outlook appears to be more important to those working in the industry.

Many respondents believe there are four main challenges for apartment living in the future:

- Coming up with the right design
- Ensuring apartments are affordable
- Ensuring there are a range of apartment options, and
- Working with industry to achieve the best outcomes.

Overall the findings indicate an engaged community with strong emotional connections to apartment living – many respondents have made the decision to live in an apartment and highly value what it offers.

The following graphs (Figures 4 to 8) outline how each issue raised in the discussion paper was rated by survey respondents.

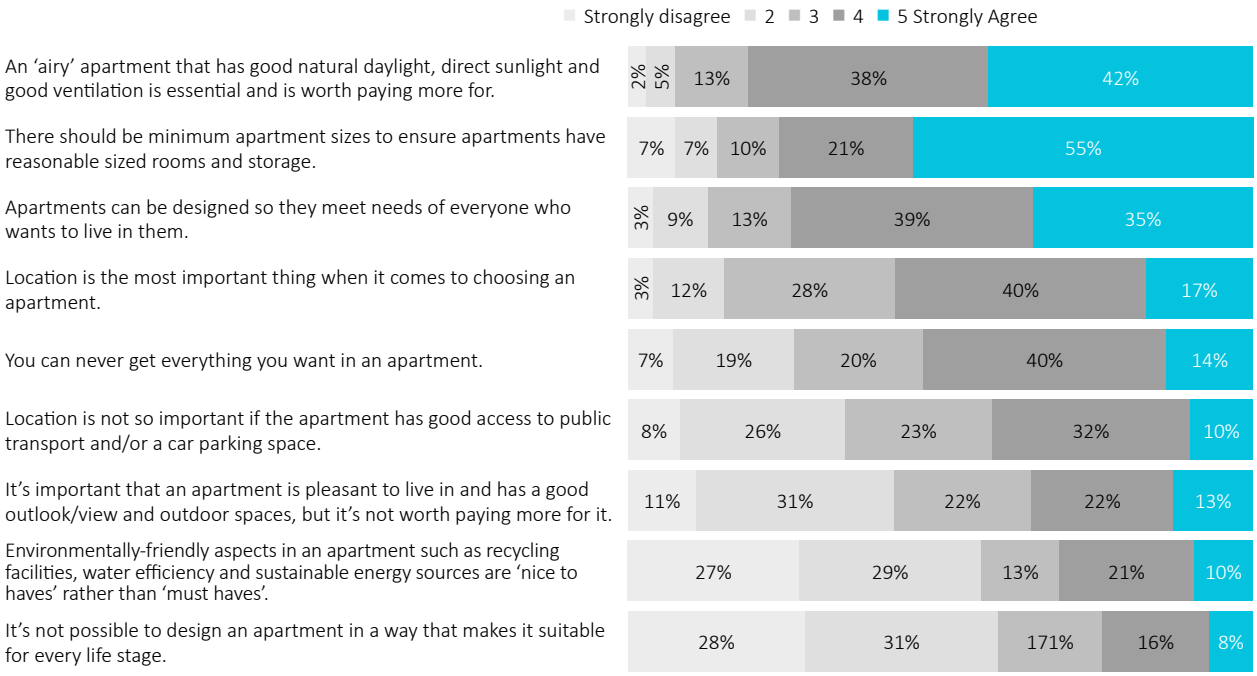


Figure 4: Attitudes towards apartment living and the 'trade offs' people are prepared to make.

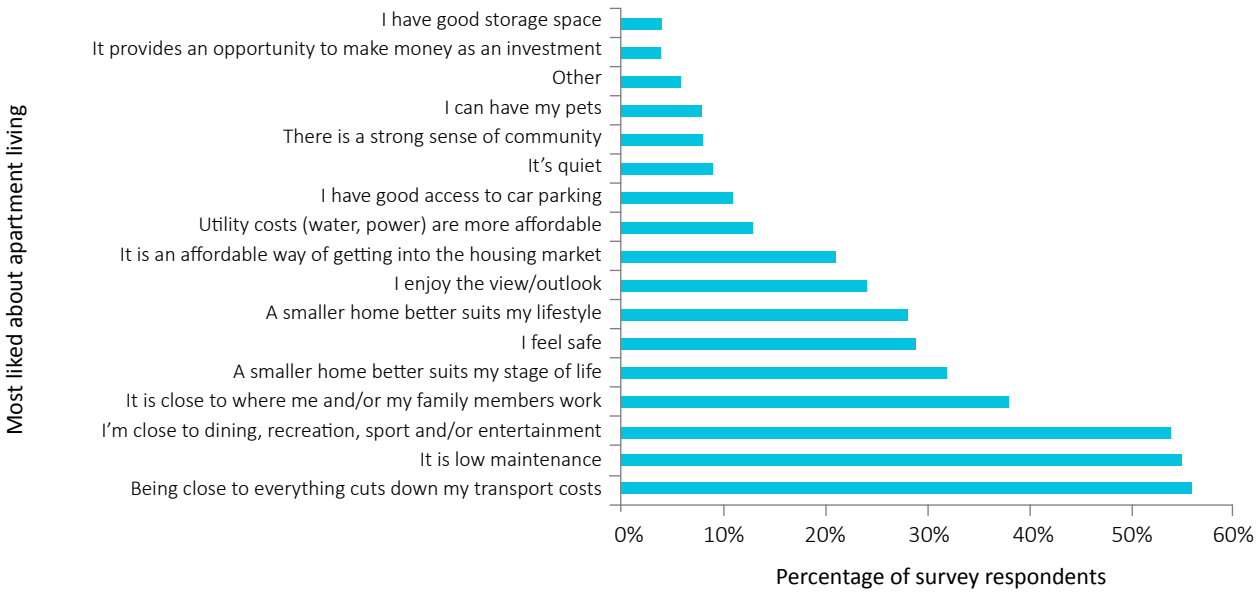


Figure 5: What is liked most about apartment living by survey respondents.

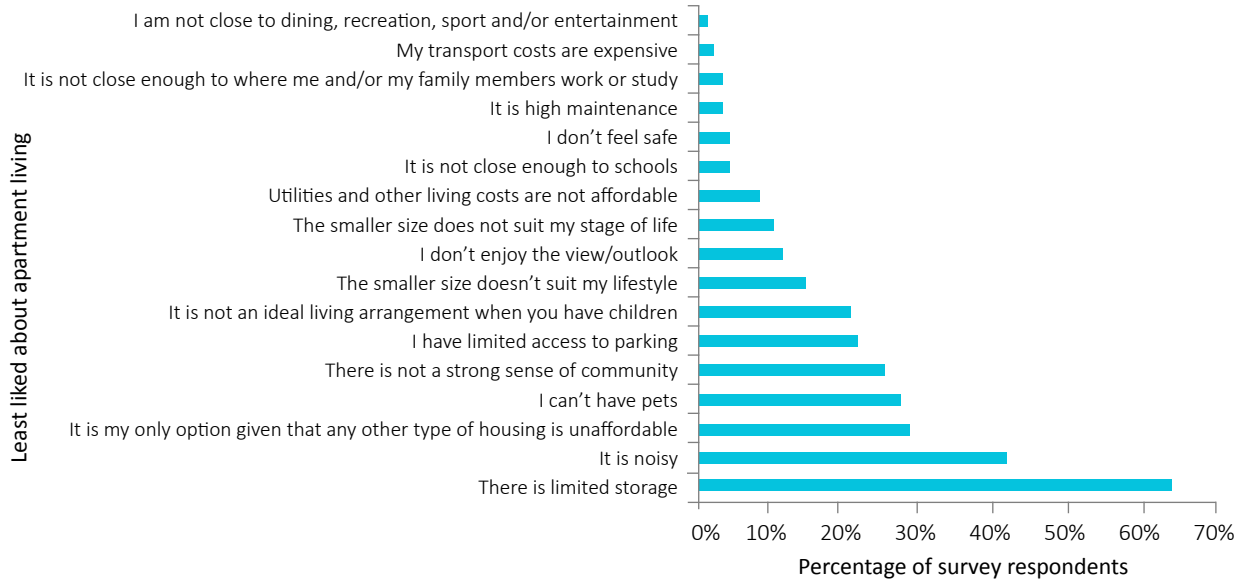


Figure 6: What is liked least about apartment living by survey respondents.

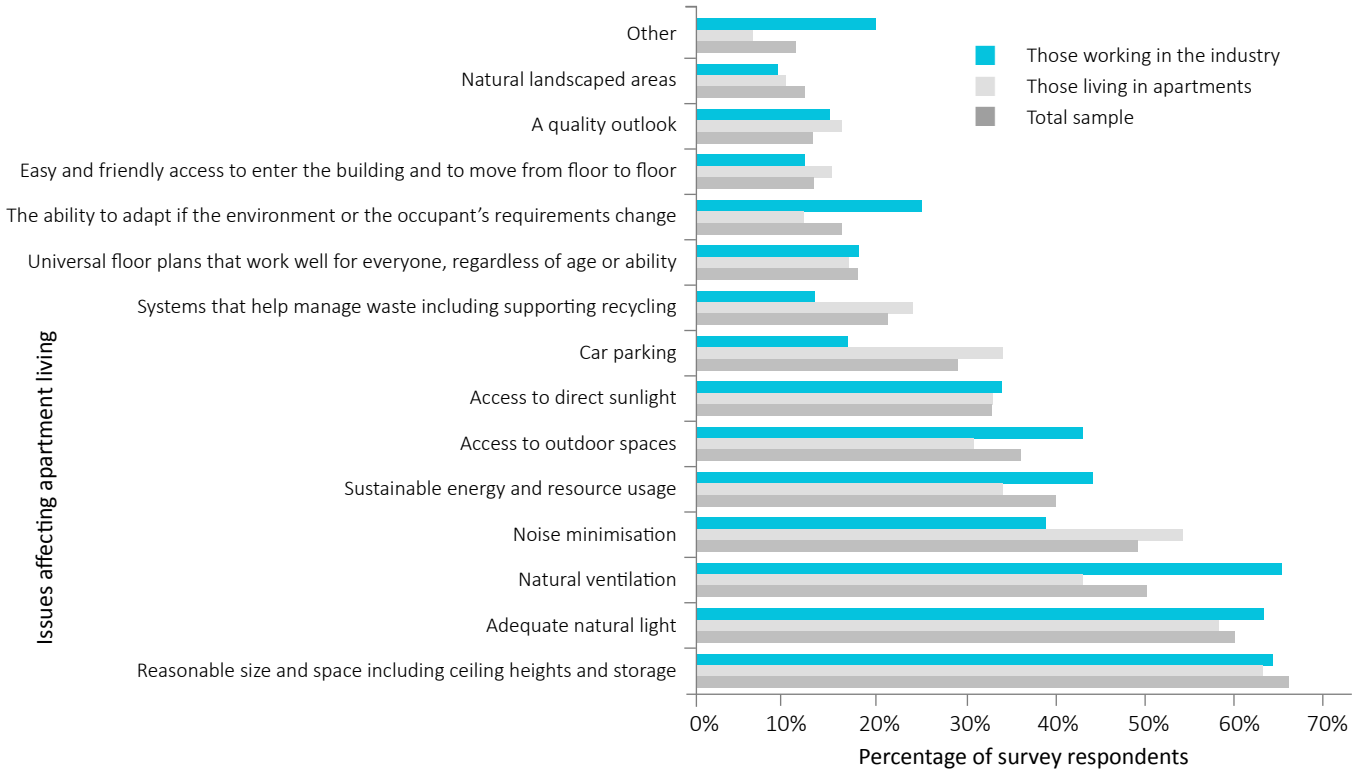


Figure 7: Most important issues affecting apartment living by survey respondents.

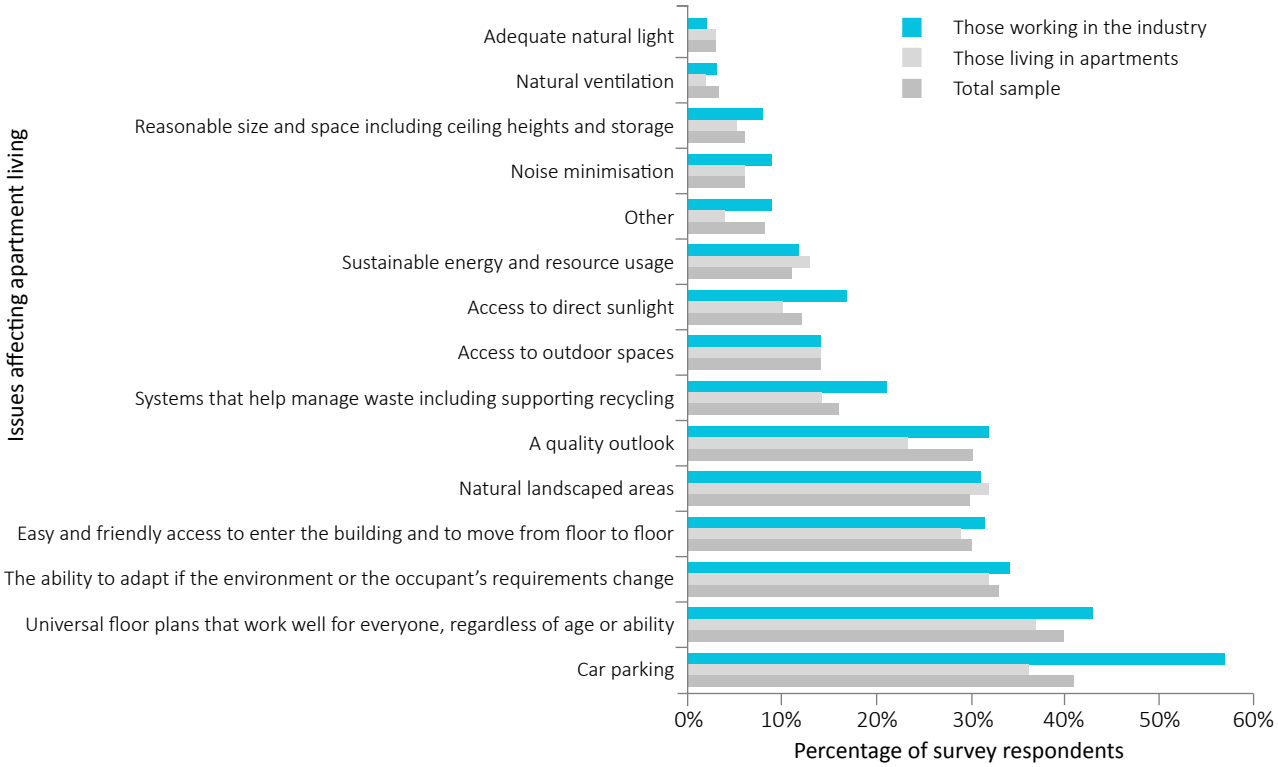


Figure 8: Least important issues affecting apartment living by survey respondents.

3.2 WORKSHOPS

The stakeholder workshops highlight differing attitudes to regulation for internal apartment amenity. In general it was observed that:

- Some workshop participants feel there is a policy vacuum and a consistent approach is required
- There are conflicting views about what are appropriate outcomes in relation to internal amenity
- There is a general acceptance about the need to improve standards relating to outlook, design of common areas (entry and circulation), size of apartments, daylight and sunlight, landscaping, adaptability and car parking
- In terms of implementation, there is general support among industry and local government for a performance-based model, which incorporates opportunities to vary planning provisions based on site context and innovation, notwithstanding that some respondents do not see a need for regulation
- Community respondents generally favour a mandatory approach to regulation
- There are some concerns that regulation could impact on development costs, affordability and innovation
- Some respondents note that many issues raised in the discussion paper are covered by the National Construction Code (NCC). In general, there is a view that regulation should remain in one place and this may require a review of the NCC.

3.3 INTERVIEWS

The interviews highlight differing attitudes to regulation for internal apartment amenity. In general it was observed that:

- Some interviewees are not aware of any need for 'new' regulation on internal amenity
- Some interviewees feel there is a policy vacuum concerning apartment design and a consistent approach is required
- Daylight, outlook and size were the most widely discussed issues. A range of views were shared about the degree of amenity currently provided to apartment residents
- In terms of implementation, there is general support for a performance-based model that incorporates opportunities to vary provisions based on site context and innovation, notwithstanding that some respondents do not see the need for new regulation
- Some respondents are concerned that new regulation could affect development costs and reduce innovation
- Some respondents note that many issues identified in the discussion paper are covered by the National Construction Code (NCC). Most industry stakeholders feel regulation should be in one place, and if there are deficiencies in design, these should be addressed by reviewing the NCC.

3.4 WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

The following graphs (Figures 9 to 12) outline how each issue raised in the discussion paper was rated by written respondents (community organisations, government, industry, individuals and the total sample).

Figure 13 shows the number of written respondents that commented on issues, implementation and other issues.

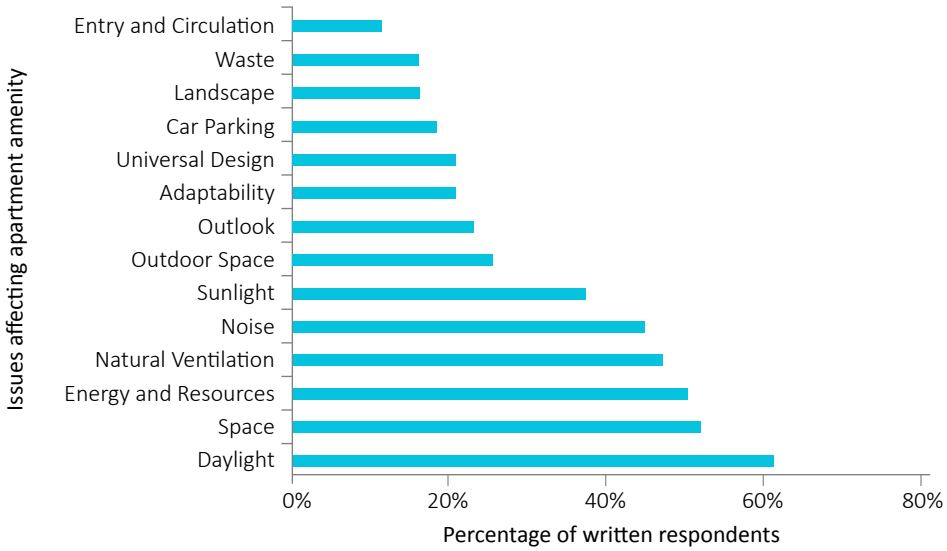


Figure 9: Most important issues affecting apartment living by written respondents.

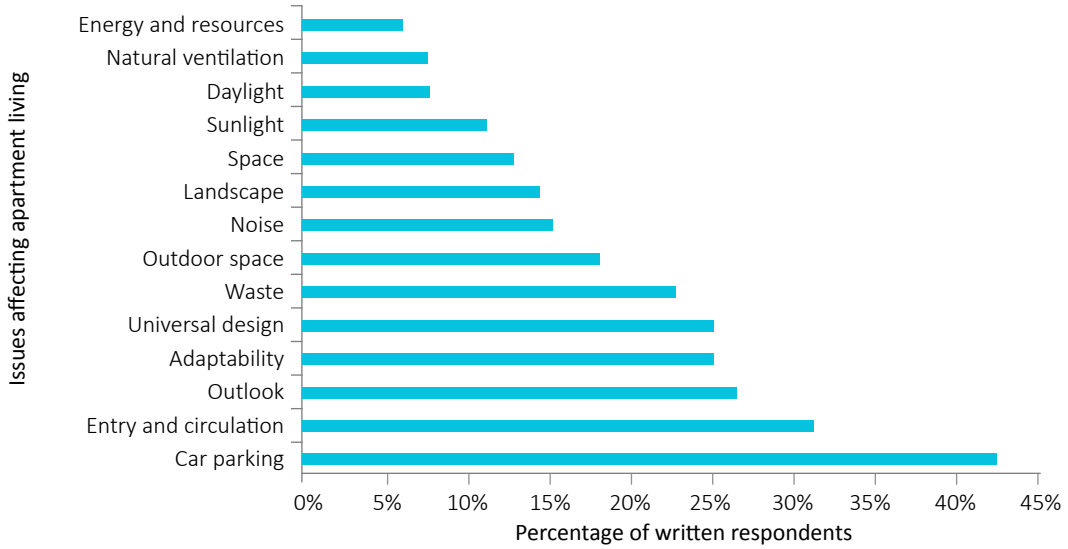


Figure 10: Least important issues affecting apartment living by written respondents.

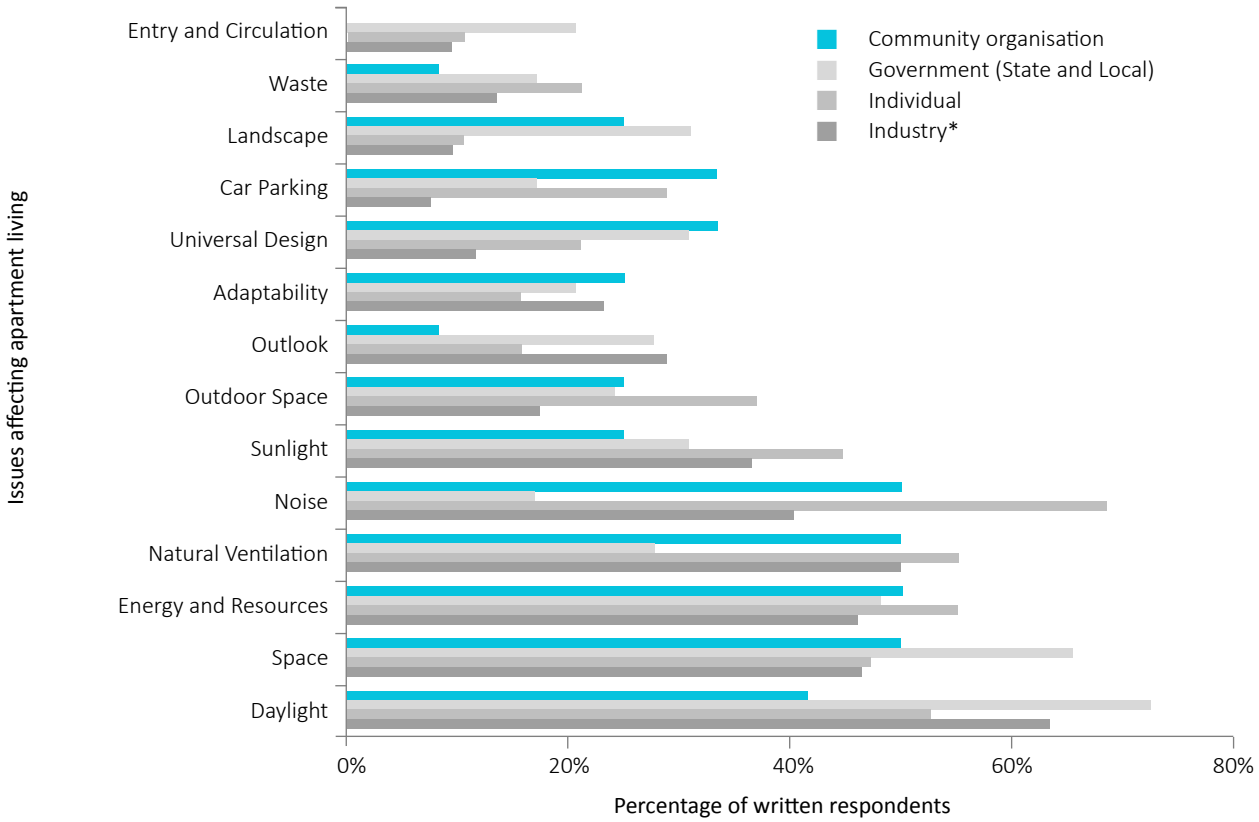


Figure 11: Most important issues affecting apartment living by written respondent stakeholder group.

*Planning and development consultants, architects, building designers and property developers.

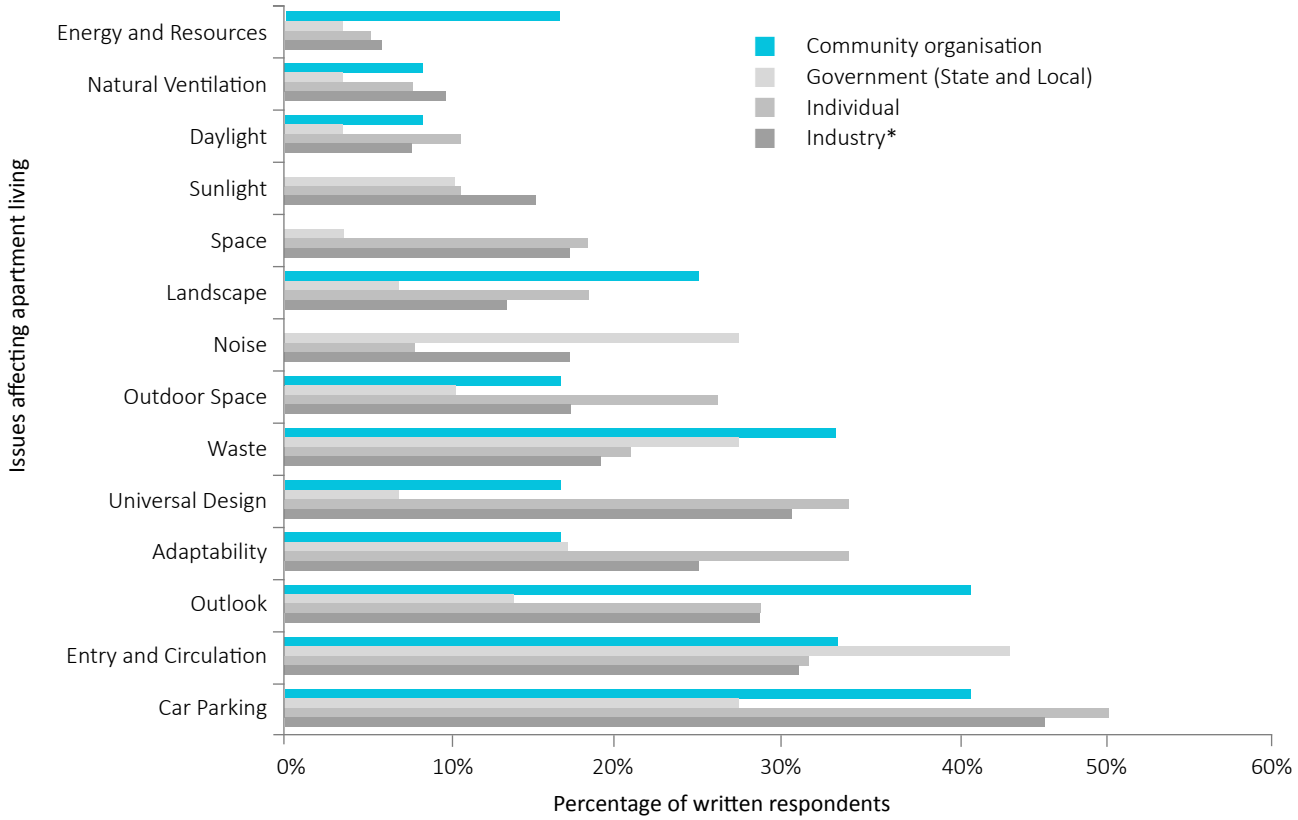


Figure 12: Least important issues affecting apartment living by written respondent stakeholder groups.

*Planning and development consultants, architects, building designers and property developers.

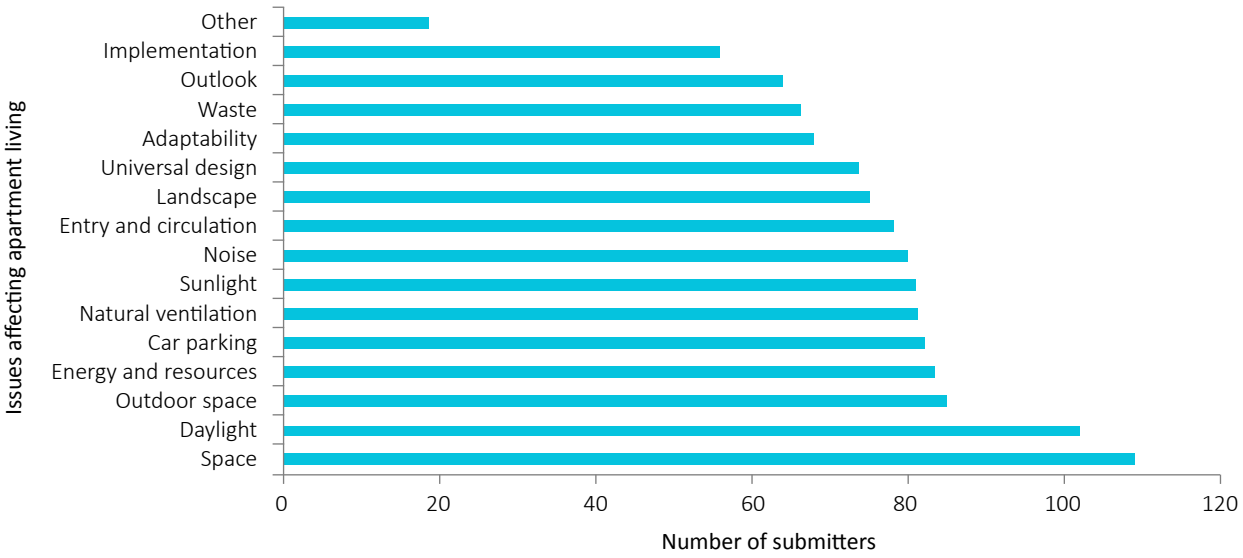


Figure 13: Number of written respondents that commented on the issues.

The following graphs (Figures 14 and 15) outline how each issue raised in the discussion paper was rated by survey and written respondents.

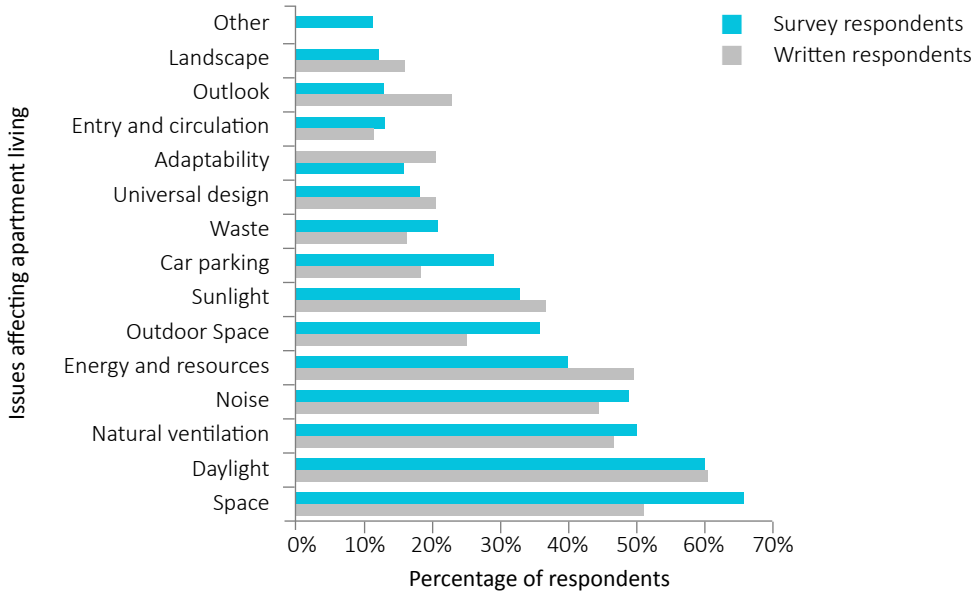


Figure 14: Most important issues affecting apartment living by comparison of survey and written respondents.

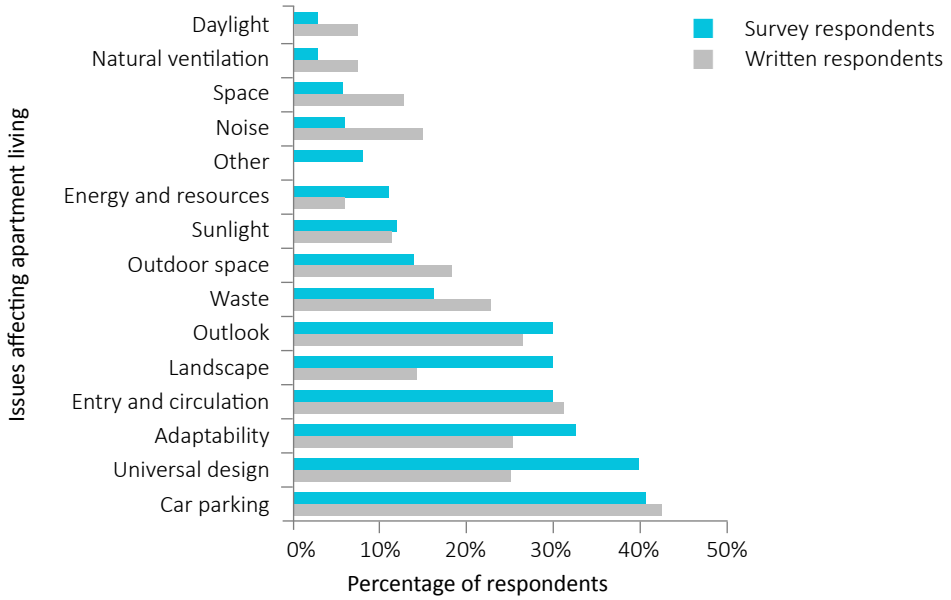


Figure 15: Least important issues affecting apartment living by comparison of survey and written respondents.

Figure 16 ranks the issues affecting apartment living from 'most' to 'least' important based on feedback from survey and written respondents.

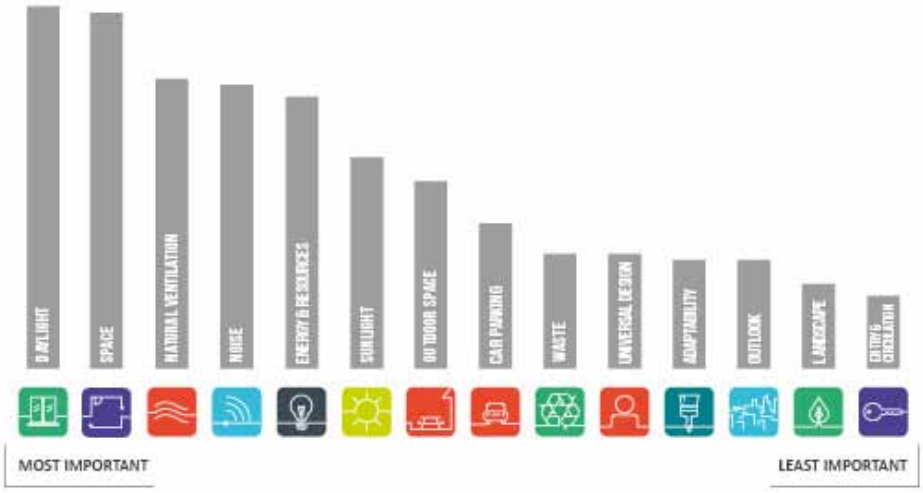


Figure 16: Ranking of issues affecting apartment living.

3.7 VIEWS OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

COUNCILS

Councils are very supportive of better managing the amenity of apartment living through introducing additional guidance in the planning system and possibly the building system. Many councils are experiencing similar issues with apartment developments irrespective of their geographical area.

Many council officers express that the existing *Guidelines for Higher Density Residential Development* (Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2004) are not an effective tool for decision-making as they have insufficient statutory weight in the planning permit process.

Councils call for a performance-based planning system that will enable design standards to be set while enabling innovation. Officers indicate that the current (ResCode) provisions within Clause 55 of the *Victoria Planning Provisions* are insufficient to assess apartment developments. A range of approaches were put forward by councils to address the amenity issues.

Several council officers claim that high quality apartments can be provided without substantially affecting development costs, and that there are long-term benefits of a well-designed apartment.

> *"The need to improve the design quality of new homes while also improving housing affordability has sometimes been framed as a choice between the two. The quality of new residential development, however, should not be reduced to the lowest common denominator in pursuit of affordability. Well-designed homes help ensure they are energy efficient and don't have high energy, management and maintenance costs for the occupant."* (City of Melbourne #105)

DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

Development industry representatives broadly support the need for a consistent approach to managing the amenity of apartments as it provides greater certainty for the industry. However, they are concerned that new standards could increase development costs, impact on the development potential of sites and housing supply and affordability.

> *"It is essential that any policy with respect to apartments is considered within the parameters of what Government considers to be affordable."* (The Property Council of Australia #136)

> *"The development and implementation of any approach to delivering better apartments must take into account the significant role apartments play on providing an affordable choice for homebuyers and renters."* (Urban Development Institute of Australia (Victoria) #115)

It was also expressed that new standards should not duplicate existing regulation and that careful consideration should be given to the placement of new policy between planning and building systems. Where new planning regulation is required this should be cognisant of individual site context and be flexible enough to allow for design innovation, variety and choice.

PLANNING AND DESIGN PRACTITIONERS

Planning and design practitioners (architects, building designers and planning consultants) support the introduction of new amenity guidance to provide greater consistency in decision-making, however they have mixed views around the type of standards that could apply.

There is some support, particularly among planning groups, for the introduction of performance-based controls such as a 'Rescode for apartments' and for regulation to be flexible enough to facilitate design excellence.

Planning and design practitioners emphasise that well-designed apartments rely on thorough site analysis and design response and that the size of an apartment is not always the only factor in achieving the best outcome.

> *"MAArchitects supports the introduction of apartment design guidelines, similar to those currently existing in NSW in the form of the SEPP65 framework. We believe that the key issue to consider when developing a new framework for apartment design for Victoria is how to raise the bar on design quality without stifling innovation, or overly restricting development and impacting on affordability."* (MAArchitects #74)

> *"We believe that addressing the issues raised in the discussion paper is critical to ensuring that Melbourne delivers well-designed apartments that are functional and provide a high level of amenity. As a way of implementing the key elements for better apartments, we recommend that a predominantly performance-based apartment code be included in the Victorian Planning Provisions that is similar to clause 54 and clause 55 of the Planning Scheme (the Scheme)."* (Collie Pty Ltd #103)

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Community members, including existing apartment residents, community groups and the broader community, are genuinely interested in making the internal living spaces better for occupants, and have mixed views about how this may be achieved.

> *"We also see the need to address the broader issues of context and place making. Additional planning mechanisms are needed which should go hand in hand to develop better housing outcomes ensuring liveability and increasing opportunities for people to live productive and fulfilling lives."* (Fishermans Bend Network #104)

Community members call for greater information for buyers and renters of apartments in terms of what to look out for and what plans mean with regard to space and amenity.

There is general support for mandatory standards to provide greater certainty for the community of the development outcomes.

While minimising development costs is important, there may be some specific features of an apartment for which consumers will be willing to accept higher rent for or a higher purchase price. Key examples are daylight, sunlight and ventilation. In the community survey, an overwhelming 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that *'an airy apartment that has good natural daylight, direct sunlight and good ventilation is essential and is worth paying more for'*.

> *"We feel that there are a number of development outcomes identified in the Better Apartments paper that should be mandatory through regulation. Other issues affecting apartment amenity should be addressed as part of a performance-based mechanism. We suggest mandatory standards would help to streamline the planning assessment process."* (Community Housing Federation of Victoria #108)

Some community members commented that consumers may be willing to trade off internal amenity for good locational amenity when choosing an apartment. Locational amenity includes the proximity of the apartment to local facilities such as public transport, social services, parks and/or shops.

> *"When purchasing or leasing an apartment, every household – except for the very rich – makes trade-offs between the costs of these attributes and their individual budget constraints. For issues that buyers or tenants are not able to assess, such as certain safety aspects or excessive noise transmissions between apartments, there is a need for robust regulation. However, dwelling features such as ceiling heights or floor areas are assessed by prospective buyers or tenants and taken into consideration as part of their decision-making process, so they can optimise their own particular preferred mix of attributes within their budget."* (Committee for Melbourne #132).

According to apartment residents the top three benefits of apartment living are proximity to services, low maintenance and a home that is a suitable size to suit their lifestyle. In comparison to other stakeholders, apartment residents view noise minimisation as more important than other design issues, and appropriate car parking design and natural ventilation as less important.

4 DETAILED FINDINGS

4.1

ISSUE 1 | DAYLIGHT

KEY FINDINGS

Access to daylight is the most important issue affecting apartment amenity, particularly to living areas.

General views:

- Daylight access affects the health and wellbeing of apartment residents.
- There is a need to set minimum standards for daylight access.

Mixed views:

- The best method for determining an appropriate minimum standard for daylight access.
- Whether 'borrowed' light provides an acceptable means of daylight access.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Many survey respondents (60%) view access to 'adequate natural daylight' as a significant issue for apartment living. They strongly agreed (80%) with the statement *'an airy apartment that has good natural daylight, direct sunlight and good ventilation is essential and is worth paying more for'*.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Most written respondents (60%) view access to daylight as the most important issue for apartment living. Government and industry stakeholders value access to daylight more than the general public and other stakeholders.

The vast majority of written respondents believe that access to adequate daylight is vitally important to the health and wellbeing of apartment residents.

> *"The provision of good natural light (daylight) within an apartment is considered central to the quality of life for the occupant."* (Brimbank City Council #69)

> *"The construction of higher density housing has the potential to impact the mental health and longevity of residents by exposing them to a number of environmental stressors including noise (from neighbours and traffic), poor air quality and inadequate ambient light."* (University of Melbourne #58)

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

What spaces within apartments are the most important in terms of access to daylight?

Many stakeholders consider it important to provide daylight access to habitable rooms such as living areas (e.g. lounge rooms and dining areas). However, there are mixed views on whether habitable rooms include bedrooms. Other stakeholders add that the provision of daylight access to kitchens is particularly important for personal safety.

"Living rooms are more important than bedrooms in terms of daylight requirements." (Port Phillip City Council #79)

"All rooms (except for bathrooms, laundries, hallways and similar) should be provided natural light. This includes kitchens, which are often seen as non-habitable rooms, but which are becoming more like secondary living rooms, particularly in open plan apartments." (Individual, Footscray #16)

"Kitchen use requires adequate light for safety, particularly when chopping food." (Best Environments #120).

"CASBE considers it is appropriate that all habitable rooms receive adequate amounts of daylight. This includes living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens and studies." (Municipal Association of Victoria – The Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) #50)

Do you think daylight should be required in secondary spaces such as corridors and bathrooms?

Most stakeholders agree the provision of daylight to secondary spaces such as corridors and bathrooms is not essential. Good daylight access to corridors within the apartment building is considered important for personal safety.

"Daylight into bathrooms is not important." (Moreland City Council #78)

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

Is it acceptable to provide borrowed daylight to bedrooms?

Stakeholders have diverse views about the acceptability of borrowed daylight to bedrooms, particularly for apartments that have a single aspect. 'Borrowed light' is where light enters an interior room or passage from an adjoining room that has windows or a skylight.

Stakeholders, mostly from the development industry, express support for apartments with borrowed light and believe it is acceptable if the space is used primarily as a study and/or is not the main bedroom. They contend that borrowed light makes good use of space and maintains housing affordability. In addition, some of these stakeholders also state that the apartment market is diverse and borrowed daylight may appeal to some occupants.

"We know that borrowed light bedrooms can be cleverly delivered and that a well-designed apartment with borrowed light can meet amenity objectives and in many cases make better use of space." (The Property Council of Australia #136)

"If an apartment with borrowed light is more affordable, the purchaser may trade off on price to allow them to enter the market rather than being locked out." (Urban Development Institute of Australia #115)

In contrast community and local government stakeholders call for borrowed light to bedrooms to be limited within a development or banned for reasons of liveability and poor internal amenity.

"Limit the number of apartments with internal (borrowed light) bedrooms to a maximum of 10% of the total apartments proposed." (City of Yarra #41)

> *"Proposing situations where 'battle-axe' bedroom layouts and borrowed-light arrangements might be acceptable, and the form they may take."* (City of Darebin #93)

> *"Melbourne prides itself on being a liveable city, borrowed light is not liveable and should be outlawed immediately."* (Anonymous, Camberwell #38)

Most stakeholders also agree that a well-designed apartment includes bedrooms that do not rely on borrowed light and this can be avoided with early planning.

> *"Saddlebacks and borrowed light apartments are a compromise and should be avoided with master planning."* (Elenberg Fraser #135)

Even though there is no consensus among stakeholders regarding borrowed light, many stakeholders suggest regulating borrowed light in bedrooms through guidance on the setbacks, dimensions and layout of rooms and light shafts.

What is the best way of determining appropriate daylight access?

Many stakeholders are concerned that uncertainty about daylight access in the planning process is leading to inconsistent decision-making. However, there are mixed views on the appropriate means of determining daylight access. For instance, some stakeholders query whether daylight modelling could be standardised.

The provision of daylight is affected by numerous factors including the depth of the apartment, the distance to a neighbouring development, the ceiling height and the orientation and position of windows.

Council officers highlight the need to consider appropriate building separation to maintain good access to daylight. Other stakeholders add that achieving building separation and ventilation standards could avoid the need to set minimum standards for daylight.

Development industry stakeholders claim the National Construction Code (NCC) adequately addresses daylight access. Other stakeholders believe that as the NCC does not consider outlook and building separation it does not adequately address daylight access.

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for daylight include:

- Providing minimum standards for the separation distance between buildings
- Providing more than one source of daylight to an apartment
- Limiting the number of apartments with borrowed light
- Limiting the height of building walls adjacent to courtyards
- Avoiding the use of light courts
- Providing minimum standards for ceiling heights, room depths, window sizes, saddleback rooms with borrowed light and light wells.

4.2

ISSUE 2 | SUNLIGHT

KEY FINDINGS

Apartments should receive access to sunlight, although access to daylight is more important.

General views:

- Sunlight needs to be balanced with thermal comfort requirements.

Mixed view:

- The best means of ensuring the majority of apartments receive adequate access to sunlight.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents consider sunlight to be less important than daylight for apartment living – 33% of respondents rate 'access to direct sunlight' as one of the most important design considerations.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Written respondents do not view access to sunlight as important as other amenity issues. It ranks sixth out of the 14 design issues – 37% of respondents identifying sunlight as one of the most important issues.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

Should there be rules to ensure a majority of apartments receive sunlight?

Many stakeholders support mandating that the majority of apartments within an apartment building receive access to sunlight. This is because it would reduce the need for artificial lighting, makes apartments more energy efficient and support the health and wellbeing of residents.

In contrast, some stakeholders highlight that sunlight can affect the thermal comfort of an apartment, and increase energy costs.

> *"…there should be guidelines to ensure a majority of apartments receive adequate sunlight for health and psychological wellbeing."* (Australian Institute of Landscape Architects #100)

> *"Sunlight is not always a good thing. Sunlight in summer tends to generate heat and as a consequence more demand on refrigerated cooling systems."* (Anonymous, Brunswick East #8)

> *"Access to sunlight needs to be considered in combination with measures to improve the thermal efficiency and comfort of those apartments receiving direct sunlight."* (City of Port Phillip #79)

Are there other options that can provide for thermal comfort?

Some community and government stakeholders believe the thermal comfort of an apartment must be taken into account when considering access to sunlight. Stakeholders suggest using a range of environmentally sustainable design features such as double glazing, insulation, external shading devices, landscaping, ventilation, ceiling fans and windows that can open.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

What are the best means of ensuring the majority of apartments receive adequate access to sunlight?

Limiting the number of south-facing apartments in a development and introducing minimum standards for separation distances were suggested mainly by community and government stakeholders. However, development industry stakeholders claim that south-facing apartments (without restricted views) may be a more affordable apartment option for buyers. They also state that people living in south-facing apartments in inner Melbourne sometimes access views of the city and the bay and remain cooler in summer. Interview and workshop participants reinforce that any standards or guidance over south-facing apartments should take into account views and vistas.

Stakeholders frequently reference the New South Wales Government's *State Environmental Planning Policy No. 65 – Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development* (SEPP 65) as an appropriate tool. Other environmental assessment tools referenced included in the *Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard* (BESS), *Sustainable Design in the Planning Process* (SDPP) and the *Moreland Apartment Design Code.*

> *"Living rooms and private open space areas should need to be designed to receive at least two hours of sunlight at the winter solstice, between 9am and 3pm."* (Bayside City Council #98)

> *"…daylight and sunlight access are harder to achieve in medium or high-density environments than they are in low-density environments. Taking this into consideration, SEPP 65 recommends two hours of sunlight access in mid-winter for Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, but three hours for the rest of the state. Again, there are potential learnings here for similar guidelines in a Victorian context."* (Committee for Melbourne #132)

What areas should receive the most sunlight?

Many stakeholders identify living areas, private open space and, to a lesser extent bedrooms, as the key areas of an apartment that should have direct access to sunlight.

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for sunlight include:

- Mandating that a proportion of apartments receive access to sunlight at certain times of the year
- Maximising the orientation of apartments to the north, east and west
- Mandating that only a proportion of apartments are south-facing
- Introducing minimum standards or guidance for building separation distances, light well dimensions, size and location of windows
- Providing thermal comfort measures (e.g. double glazing and external shading devices)
- Utilising existing measurement tools (e.g. the BESS – Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard).

4.3 ISSUE 3 | SPACE

KEY FINDINGS

Adequate space is essential to apartment amenity. Functional space is just as important as size.

General views:

- Setting minimum standards for room sizes within an apartment is more beneficial than setting minimum standards for an overall apartment size.
- Provision of a variety of apartments (i.e. different numbers of bedrooms) will help meet the needs of a diversity of households.
- Adequate storage space contributes to apartment amenity.

Mixed views:

- The best measure of an appropriate minimum apartment size and ceiling height.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The majority of survey respondents (66%) consider that providing 'reasonable size and space including ceiling heights and storage' is the most important aspect of apartment living. 'Space' is therefore the most important issue according survey respondents.

Survey respondents (76%) strongly agree that *'there should be minimum apartment sizes to ensure apartments have reasonable sized rooms and storage'*.

Limited storage within an apartment is the least popular aspect of apartment living (63%).

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Written respondents (51%) view space as the second most important issue for apartment living.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

Do we need to set minimum apartment sizes in Victoria?

Stakeholders in support of establishing minimum standards believe it will ensure apartments are functional and accessible.

"There should be a minimum size for apartments in Victoria with minimum ceiling heights. I think the biggest issue we have faced is finding apartments of different sizes that can house more than two people or two people with a child. It is difficult to find 3 bedroom apartments with reasonable bedroom sizes. Many bedrooms can barely fit a twin bed let alone a wardrobe." (Brenda Lin, Prahran #25)

"The space and size of apartments being built is a primary concern for the real estate industry with 72% of agents surveyed agreeing there is a need for minimum apartment sizes in Victoria. With increasing demand for affordable properties across the city, the diminishing size and quality of one and two-bedroom apartments is affecting agents who are struggling to sell and rent poorly designed dwellings. …New-build one-bedroom apartments can be below 50m^2, with some poorly designed with a lack of adequate ventilation. There is general consensus from REIV members that one-bedroom apartments should be no less than 50m^2 and two-bedroom properties should be at least 62m^2." (Real Estate Institute of Victoria #87)

Development industry representatives and some other stakeholders oppose setting minimum standards for apartment size for the following reasons:

- Mandating minimum apartment size could increase the cost of new apartments and affect housing affordability
- The layout design of an apartment is a more important determinant of amenity than the size of the space
- Setting minimum size standards will limit creativity in design and result in a lack of diverse apartments
- Well-designed apartments will not necessarily result from setting minimum size requirements

"Whilst minimum sizes for apartments are good in principle, there is concern around the impacts that the introduction of minimum standards may have on construction costs and in turn, housing affordability." (City of Hobsons Bay #56)

Do we need to increase minimum ceiling heights for apartments in Victoria?

Community and local government stakeholders strongly support introducing standards to increase the minimum ceiling height of an apartment. Higher ceilings can create a sense of openness, improve ventilation and daylight access.

"An increase in minimum ceiling heights is also supported by the majority of REIV members as it would improve ventilation and access to daylight. In addition, the REIV would support the introduction of a minimum industry standard alongside the existing building regulations." (Real Estate Institute of Victoria #87)

Development industry stakeholders do not support increasing standards for ceiling heights because it could increase construction costs and energy costs (i.e. heating and cooling), making apartments less affordable.

> *"Residential developments are typically 3m floor to floor. The slab is 200mm and the ceiling space 150mm leaving living rooms with a 2650mm ceiling. This is considered a high ceiling. Higher ceilings require more heating. Higher ceilings increase construction cost and reduce affordability and mandatory height areas (e.g. 18m in Port Phillip) a floor to floor height over 3m will result in one less floor of development. The land cost will need to be spread over fewer apartments resulting in a higher purchase price."* (Plus Architecture #65)

> *"To ensure that [the] current role of apartments in providing affordable housing options is maintained, minimum and maximum requirements, sizes and ceiling heights must be avoided."* (Urban Development Institute of Australia (Victoria) #115)

Should larger developments be required to include different types of apartments catering to different types of households?

Most stakeholders strongly support encouraging a mix of apartment types (i.e. different apartment sizes and bedroom numbers) to cater for different household needs.

> *"A variety of dwelling types is important to ensure that different family structures and types have the ability to live comfortably in different building typologies. Larger developments should therefore be required to include different types of apartments and diversity in the number of bedrooms."* (City of Whittlesea #51)

Workshop and interview participants believe the current supply of apartments in Victoria best caters for single person and two person households. Industry workshop participants assert that there is demand for apartments with three or more bedrooms and that the housing market is beginning to respond.

Some stakeholders also highlight that there is demand for smaller apartments (e.g. studio and 1 bedroom apartments) for student accommodation.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

Do we need to set minimum standards for room sizes?

Stakeholders strongly believe that the size of rooms is a more important amenity factor than the overall size of an apartment. Having functional room spaces is what matters most.

Some stakeholders suggest that minimum standards could be set for the size of living rooms and bedrooms.

> *"I have discovered the experience is not about size, aspect, balconies or communal space it is about… proportions (rooms should be capable of fitting the basic furniture required for that room's activity)."* (Anonymous, Melbourne #62)

Do we need to set minimum standards for storage areas?

Community survey respondents are concerned about a lack of storage space and some people believe minimum standards should be set. Workshop participants commented that apartments are generally poorly designed for storage and that more storage areas are needed within and outside an apartment.

The need for accessible storage for bicycles, motorcycles and waste disposal facilities feature as important issues.

> *"The provision of adequate storage space is also an ongoing issue, particularly with the provision of smaller apartments and Council would welcome a mandated requirement in relation to both the provision and size of storage cages in multi-unit developments and adequate storage within apartments for example: linen cupboards."* (Moonee Valley City Council #143)

In addition, the security of storage cages within car parks is raised as a significant issue. It is suggested that guidance be provided on storage security measures.

> *"To reduce the number of incidents change is needed to the design rules and the planning process. The current style of open cyclone mesh allows offenders to view items and break into the cages that allow the greatest return. The access is gained via cutting the wire, cutting the padlock or the gate latch. To help reduce the number of thefts we would recommend that the cage walls be made of solid construction and not an open style mesh. Corrugated metal style would suffice. The locking mechanism should be similar to deadlocks and not a padlock to further enhance security."* (Prahran Proactive Unit Victoria Police #86)

How do we determine an appropriate minimum standard for apartment size?

The Planning Institute of Australia, the Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association and some councils support minimum apartment sizes provided they are discretionary and performance-based measures that can be varied based on a diversity of factors, such as lot size, orientation, outlook, locational amenity and other factors.

> *"Consideration should be given to a combination of mandatory minimum apartment size (with size dependant on number of bedrooms) and the use of performance standards to reflect the day to day needs of residents as well as ensuring space for visitors."* (City of Yarra #41)

In addition, some stakeholders believe there should be a standard method for measuring the size of an apartment to inform potential tenants and purchasers of the usable floor area.

How do we determine an appropriate minimum standard for ceiling heights?

Stakeholders in support of increasing minimum standards for ceiling heights have diverse views regarding the best approach for determining an acceptable ceiling height. It is acknowledged that ceiling heights are currently regulated through the National Construction Code (NCC).

Some stakeholders suggest increasing the ceiling height of an overall apartment (i.e. to 2.7m), while others suggest ceiling heights should be varied for different rooms. For example, some stakeholders believe that 2.7m is an appropriate ceiling height for habitable rooms (i.e. living areas and bedrooms) and that non-habitable rooms (i.e. bathrooms) could be lower.

An alternative view expressed by the Urban Development Industry of Australia is that increased ceiling heights are easier to achieve in areas where building height controls are based on storeys, rather than metres.

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for apartment space include:

- Introducing standards for minimum overall apartment sizes and/or room sizes
- Increasing the minimum standard for ceiling heights
- Ensuring apartment buildings have a range of different apartment types and storage options based on the number of bedrooms.

4.4

ISSUE 4 | OUTLOOK

KEY FINDINGS

A 'green' outlook is valued by most people so long as privacy is not compromised.

General views:

- Defining a good outlook will largely depend on the site context.
- There is a need to address privacy and outlook requirements in a balanced way.
- Residential buildings should be effectively designed so as to not limit the development potential of adjoining sites by affecting the outlook and privacy needs of future residents.

Mixed view:

- The most effective design responses to achieve a good outlook.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents consider outlook as less important for apartment living than most other issues – 13% of respondents rate 'a quality outlook' as the most important issue, and 30% of respondents rate it as the least important issue.

A quality outlook is less important to some industry stakeholders than those who live in apartments.

People living in apartments who are less concerned about outlook, are more likely to be renting than owners.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Written respondents have a broad range of views about the importance of outlook – 27% ranked it as the least important issue and 23% ranked it as one of the most important issues.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

What are the essential qualities of a good outlook?

Many stakeholders believe the provision of a good outlook is beneficial. Local government and industry workshop participants link the provision of a good outlook to improved mental heath and highlight the importance of landscape design in improving outlook.

> *"It is considered that the features of a quality outlook includes direct outlook to streets, laneways and public reserves, internal landscaped areas and distant skyline views."* (Moreland City Council #78)

Other industry stakeholders believe a good outlook contributes to the price of an apartment, and that apartments with poorer outlooks provide opportunities for more affordable housing.

> *"We recognise that an outlook provides a visual connection to the outside world however what that outlook is will depend on the location of the site. An outlook with trees, an urban landscape or a view may be the most desirable but it is also the most expensive to purchase."* (Property Council of Australia #136)

The Urban Development Institute of Australia asserts that liveability is not dependent solely on outlook – some residents trade off a good outlook for access to services, shops and open space.

Stakeholders are fairly consistent in their expectations of what is considered an acceptable outlook. A quality outlook occurs where there are no views into other apartments and buildings, where streets or public open spaces can be overlooked, a sense of openness, and the outlook is interesting (i.e. street wall art).

An outlook to green space is valued by all stakeholders, with distant landscape views being preferred. Several workshop participants indicate that a good outlook or adequate separation could lead to other amenity benefits such as more daylight.

Darebin City Council provided the following checklist of outlook considerations:

- *"Being able to see the sky and weather*
- *Being able to see for a reasonable horizontal distance*
- *Not looking directly into another building at close range*
- *Not feeling overlooked by others*
- *Having a view of landscaping and/or people and activity in public spaces."* (City of Darebin #93)

Should living spaces be treated differently to other spaces within an apartment in regard to outlook?

Many stakeholders believe 'primary outlooks' are more important than 'secondary outlooks'. A primary outlook relates to rooms where occupants spend most of their time (e.g. living rooms), whereas a secondary outlook refers to an outlook from other rooms (e.g. bedrooms).

Primary outlooks should be provided through greater separation distances between buildings, while secondary outlooks can be provided through light courts or courtyards with adequate daylight.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

How can a good outlook be achieved while ensuring privacy?

Stakeholders recognise the tension between providing a high quality outlook and achieving privacy, particularly in locations where multiple apartments interface. Community stakeholders feel that reliance on screening is symptomatic of overdeveloping the site. They believe that requiring screening of 1.7m in height is a detrimental outcome for living areas.

Landscaping is an alternative suggested approach to reducing overlooking while providing a good outlook.

Some community stakeholders also suggest that where outlook over a public area is not possible, a minimum separation distance should be provided between buildings to avoid the need for screening. Sharing building separation between properties is suggested as an alternative means of providing outlook for narrower sites.

A range of building separation distances are suggested for providing a good outlook. Many stakeholders refer to the current 9m separation distance specified in Clause 55 of planning schemes. Other stakeholders consider that a separation distance between buildings of greater than 9m is needed and that the distance should be measured from the property boundary.

> *"Increase [separation] with building height. 10 metres from shared boundaries is the preferred setback for buildings over 40 metres. Separation could be reduced to a minimum of 5 metres for buildings between 20 and 40 metres with justification".* (City of Port Phillip #79)

How do we ensure apartments are designed not to limit the development potential of future apartments on adjoining sites?

Ensuring the design of residential buildings do not limit the development potential of adjoining sites by diminishing the outlook and privacy opportunities of future residents (i.e. equitable development) is a key consideration.

Many stakeholders, particularly local councils, highlight the need to develop principles to ensure equitable development is achieved when considering appropriate separation distances.

> *"An increase in the number and size of apartment buildings has clearly shown a need to carefully consider setbacks from abutting private land and narrow laneways to ensure ongoing amenity protection and equitable development opportunities. In some instances, there has been a failure of designers to properly consider future development on adjacent sites which has led to poor designs."* (City of Yarra #41)

Some stakeholders are concerned that a lack of policy direction regarding equitable development could result in inconsistent planning decisions.

Local government stakeholders assert that the requirement for a good site analysis and design response is the best means for ensuring the best development outcomes.

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for outlook include:

- Providing minimum separation distances between apartments and buildings
- Orienting apartment windows to avoid views into other buildings or the need for screening
- Encouraging outlooks to 'green' public spaces and other interesting features.

4.5 ISSUE 5 | NATURAL VENTILATION

KEY FINDINGS

Natural ventilation is a key contributor to high quality apartment living.

General views:

- Natural ventilation is important in areas such as living rooms and bedrooms.
- There are multiple design solutions to ensure effective natural ventilation.
- Thermal comfort is affected by natural ventilation.

Mixed views:

- Whether apartments should be dual aspect to accommodate cross ventilation.
- Whether natural ventilation is necessary in areas than can be mechanically ventilated (i.e. bathrooms and laundries).
- Whether the existing National Construction Code (NCC) is an adequate mechanism for regulating natural ventilation.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Many survey respondents (50%) consider natural ventilation to be the third most important issue for apartment living. Of these respondents industry stakeholders (65%) believe natural ventilation is the most important aspect of apartment living compared to people living in apartments (43%).

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

The importance of natural ventilation for apartment living is reinforced by 47% of written respondents.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

How can access to fresh air in an apartment be improved?

There is general agreement that natural ventilation should be achieved in areas such as living rooms and bedrooms and that it is linked to issues of thermal comfort and energy efficiency.

Survey respondents report that a lack of ventilation creates a poor quality living environment. It results in 'stuffiness' and causes lingering odours from food or household rubbish chutes in apartment hallways.

Many community and local government stakeholders believe that the ability to open windows is important for natural ventilation, although they acknowledge this may be difficult in some high-rise developments.

Some stakeholders recognise that while bathrooms and laundries may not require windows, they need sufficient ventilation to avoid dampness and mould.

> *"Being able to open windows even a small amount (for safety reasons in high-rise) is very important."* (Blackburn Village Residents Group #75).

Community members, local government and design practitioners strongly support enhancing natural ventilation through having a dual aspect apartment design, or by having shallower apartment depths, facade variations, and/or by stipulating window opening, size and location. A dual aspect apartment is an apartment with external walls facing in more than one direction, allowing the possibility of natural cross ventilation from openings in those walls.

> *"There should be requirements for minimum provision of natural ventilation in apartments, which take into account the role of operable windows, room proportions, cross ventilation, the ability to control air movement, and the size and positioning of windows."* (Anonymous, Abbotsford #37)

> *"Variation in depth across a single aspect apartment can effectively create pockets of dual aspect by forming 'bay windows'. This enhances opportunities for cross-ventilation and maximises the width of the façade. Even subtle dips in the plan can increase aspect and allow for arrangement of openings which provide cross-ventilation."* (Elenberg Fraser #135)

However, development industry stakeholders believe that providing cross-ventilation to a majority of apartments in a development is unachievable. They assert that the existing National Construction Code (NCC) is the most appropriate mechanism to regulate natural ventilation. Conversely, local government stakeholders believe the NCC provisions are inadequate.

> *"Dual aspect apartments are ideal to enable cross-ventilation, however it would not be feasible to set a minimum requirements for these types of apartments, as it would significantly reduce apartment yield."* (ERM on behalf of Central Equity #96)

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for maximising natural ventilation include:

- Maximising natural cross ventilation
- Encouraging dual aspect apartments
- Encouraging shallow apartment depths to facilitate greater air circulation.
- Maximising the size, location and ability to open windows.

4.6 ISSUE 6 | NOISE

KEY FINDINGS

Noise between apartments and from external sources is affecting apartment amenity.

General views:

- The most problematic noises come from within the apartment building, particularly from other apartments, communal spaces and services (i.e. air conditioning, garbage chutes and lift wells).
- The main sources of external noise are from motor vehicles, trains and trams, and entertainment venues.
- There is a need to include noise mitigation measures during construction.

Mixed views:

- Whether minimum standards are required for noise mitigation.
- Whether the National Construction Code (NCC) is an adequate tool to deal with noise mitigation measures.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Survey respondents (49%) believe that noise minimisation is the fourth most important issue in designing apartments for the future. Some respondents note that high noise pollution in denser urban areas, or even among neighbours, can affect sleep, relationships and quality of life.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Written respondents (44%) also consider noise is an important issue for apartment living. Community members rated noise much higher than other stakeholders.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

Are you aware of any major issues relating to noise transfer between apartments? What are the main sources of noise that can impact apartment occupants?

Most stakeholders believe noise transfer between apartments is a major issue affecting apartment amenity. Some stakeholders identify the most problematic noise sources as being located within the site, including other apartments, communal spaces and services (e.g. air conditioning, garbage chutes and lift wells):

> *"Noise transfer continues to be a major issue affecting the liveability of residents in apartment buildings and is a common complaint by new owners and tenants."* (Real Estate Institute of Victoria #87)

> *"Noise transfer between apartments can impact adversely on quality of life. Noise transfer can occur between apartments, from the communal facilities of a development, and from external sources such as the street."* (City of Darebin #93)

The main sources of external noise are from motor vehicles, trains and trams, and entertainment venues.

Poor building construction materials are commonly identified as the cause of noise transfer between apartments (e.g. thin walls and ineffective and/or poorly installed acoustic insulation).

Some stakeholders believe that noise may be influenced by outlook and orientation to the noise source.

> *"Part of living in higher densities is accepting the associated noise of city living."* (Housing Choices Australia #111)

> *"Noise was and is my biggest problem living in apartments. Apartments should be adequately insulated from noise from the street and noise from other residents."* (Individual, London, UK #39).

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

What design measures are required to mitigate noise between apartments and from external sources?

Many stakeholders support built-in noise mitigation measures to address internal and external noise transfer including double glazing, insulation, improved building materials and soundproof floors and ceilings. Enclosure of common lift lobbies, stairs and waste chutes, together with resident agreements, are also suggested.

The careful consideration of floor plan layouts during the planning permit process is highlighted by many stakeholders.

> *"Apartment floor areas should be designed over each other, i.e. bedrooms over bedrooms and living rooms over living rooms."* (Manningham City Council #72)

Other stakeholders suggest that apartment developments be located in areas that do not conflict with residential land uses.

What is the most appropriate implementation mechanism to address noise issues?

Most stakeholders believe the National Construction Code (NCC) is the most appropriate mechanism to address noise issues within and between apartments. Many stakeholders also consider external noise is best addressed by updating the State environment protection policies (SEPPs) for noise and/or the NCC.

> *"VPELA is not aware of any major issues relating to noise transfer between apartments and submits that these noise impacts might be better dealt with through the National Construction Code."* (Victorian Planning & Environmental Law Association #88)

> *"Current internal noise transfer regulations between apartments on the same floor are considered adequate. Issues created by noise transfer from floors and ceilings and co-location of service infrastructure and apartments may however require revision of the National Construction Code."* (City of Whittlesea #51)

Several stakeholders point to existing noise regulation for guidance, including the City of Moreland's proposed Apartment Design Code, *Apartment Design Guide* (NSW, July 2015), the City of Sydney's development control plans and New Zealand's and the United Kingdom's building regulations.

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design solutions suggested for reducing the impact of noise include:

- Designing apartment buildings to avoid locating noise sources near sensitive uses
- Improving construction materials and finishes such as double glazing and insulation
- Ensure there is adequate screening of building services (e.g. plant equipment)
- Providing soundproofed floors and ceilings
- Continuing to require an acoustic report as a condition on a planning permit.

4.7 ISSUE 7 | OUTDOOR SPACE

KEY FINDINGS

Private and communal outdoor spaces are valued features of apartment living.

General views:

- A variety of outdoor spaces need to be provided in an apartment development.
- Communal outdoor space is considered an advantage of apartment living.
- Apartments should be provided with balconies in most circumstances.
- Requirements for outdoor space should be determined by the location, type and size of a development.

Mixed views:

- Whether communal open space is necessary.
- Whether the provision of balconies to all apartments should be mandatory.
- The need for minimum balcony and outdoor space size standards.
- Whether communal spaces should offset private open space requirements.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Outdoor space is the sixth most important issue for apartment living – 36% of survey respondents rate it as the most important issue. Of these respondents, industry stakeholders rank outdoor space as more important (43%) than people living in an apartment (31%).

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Written respondents consider outdoor space to be slightly less important to apartment living – 25% of respondents choose outdoor space as the most important issue. Community respondents valued outdoor space more than other stakeholders.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

What types of shared outdoor spaces do you think apartment developments should provide? (E.g. play spaces, roof terraces, productive gardens, swimming pools.)

Communal space is an advantage of apartment living, although there are differing views about the necessity and form of these spaces. There are a range of communal outdoor space options including roof top terraces, ground level communal gardens, play spaces for children, and swimming pools.

Several stakeholders believe outdoor space should be considered in the context of the size, type, location and target market of the development. Some local government and development industry stakeholders emphasise the need to consider the provision of public open space in the local area when assessing communal open space provisions and whether communal space could be offset by private open space requirements. Others are concerned about maintenance costs, particularly for swimming pools.

> *"The provision of shared outdoor spaces is very dependent on the size and orientation of the site, and the intended target market. The availability for residents of private open space, communal shared spaces and access to public open space need to be considered together."* (Maribyrnong City Council #91).

Some stakeholders believe that minimum standards could be specified for communal areas to ensure daylight, sunlight, ventilation, landscaping and outlook objectives are met.

Should all apartments have balconies?

Stakeholders, particularly community and local government, generally agree that apartments should be provided with balconies in most (if not all) circumstances. Other stakeholders believe that while balconies are a worthy feature, they are not practical at certain buildings heights due to climate effects, such as wind.

There are divergent views as to whether it is appropriate to trade-off balcony provision or balcony size with communal open space, and/or the locational context of apartment developments (i.e. where they are located near local parks and recreation spaces).

The need to link private open space with living areas is also raised by some stakeholders.

Is the size of a balcony important to you?

Community and local government stakeholders strongly support the concept of minimum balcony size standards, however stakeholders vary in their views of an appropriate balcony size. Some stakeholders believe balcony sizes should be measured by the number of bedrooms.

Other stakeholders suggest a functional approach, whereby south-facing balconies should be avoided and balconies should be spacious enough to accommodate a table and two chairs. Allowing enough space on balconies for landscaping and water taps is also mentioned by several stakeholders.

Many stakeholders believe that the minimum requirements specified in Clause 55.05-4 of council planning schemes (i.e. $8m^2$ for a balcony with a minimum width of 1.6m) is satisfactory.

Is it acceptable for air conditioning units to be located on apartment balconies?

Views about the placement of air conditioning units on balconies are mixed. Some stakeholders are conditionally supportive, subject to the provision of visual and acoustic screening and/or landscaping. Other stakeholders suggest that air conditioning units should only be placed on rooftops.

There is some support for excluding the space taken up by an air conditioning unit from the calculation of a minimum balcony space.

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for outdoor space include:

- Tailoring communal spaces for different users
- Encouraging a variety of shared spaces
- Specifying minimum size and dimensions of balconies
- Encouraging balconies to be connected to living spaces
- Providing for ground floor and roof top common areas, including landscaping and productive gardens
- Specifying minimum size of communal open space
- Providing air conditioning unit design requirements

4.8 ISSUE 8 | ADAPTABILITY

KEY FINDINGS

Designing apartment buildings to be adapted in the future is beneficial.

General views:

- The most important determining factors of building adaptability are the location of infrastructure and services, flexible floor plans and wall locations, and ceiling heights.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Adaptability is not an important amenity issue – 33% of survey respondents rated the 'ability to adapt an apartment if the occupant's requirements changed', as the least important issue.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Written respondents are divided over the importance of adaptability – 25% of respondents rank it as the least important issue.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

Should buildings be designed to be adaptable in the future?

Some community members and local government stakeholders believe it is important to provide adaptable floorplans to meet the future needs of households and to respond to a building's lifecycle. The development industry has mixed views on the importance of being able to adapt buildings in the future.

> *"It is very important that buildings should be designed to be adaptable for the future as there continues to be major demographic changes in different periods and locations."* (Anonymous, Abbotsford #37)

> *"No, apartment building should always be focused on residential living."* (Anonymous, Point Cook #6)

> *"… Attempts to predict what is likely to be desirable in ten, twenty or fifty years' time is not the basis on which to dictate design outcomes today and urges the Government to predicate any provision on today's market."* (Property Council of Australia #136)

> *"The introduction of mandatory requirements for adaptability, accessibility or universal design in private dwellings is not appropriate, nor cost effective, for addressing the needs of people with disabilities. Across the board solutions re not tailored to the individual needs of the occupants. Required features can be easily incorporated into apartments and should be done so at the choice of the consumer to meet their own needs. These needs are better addressed through voluntary market-based incentives, improved consumer and industry information, and direct Government assistance to people with disabilities."* (Housing Industry Association #106)

Many workshop participants assert that adaptability could be made easier for future occupants by removing non-load bearing walls or altering nominal floor to ceiling heights without the need for planning permission. The Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association also suggest through the interview process that *'there could be an option to approve permits without fixed floor plans and then allow alteration of the building to occur without the need for a planning permit, provided it did not alter car parking or other requirements'*.

Some workshop participants also state that any attempts to regulate adaptability may be difficult due to owners corporation requirements (i.e. the consent of all apartment owners may be needed).

Should certain floors be designed for a variety of uses?

There is support for the ground and first floors of apartments to be adaptable to potential future land uses (i.e. mainly residential and commercial uses) particularly in activity centre locations. Some stakeholders believe there should be no street level car parks in order to facilitate future adaptability on the ground floor.

What are the important features of adaptable buildings?

The most determining features for enabling buildings to be adapted are location of infrastructure and services, flexible floor plans and wall location, and ceiling heights. Locating similar uses adjacent to each other to enable consolidation of smaller apartments is also a key consideration.

> *"If apartment buildings are to be adaptable, consideration needs to be given to ceiling heights, the location of load bearing walls, the construction materials and the width of doorways."* (City of Whittlesea #51).

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for adaptability include:

- Increasing ceilings heights
- Providing flexible floor plans and wall locations
- Allowing for spaces to be adaptable for commercial or residential uses (i.e. multi-purpose uses)
- Providing for the flexible location of infrastructure and services.

4.9

ISSUE 9 | LANDSCAPE

KEY FINDINGS

Access to garden areas on apartment sites is important, however landscaping is not considered a significant amenity issue that needs addressing on balance with other issues.

General views:

- Landscaping should be determined by the amount and location of open space at a site, and access to daylight and sunlight.
- There are a variety of methods for providing landscaping within an apartment development.
- There should be different landscaping requirements for low and higher rise developments.

Mixed views:

- Whether there should be minimum standards relating to landscaping areas.
- How landscaped areas can be effectively managed over time.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Landscaping is not an important issue for apartment living on balance with other amenity issues – 30% of survey respondents rank it as the least important issue.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Written respondents are divided over the importance of landscaping – 16% of respondents feel it is the most important issue and 15% ranked it as the least important issue.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

Should all apartments require some form of landscaped area?

Many community and local government stakeholders believe some form of landscaping provision for all apartment developments (i.e. at ground level, the roof and/or via vertical gardens). They support the existing requirement to provide a landscaping plan as part of a planning permit application and developing standards relating to a minimum percentage of landscaped areas.

Landscaping helps minimise the impacts of the 'urban heat island effect' by reducing stormwater run-off and providing shaded areas. It also contributes to urban ecology.

Stakeholders consider that landscaping is influenced by the availability of open space, daylight and sunlight, and that it is an integral part of the design process.

The ongoing maintenance of landscaping is a key consideration for many stakeholders, including development industry representatives. Vertical gardens are considered more difficult to maintain than other landscaping options, such as rooftop gardens.

> *"It must also be noted that many people choose to live in an apartment because there is no landscaping."* (Housing Industry Association #106)

Should this vary for low, medium or high rise buildings?

Many stakeholders believe that landscaping should be provided at ground level in low-rise developments. Roof gardens and vertical gardens are preferred for higher rise developments.

Other stakeholders believe that landscaping requirements should be based on the local context. Several development industry stakeholders state that apartment developments located near parks should have less landscaping requirements.

> *"Developments should respond to their context. In commercial precincts, ground level open space and planting may be unrealistic; however, creative solutions such as green roofs, walls and facades or planting within communal open areas can provide positive outcomes (where these do not significantly conflict with other policy, such as heritage requirements) and are strongly encouraged."* (City of Yarra #41)

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

How can we provide areas for deep soil?

Stakeholders note the importance of allowing enough space for landscaping on the ground level to provide deep soil areas and adequate setbacks for canopy trees and landscaping.

Council and community workshop participants suggest a maximum site coverage and minimum setbacks for basements from boundaries to enable deep soil planting. In contrast, industry stakeholders say that deep soil areas can impact on car parking areas and the overall apartment yield.

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for landscape include:

- Requiring a landscape plan
- Providing a minimum standard for landscape areas
- Providing landscaping based on local context
- Providing for deep soil areas and building setbacks
- Providing for roof and vertical gardens.

4.10 ISSUE 10 | UNIVERSAL DESIGN

KEY FINDINGS

Designing apartment buildings and a proportion of apartments to be universally accessible for people of all abilities and ages is preferred.

General views:

- Universal design is a basic human right.
- Flexible design outcomes are important to promote accessibility for people with limited mobility.

Mixed views:

- Whether mandating a minimum number of universally designed apartments will impact on the overall design of a building and development costs.
- The percentage of apartments within a development that should be universally designed.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Universal design is not an important issue for apartment living according to survey respondents – 40% of respondents ranked it as the least important issue.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Universal design is relatively less important for apartment living according to 25% of written respondents, while 21% of respondents consider universal design as most important.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

Should all apartments, or a percentage of apartments, be designed for everyone, regardless of age or ability?

A number of stakeholders, including community members and councils, support improving the accessibility of apartments for people of all abilities and ages. It is believed universal design can be achieved through encouraging flexible design outcomes.

> *"Ensuring all citizens have dignified and independent access to apartments is important with reference to the human rights of people with a disability, parents with young children and older persons, given the projected growth in our ageing population."* (City of Melbourne #105)

However, many stakeholders consider that only some apartments should be universally designed in a development, and that this should depend on the building height or number of apartments.

> *"Council does not believe that every apartment needs to meet these standards. However, a particular share of apartments for larger developments (10+ dwellings) could be entertained (e.g. 10%)".* (City of Boroondara #49)

Other stakeholders assert that developments in close proximity to schools should require a higher proportion of larger-sized units, as well as programs targeted at promoting accessible housing.

Some stakeholders are concerned that mandating a standard for all apartments could impact on development costs and stifle creativity. They claim that the ability to deliver universally designed apartments is hindered by a lack of consistency with existing regulations (i.e. the Australian Standards, the National Construction Code and the *Livable Housing Design Guidelines*, Department of Social Services Australian Government, 2010.)

> *"A degree of universal design is important in larger developments to cater for people of all ages and ability. Implementing universal design however, substantially increases the construction cost of apartments, which is not considered a reasonable, nor necessary requirement for all apartments."* (ERM on behalf of Central Equity #96)

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Suggested design approaches suggested for achieving greater universal design include:

- Requiring a minimum number of apartments to be designed for universal access
- Requiring developments in close proximity to schools to provide a higher proportion of larger-sized apartments
- Promoting accessible housing programs
- Providing universal access to bathrooms including showers and toilets
- Making existing regulation more consistent.

4.11 ISSUE 11 | ENERGY & RESOURCES

KEY FINDINGS

Improving the energy and resource efficiency performance of an apartment building and apartments is important.

General view:

- Achieving a higher minimum green star rating is a key design solution to improving the energy and resource efficiency of apartments.

Mixed views:

- Whether energy and resource efficiency should be assessed through the planning systems, the building system, or both.
- The need for state-wide environmentally sustainable design (ESD) standards.
- Whether apartments should have individual metering of utilities.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Designing for energy and resources is important to 40% of survey respondents. However, 34% of people living in an apartment rate this issue as the most important, compared to 44% of industry representatives.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Stakeholders consider energy and resources of higher importance than survey respondents, with 50% of written respondents ranking it as one of the most important issues.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

What environmental issues are important to residents?

Stakeholders are concerned about environmental issues such as pollution, depletion of our native flora and fauna and reducing our exposure to climate change impacts. They view waste disposal reduction, low water usage, reduced energy consumption, solar access, and access to public transport as key ways to achieve better environmental outcomes through planning and designing apartments.

Achieving a higher minimum green star rating is proposed by many stakeholders as an effective means of improving the energy efficiency of an apartment building. Some workshop participants recommend encouraging or mandating the provision of double glazing, floor heating and insulation. While development costs could increase they may be offset by lower long-term energy costs.

Should every apartment have individual metering of their utilities (e.g. gas, electricity, water)?

A large number of community members and councils, and some development industry representatives, support individual metering, as it encourages occupants to reduce their consumption of utilities and enables control of energy costs.

> *"Provide individual metering to encourage occupants to be responsible for their resource use."* (City of Yarra #41)

> *"It should be regulatory based that all apartments have individual metering of their utilities. This will ensure that each owner/ occupier can monitor their own usage and the amount they spend on utilities and discourage unnecessary use."* (City of Whittlesea #51)

> *"The Property Council supports the individual metering of apartments including those with a communal system for example, thermal metering for hot water. We accept that it is best practice for sustainable outcomes and has the potential to make resources more affordable by giving residents control over their ongoing costs."* (Property Council of Australia #136)

Conversely, some stakeholders believe individual metering could prevent site owners from buying electricity at a 'wholesale rate' through a single supply point and then on-selling energy to tenants at small-market rates. This is known as an 'embedded network'.

Other stakeholders assert that individual metering of gas is not cost effective. It is significantly cheaper for occupants to obtain gas through a centralised gas supply to the building.

> *"Individual metering is inappropriate where consumption is very low (e.g. gas for a cooktop). The connection charges are much greater than consumption so it is better to pool consumption and distribute costs via the Owner Corporation."* (MAB Corporation #26)

Should all apartments be required to meet a minimum industry standard in addition to the building regulations?

There is support from community, government and some industry stakeholders for setting state-wide environmentally sustainable design (ESD) standards through the planning system in addition to building regulations.

Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment strongly support the incorporation of ESD measures for apartment developments in the planning permit process.

Many stakeholders suggest addressing energy and resource issues at the planning stage and revising some aspects of ESD requirements currently in the Building Code of Australia of the National Construction Code.

> *"The Building Code deals with some aspects of energy efficiency such as the thermal rating of materials and star rating of appliances, however better outcomes can be achieved if building design is assessed for ESD at the planning stage. … There is also potential for some aspects of resource and energy efficiency to be picked up through changes to the Building Code including selection of material and finishes that are sustainably sourced and produced, that are recyclable and consideration to their toxicity."* (City of Brimbank #69)

> *"… ESD requirements should be standardised across all municipalities with direction coming from the State Government. This would provide more certainty to developers as to what is required from an ESD perspective and we see the introduction of an apartment code as the perfect opportunity for this to be implements."* (Collie Pty Ltd #103)

Other stakeholders, particularly from the development industry, support a single set of standards to control ESD through the building regulations.

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for improving energy and resource efficiency include:

- Ensuring the building design and layout achieves a higher minimum green star rating
- Encouraging or mandating the provision of double glazing, floor heating and/or insulation
- Providing for the separate metering of some apartment utilities (e.g. water and electricity).

4.12 ISSUE 12 | WASTE

KEY FINDINGS

The collection and management of household waste is an important consideration for the design of apartment buildings.

General views:

- The design of waste collection depends on the number of apartments within the apartment building.
- It is beneficial to prepare a waste management plan in the preliminary stages of an apartment development.
- Facilities that separate organic, recyclable and non-recyclable waste are preferred.
- Adequate space should be provided within an apartment development for appropriate waste collection.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE:

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents consider waste management a relatively less important issue for apartment living, with 21% of people choosing 'systems that help manage waste including supporting recycling' as the most important aspect of apartment living.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Waste management is less important to written respondents – 23% of people rate it as the least important amenity issue.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

How should waste be collected from apartment buildings?

Many stakeholders believe the design of waste collection depends on the number of apartments within the apartment building. Larger developments need more comprehensive waste management systems.

Several stakeholders, particularly from local government, refer to the importance of determining waste collection requirements early in the planning process and support a waste management plan as a condition of a planning permit. Industry workshop participants confirm that the current practice adopted by many councils of requiring a waste management plan for larger developments works well. It enables waste related traffic movements to be effectively integrated into the design of the development.

The Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment recommends that apartment developments comply with the *Guide to Best Practice Waste Management in Multi-Unit Developments guidelines* (Sustainability Victoria, 2010).

Should sorting facilities be provided for recycling and where?

Many stakeholders support having facilities for sorting recyclable, non-recyclable and organic waste items on site. Consequently there is a need for adequate space and accessible storage facilities to be provided for residents. For example, waste chutes or rubbish rooms could be provided for each floor of the apartment building, so long as they are well ventilated and easily cleaned and maintained.

> *"On-site facilities for recycling, organic waste composting, green waste reuse and hard rubbish storage should be mandatory requirements for future apartment building development."* (Nillumbik Shire Council #35)

Not withstanding this, other stakeholders point to the hidden maintenance costs and design requirements involved in providing rubbish chutes.

> *"Garbage chutes are convenient but have hidden high maintenance costs and must be carefully designed or not used."* (Anonymous, Melbourne #15)

> *"If waste chutes are provided, separate general waste and recycling chutes should be provided and clearly signed."* (Banyule City Council #60)

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for improving waste management include:

- Requiring a waste management plan as a planning permit condition
- Designing for facilities to separate organic waste, recyclable and non-recyclables
- Linking waste removal practices to the size of the apartment building
- Providing adequate storage areas for hard rubbish.

4.13 ISSUE 13 | CAR PARKING

KEY FINDINGS

Key factors for determining appropriate car parking provision and good design are occupant needs and the local context.

General view:

- The amenity, design and layout of car parking areas requires careful consideration.

Mixed views:

- Whether car parking requirements should be discretionary and based on location, access to public transport and alternative transport solutions.
- The suitability of car stackers when space is limited.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents saw car parking as a less important issue for apartment living in comparison to other issues – 41% rated it as least important. However, the results varied by segment with 37% of people living in an apartment rating car parking as least important compared to 57% of industry participants. For people who live in an apartment, renters were slightly more likely to see car parking as unimportant.

In contrast, around 29% of all survey respondents rated car parking as the most important issue for apartment living. For those living in an apartment who rated car parking as most important, they are more likely to own an apartment and live in a low-rise apartment complex.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Car parking is the least important issue for apartment living, according to 43% of written respondents. It ranks least important by a larger margin (12%) than the next ranked issue, which is entry and circulation (31%).

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

How important is a car space in an apartment?

There is a diversity of views as to whether car parking design is an important issue for apartment amenity.

Some community stakeholders prefer car parking to be provided for all apartments. This is reinforced by community workshop participants who focus on the insufficiency of car parking in existing developments and suggesting that two spaces need to be provided per apartment.

> *"We have observed that if developments do not have sufficient car parking that unit-dwellers use the nearby residential streets for parking. Often these side streets are narrow and parking on both sides creates hazardous conditions."* (Malvern East Group #45)

Many stakeholders, particularly those from community, local government and industry believe the provision of car parking should be dependent on the location of the building and access to public transport.

> *"A mix of apartments with and without car parking should be in most developments. Car parking is not absolutely necessary but the location and demographics need to be considered."* (Southbank Residents Group #127)

> *"There is clearly a market for apartments close to public transport for people who do not own cars."* (Anonymous, Preston #23).

Local government workshop participants contend that car dependency is entrenched in many middle to outer suburbs and car parking provisions in the planning scheme (Clause 52.06) did not address existing demand in these areas. They support a location-based approach to car parking provision taking into account: car ownership demographics for the area, access to public transport, bicycle use and other factors.

Some stakeholders believe discretion should continue to be provided by planning schemes, although workshop participants differ on the appropriateness of reducing car parking.

Community workshop participants call for a greater number of visitor spaces, while both local government and industry participants report these spaces are largely underutilised.

A number of stakeholders believe that street level and above ground car parking should be minimised to preserve the streetscape character. This is consistent with workshop participants, from all groups, who express that above ground podium car parking detracts from streetscape activation and that basement car parks are preferred.

Many stakeholders believe the amenity of car parking areas can be improved by designers carefully considering factors such as accessibility, ventilation, light and noise and by providing adequate visitor, bicycle and motorcycle parking.

Several local government workshop participants also mention the importance of car park design and streetscape presentation, including the need to improve circulation and separation between pedestrians, cars and bicycles.

Some stakeholders recommend providing for electric vehicles in car parking areas, and separating storage areas from car parking areas.

Can alternatives to car parking provision offer improved solutions? If so, what?

Many stakeholders support the development of alternative solutions to car parking. Car sharing is the most popular alternative solution identified, predominantly by architects and industry stakeholders.

Car stackers are another commonly suggested alternative, however community and local government workshop participants view them as impractical to enter and exit and are therefore underutilised.

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for car parking include:

- Specifying minimum car parking requirements for apartment developments
- Providing discretion to vary car parking requirements based on consideration of locational factors, including access to public transport
- Encouraging underground car parking
- Providing car sharing and car stacking facilities
- Separating storage areas from car parking
- Increasing the provision of bicycle parking, visitor parking and electric cars.

4.14 ISSUE 14 | ENTRY & CIRCULATION

KEY FINDINGS

Apartments require good access and appropriate loading areas.

General views:

- Consideration should be given to the provision of access for deliveries, removals and building work.
- Goods lifts should be adequately sized.
- Lobbies and communal entrance areas should be safe and clearly identifiable.

RANKING OF IMPORTANCE

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Entry and circulation is less important for apartment living according to survey respondents – 30% rated 'easy and friendly access to enter the building and to move from floor to floor' as the least important issue, and 13% of respondents rated it as the most important aspect of apartment living.

WRITTEN RESPONDENTS

Written respondents also consider entry and circulation as less important for apartment living in comparison to other issues. It ranks as the second least important issue by 31% of written respondents.

'TELL US MORE' QUESTIONS

Should designated areas be provided for on-site loading?

Development industry and local government stakeholders strongly support access to buildings for deliveries, removals and maintenance. Many people believe loading areas should be provided for commercial deliveries as well as for residential deliveries.

Some stakeholders believe that the provision of loading areas are important for larger developments (i.e. over 10 or 15 apartments) unless it can be demonstrated that there is adequate on street loading.

Other stakeholders consider that service lifts should be provided for buildings of a specified height (i.e. over 3 storeys). This issue is confirmed by workshop participants who highlight the need to provide adequately sized service lifts in apartment buildings to reduce disruption to other residents.

Should apartment building lobbies be clearly visible from the street?

Some stakeholders consider that visible entry points are important for locating addresses, deliveries and the safety of residents. There is general consensus among workshop participants that lobbies can be multi-functional and provide a strong 'sense of address' to define a building entry.

> *"Apartment buildings need to have clear and visible entry points."* (City of Yarra #41).

Should internal corridors have views out and provide daylight?

Daylight and ventilation to internal corridors is desired by a number of community stakeholders. Other stakeholders find this difficult to achieve due to site constraints. Local government workshop participants suggest that long corridors need to be discouraged in design.

> *"Ideally internal corridors should have some external lighting to allow for views out, provide additional light source and a greater feeling of observation/safety."* (City of Greater Geelong #43).

> *"This is not always possible due to site constraints."* (City of Whittlesea #51)

SUGGESTED DESIGN APPROACHES

Design approaches suggested for improving entry and circulation include:

- Providing designated areas for loading goods
- Providing visible entry points to the apartment building
- Active building frontages
- Providing communal mail delivery areas
- Separating pedestrian and vehicle access
- Providing service lifts in larger developments
- Providing spacious lobbies and corridors to communal areas.

5 IMPLEMENTATION GETTING THE TOOLS RIGHT

KEY FINDINGS

Any final product or outcome resulting from the discussion paper needs to be implemented in a practical way. There are mixed views on the type of tools needed to promote high quality apartment living opportunities.

General views:

- The need for a consistent, state wide approach to address existing inconsistencies in decision-making.

Mixed views:

- Whether the design of apartments requires further regulation.
- Whether regulation should occur through the planning system and/or the building system.
- Whether a mandatory or performance-based regulatory approach is likely to be more effective.

'TELL US MORE'

What is the most appropriate implementation tool(s) for the Victorian context?

Many stakeholders highlight that there is inconsistent decision-making regarding internal amenity for apartments and suggest a need for a consistent, state wide approach.

> *"From our experience, clear guidelines ensure there is clarity for all players in the development process."* (Housing Choices Australia #111)

Many individuals and councils suggest the need for improved regulation to achieve better outcomes.

> *"The government should actively encourage and mandate good design and reward those who show a commitment to it."* (Individual, East Melbourne #102)

> *"Regulation is needed- the State Government cannot rely on the developers to do anything that reduces profit."* (Anonymous, Melbourne #15)

> *"Council strongly support(s) the preparation and implementation of apartment guidelines."* (City of Yarra #41)

There are mixed views on the most appropriate regulatory tool and the role of government. The various regulatory approaches are considered including mandatory, performance-based and policy-based approaches. There was also consideration of whether the amenity issues are likely to be addressed by the development industry in response to market preferences. Many stakeholders prefer a combination of approaches.

Several stakeholders are concerned that further regulation may lead to delays in determining planning permit applications. They believe that new standards or guidelines may be used to intentionally delay the planning process for other reasons, such as an 'in principle' opposition to apartment developments in the area.

Many stakeholders also indicate that the implementation mechanisms should not:

- Impact on the ability to deliver high quality apartment amenity and design
- Impact on the ability to create flexible, site responsive building and apartment design
- Impact the overall development cost, particularly in the Central Business District
- Be on size fits all.

What are the strengths and limitations of various approaches?

MANDATORY REGULATORY APPROACH

Stakeholders who prefer a mandatory regulatory approach identify the primary benefit as greater certainty for applicants in the planning permit process.

Housing Choices Australia describes the mandatory approach as the *"most effective mechanism, but not in isolation"* as it *"can be enforced too strictly with the effect of increasing cost"* and *"can stifle innovation"*. (Housing Choices Australia #111).

Some stakeholders favour the adoption of a similar approach to the *State Environmental Planning Policy No 65 – Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development* (SEPP 65).

Planning and design practitioners including council officers are cautious about adopting a prescriptive mandatory standard because it could stifle innovation, lead to uniform development that is not responsive to the site or locational context, and can affect apartment pricing.

> *"The UCR (urban context report) is considered an integral component of the design process and therefore should be prepared as part of and in the initial stages of the design process with the intention of informing the remainder of the process and enabling all relevant planning matters / issues to be considered on balance."* (Housing Industry Association #106)

> *"We feel that it is critical that any guidelines/standards clearly refer to the need to have regard for the urban context."* (Australian Institute of Architects #94)

> *"A regulatory based approach is considered unnecessary and inflexible. This degree of control would provide limited incentive for creative design, resulting in similar building profiles and limited variety in apartment stock, thereby reducing choice for buyers. This approach is likely to result in reduced lot yield to meet strict controls and subsequently, result in excessive construction costs and fewer dwellings, the cost of which is likely to be passed on to buyers."* (ERM on behalf of Central Equity #96).

> *"…blanket rules could cause considerable damage to a Billion dollar industry, leading to the loss of many jobs and driving up apartment pricing."* (Andrew Ferris Drafting and Design P/L #4)

PERFORMANCE-BASED REGULATORY APPROACH

Planning and design practitioners, a number of councils, and some development industry stakeholders favour a performance-based approach as it provides greater flexibility in the decision-making process for the development industry to design and develop apartments beyond minimum standards.

> *"In order for any guidelines/standards to be effective they need to be implemented with an appropriate degree of flexibility to allow for the provision of alternative solutions where it can be demonstrated that the guideline/ standard is unreasonable or unnecessary in the particular circumstances and to encourage and support innovation and good design."* (Australian Institute of Architects #94)

> *"If minimum design standards are imposed, it is paramount that a mechanism needs to be introduced to allow flexibility in the right circumstances."* (Mirvac Group #141)

> *"…using Design Guidelines and Assessment Criteria could effectively guide designers and developers to deliver apartment developments that are responsive to market demands whilst achieving a satisfactory level of consistency in terms of amenity and built form." (*Housing Industry Association Ltd #106)

Many stakeholders suggest using a performance-based tool combined with both mandatory and discretionary provisions, similar to Clause 55 of the *Victoria Planning Provisions* that regulates medium density residential development (known as ResCode).

> *"ResCode's approach of discretionary standards and mandatory objectives provides a good balance of certainty by specifying minimum standards and flexibility by allowing alternatives to minimum standards."* (Moreland City Council #78)

However, some community stakeholders believe that discretionary requirements are *"too flexible and open to interpretation"* by decision-makers because the objectives may be interpreted in various ways.

POLICY-BASED REGULATORY APPROACH

Many councils highlight the current gap in planning policy and the difficulties experienced with making decisions that meet local expectations.

> *"the policy vacuum that exists through the current package of State Controls and guidelines together with a commonly held view that minimum standards allowed under the VPPs do not go far enough in delivering what is now considered an acceptable form of development."* (City of Darebin #93)

Specific recommendations include strengthening the State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) to place greater emphasis on the importance of internal amenity for all housing types including apartment buildings. While the *Design Guidelines for Higher Density Residential Development* (Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2004) are referenced in Clause 15 of the SPPF, the guidelines are not an incorporated document and have less statutory weight in the decision-making process.

However, some stakeholders oppose relying entirely on a policy based approach.

> *"The Urban Development Institute of Australia is supportive of a mixture of market based and policy/performance-based approaches to delivering Better Apartments."* (Urban Development Institute of Australia (Victoria) #115).

> *"We consider the success of the design guidelines to rest on the final cost of their implementation in addition to the design outcomes produced."* (The Property Council of Australia #136).

MARKET-BASED APPROACH

Development industry and some community stakeholders believe the market will adjust to consumer expectations regarding apartment amenity.

> *"Developers that don't give their buyers what they want get left behind in sales so technically that is what demands that developers deliver what people want".* (Anonymous, Brunswick East #8)

Further, it is believed that consumers can help achieve better outcomes if they are educated about what to look for in an apartment. For example, the National Australian Built Environment Ratings System (NABERS) is a performance-based environmental impact rating system for existing buildings. This approach informs people about their potential apartment purchase and allows fair comparison of apartment amenity.

Other stakeholders believe achieving good apartment amenity is too important to leave to the market.

> *"Market based intervention has failed to date. Consumers are not educated or demanding enough to push developers into achieving better outcomes".* (Carbon Wise #44)

> *"A rating system would ensure that potential purchasers and renters can make informed choices about apartments, without restricting the options available to them. It would also ensure that the price of apartments is closely related to their amenity, so that relatively poor apartments provide an affordable housing option".* (David Lock Associates #118)

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

How will the planning and building systems work together?

Some councils highlight a need to ensure that any regulation that is developed does not conflict with the National Construction Code (NCC). Industry practitioners at the workshops and many interview participants highlight that there is a blurring of matters covered by the NCC and the planning system. Stakeholders feel that over time the planning system has included matters that are already covered by the NCC and this has led to inconsistent decisions.

Many stakeholders favour better alignment between the NCC and the planning system, while a limited number believe regulation should occur solely through the NCC.

Industry practitioners favour the NCC as the best place for regulation of the technical performance buildings.

Some interview participants (Building Designers Association of Victoria, Urban Development Industry Association and the Property Council of Australia) express the following concerns:

- There is no evidence that the NCC is deficient
- Planning provisions should not be more onerous than the NCC
- Overlapping regulation could lead to further red tape and delays
- Design standards that are inconsistent with the NCC could place Melbourne at a competitive disadvantage to other states in terms of construction and development regulation.

Other interview participants (Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment and Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association) assert that the planning system often assesses different issues to the building system when approving an apartment development. Some of these issues overlap and require assessment under both systems. For example when considering the environmentally sustainable design of a building, the planning system considers layout and orientation while the building system considers construction and materials.

6 NEXT STEPS

This Public Engagement Report is a summary of feedback from community members, the development industry, planning and design practitioners and local and state government on the *Better Apartments – Discussion Paper*, released in May 2015.

The discussion paper sought to confirm the key issues relating to the amenity of apartment living and how they may be addressed.

Overall there was strong participation in the public engagement process and a diversity of views expressed.

The public engagement results will help inform the creation of new mechanisms including apartment design guidelines to better manage Victoria's apartment developments in the future.

The next steps are:

- Quarter 1, 2016: Preparation of draft design guidelines and other mechanisms.
- Quarter 2, 2016: Public engagement.
- Quarters 2-3, 2016: Design guidelines and other mechanisms finalised.
- Quarter 4, 2016 and beyond: Implementation and monitoring and review of the effectiveness of mechanisms.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
Apartment	An apartment is a dwelling that is part of a larger building and has other dwellings above and/or below it and does not sit on its own parcel of land.
Apartment building	A building comprising of several dwellings. An apartment building can contain other uses as well, such as retail or commercial premises, often on the ground floor.
Active frontages	Refers to street frontages where there is an active visual engagement between those in the street and those on the ground floors of buildings. This quality is assisted where the front façade of buildings include the main entrance, face the street, and the ground floor uses face and open towards the street.
Activity centre	Activity centres are the traditional focus for services, employment and social interaction in cities and towns. They are where people shop, work, meet, relax and often live. Usually well served by public transport, they range in size and intensity of use from local neighbourhood strip shopping centres to traditional town centres and major regional malls.
Borrowed light	When a room has no window directly to the outside and accesses daylight from adjacent rooms, it is known as 'borrowed light'.
Building separation	The distance between two separate buildings clear to the sky.
Circulation space	Circulation space in an apartment building serving all residents, including lifts, stairs, landings, entry lobbies and corridors.
Communal open space	An outdoor area of a building, at ground level or incorporated in or on the building for exclusive use of the occupants.
Cross or cross flow ventilation	The natural movement of air through an internal space (or spaces) between one external opening and another.
Daylight	Natural ambient light available during the day.
Deep soil	An area of natural ground unimpeded by a structure below (and above), providing opportunity for ground water infiltration and canopy trees.
Dual aspect apartments	An apartment with external walls facing more than one direction that allows for the possibility of natural cross-ventilation from openings in those walls. This includes corner apartments, through-block apartments and cross-over apartments.
Embedded networks	Embedded networks are where the site owner buys electricity at large market user rates through a single supply point and then on-sells energy to tenants at small-market rates. This relates to metering.

Term	Meaning
Habitable room	A room used for normal domestic activities, and: a. includes a bedroom, living room, kitchen, dining room and study; but b. excludes a bathroom, laundry, toilet, pantry, walk-in wardrobe, corridor, lobby, clothes drying room and other space of a specialised nature occupied neither frequently nor for extended periods.
In-board bedroom	A bedroom located in an apartment containing one or more bedrooms, that has no window in the exterior wall of the building.
Light well/Light court	An unroofed space, bounded on all sides, which provides daylight to more than one storey of a building and may provide ventilation.
Natural ventilation	The movement and change of air in internal spaces by natural means through the use of a window that can be opened rather than the use of mechanical systems.
One bedroom apartment	An apartment that contains an additional habitable room separate from the main habitable room of the dwelling by a wall.
Orientation	The general compass direction that an apartment, apartment building or habitable room 'faces' that is typically defined by the location of primary openings in external walls.
Outlook	A place from which a view is possible; a vantage point.
Private open space	An outdoor space of an apartment for the exclusive use of the occupants.
Saddleback bedroom or snorkel bedroom	A bedroom in an apartment containing one or more bedrooms, where the bedroom is connected to a window in the exterior wall of the building via an adjoining space.
Single aspect apartment	An apartment with external walls facing only in one direction.
Sunlight	Direct rays from the sun, providing radiant heat as well as daylight.
Thermal comfort	The perception of physical comfort in a space, influenced by air temperature and movement, humidity, radiant heat, glare and the sense of having some control of these factors
Urban heat island effect	A city or metropolitan area that is significantly warmer than its surrounding rural areas due to replacing vegetated areas with buildings, roads and other impervious surfaces as a city expands. For further information, refer to the Plan Melbourne Refresh Discussion Paper (http://refresh.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au/plan-melbourne-refresh-discussion-paper).

For further information refer to *Better Apartments – A Discussion Paper (May 2015)*.

APPENDIX A

BETTER APARTMENTS SUBMISSION FORM

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS BY FRIDAY, 31 JULY 2015

USING THIS FORM

- Enter your comments directly into the form or attach a more detailed set of comments.
- Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory and must be completed to enable you to send us your comments.
- All text boxes will allow you to enter up to 3000 characters of text (including spaces). If you require more space please upload your comments in Part D as a single attachment.
- You can change or add to your submission by using the 'Previous Page' and 'Next Page' buttons at the bottom of the page to navigate through sections of the form.
- You are not able to save the submission form and return to submit; it must be completed in one sitting.

YOUR COMMENTS ARE INVITED

Your comments are invited on the Better Apartments – Discussion Paper May 2015. You are encouraged to download a copy of the Discussion Paper prior to making your submission.

This form is divided into four parts as summarised below:

Part A- Contact Details*

Part B- Ranking of issues*

Part C- Structured issue based responses

Part D- Further comments

Part E- Privacy statement*

Parts C and D are not mandatory. It would assist the Department if you provided a response to the issues within the structural based responses in Part C (even if some are left blank), however Part D has been provided as an alternative or for further comments. (The responses you provide to Part C and any further submission you make in Part D will be compiled by the Department to create one single submission.)

PART A – CONTACT DETAILS

Title:

First name:

Last name:

Position title:

Phone:

Name of organisation:

Postal address:

Email:

Your email address will be our primary means of contacting you if we need to. Please check that the address you have provided is correct.

Confirm email address:

I AM SUBMITTING ON BEHALF OF A (SELECT ONE) : *

- ☐ Individual (go to question 1a)
- ☐ Community-based organisation
- ☐ Local government – metropolitan
- ☐ Local government – regional
- ☐ State government department or agency
- ☐ Construction or development industry organisation
- ☐ Sole Provider or company involved in the development industry
- ☐ Architect or building designer
- ☐ Planning or development consultant
- ☐ Other

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS ONLY

1a. Do you currently live in an apartment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

1b. Have you previously lived in an apartment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

PART B – RANKING OF ISSUES

The Better Apartments- Discussion Paper, May 2015 outlines 14 issues affecting apartment amenity. Refer to the Discussion Paper if you are unsure about the definition of an Amenity Issue.

There are many different people or organisations interested in apartment living, buying, designing, developing, assessing or constructing. Of the 14 issues identified please identify the most important issues to you or your organisation. You can choose up to five *.

- ☐ Daylight
- ☐ Sunlight
- ☐ Space
- ☐ Outlook
- ☐ Natural Ventilation
- ☐ Noise
- ☐ Outdoor space
- ☐ Adaptability
- ☐ Landscape
- ☐ Universal Design
- ☐ Energy and resources
- ☐ Waste
- ☐ Car Parking
- ☐ Entry and Circulation

Of these 14 issues, please identify the least important issues. You can choose up to five *

- ☐ Daylight
- ☐ Sunlight
- ☐ Space
- ☐ Outlook
- ☐ Natural Ventilation
- ☐ Noise
- ☐ Outdoor space
- ☐ Adaptability
- ☐ Landscape
- ☐ Universal Design
- ☐ Energy and resources
- ☐ Waste
- ☐ Car Parking
- ☐ Entry and Circulation

PART C – STRUCTURED ISSUES BASED RESPONSES

Below is an opportunity to respond to the 14 issues outlined in the Better Apartments – Discussion Paper May 2015. While this section is not mandatory, it would assist the Department if you provided a response to these questions.

NOTE: Do not include private information such as names and addresses in the comments boxes or your attachment. If you prefer, your comments may be attached in a separate document in either Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF format (Part D).

ISSUE 1: DAYLIGHT

Issue 1: Daylight is outlined on page 14 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- What spaces within apartments are the most important in terms of access to daylight?
- Do you think daylight should be required in secondary spaces such as corridors and bathrooms?

Provide your comments on Daylight:

ISSUE 2: SUNLIGHT

Issue 2: Sunlight is outlined on page 15 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- Should there be rules to ensure a majority of apartments receive sunlight?
- Are there other options that can provide for thermal comfort?

Provide your comments on Sunlight

ISSUE 3: SPACE

Issue 3: Space is outlined on page 16 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- Do we need to set minimum apartment sizes in Victoria?
- Do we need to increase minimum ceiling heights for apartments in Victoria?
- Should larger developments be required to include different types of apartments catering to different types of households?

Provide your comments on Space

ISSUE 4: OUTLOOK

Issue 4: Outlook is outlined on page 17 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- What are the essential qualities of a good outlook?
- Should living spaces be treated differently to other spaces within an apartment in regards to outlook?

Provide your comments on Outlook

ISSUE 5: NATURAL VENTILATION

Issue 5: Natural Ventilation is outlined on page 18 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a "Tell us more" question you may wish to consider in your response:

- How can access to fresh air in an apartment be improved?

Provide your comments on Natural Ventilation

ISSUE 6: NOISE

Issue 6: Noise is outlined on page 19 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- Are you aware of any major issues relating to noise transfer between apartments?
- What are the main sources of noise that can impact apartment occupants?

Provide your comments on Noise

ISSUE 7: OUTDOOR SPACE

Issue 7: Outdoor Space is outlined on page 20 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- What types of shared outdoor spaces do you think apartment developments should provide? (e.g. play spaces, roof terraces, productive gardens, swimming pools)
- Should all apartments have balconies?
- Is the size of a balcony important to you?
- Is it acceptable for air conditioning units to be located on apartment balconies?

Provide your comments on Outdoor Space

ISSUE 8: ADAPTABILITY

Issue 8: Adaptability is outlined on page 21 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- Should buildings be designed to be adaptable in future?
- Should certain floors be designed for a variety of uses?
- What are the important features of adaptable buildings?

Provide your comments on Adaptability

ISSUE 9: LANDSCAPE

Issue 9: Landscape is outlined on page 22 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- Should all apartments require some form of landscaped area?
- Should this vary for low, medium or high rise buildings?

Provide your comments on Landscape

ISSUE 10: UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Issue 10: Universal Design is outlined on page 23 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a "Tell us more" question you may wish to consider in your response:

- Should all apartments, or a percentage of apartments, be designed for everyone, regardless of age or ability?

Provide your comments on Universal Design

ISSUE 11: ENERGY AND RESOURCES

Issue 11: Energy and Resources is outlined on page 24 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- What environmental issues are important to residents?
- Should every apartment have individual metering of their utilities (e.g. gas, electricity, water)?
- Should all apartments be required to meet a minimum industry standard in addition to the building regulations?

Provide your comments on Energy and Resources

ISSUE 12: WASTE

Issue 12: Waste is outlined on page 25 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- How should waste be collected from apartment buildings?
- Should sorting facilities be provided for recycling and where?

Provide your comments on Waste

ISSUE 13: CAR PARKING

Issue 13: Car Parking is outlined on page 26 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- How important is a car space in an apartment?
- Can alternatives to car parking provision offer improved solutions? If so, what?

Provide your comments on Car Parking

ISSUE 14: ENTRY AND CIRCULATION

Issue 14: Energy and Circulation is outlined on page 27 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- Should designated areas be provided for on-site loading?
- Should apartment building lobbies be clearly visible from the street?
- Should internal corridors have views out and provide daylight?

Provide your comments on Entry and Circulation

OTHER

In addition to the 14 issues identified in the Discussion Paper, are there any other amenity issues relevant to internal apartment design? Is so, please discuss.

Provide your comments

IMPLEMENTATION: GETTING THE TOOLS RIGHT

Implementation is outlined on page 8 of the Discussion Paper. It includes a number of "Tell us more" questions you may wish to consider in your response:

- What is the most appropriate implementation tool(s) for the Victorian context?
- What are the strengths and limitations of the various approaches?

Provide your comments on Implementation

PART D - ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Below is an opportunity to provide comments in addition to those you may have submitted in Part C. It would assist if your submission was grouped using the 14 issues identified in the Discussion Paper.

You can submit your comments in the relevant text box below, or if you prefer, your comments may be attached in a separate document in either Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF format.

Provide your comments

PART 3 – PRIVACY STATEMENT

Please complete this information so that your comments can be registered and considered.

DELWP is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. For more information read DELWP's Information Privacy Policy.

The personal information in your comments is collected by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to administer the public consultation process only. For transparency and accountability, your comments may be published on the DELWP website which is accessible worldwide. Any person may view your comments. Your comments may remain on external servers, even once your comments are removed from the DELWP website.

All comments are public documents and may be accessed by any member of the public unless you request and your comments are given confidential status.

You can request access to your personal information by contacting DELWP's Freedom of Information Unit by phone on (03) 9208 3112 or email foi@delwp.vic.gov.au

If you are making comments as an organisation your comments may be published, including the name of your organisation. The Department may consider an application for comments to be published anonymously in exceptional circumstances.

If you are making comment as an organisation and DELWP decides to publish the comments received on this website then your comments will be published, including the name of your organisation. The Department may consider an application for comments submitted on behalf of an organisation to be published anonymously in exceptional circumstances.

If you are making comments as an individual please tick the box in the 'Privacy Agreement' section which most accurately reflects the way you want DELWP to publish your comments.

Please tick only one box.

PRIVACY OPTIONS*

Please select an option. If you do not select an option you will not be able to continue with this submission.

☐ These comments are being made by an organisation and I understand that it will be published , including the name of the organisation

☐ I agree that my comments can be published openly with my name and suburb/town but no other details

☐ I request my comments to be published anonymously with my suburb/town but no other details

☐ I request that my comments not be published and my submission will only be disclosed to DELWP officers and any working groups formed for the Planning Implementation team.

IMPORTANT: Selecting the last option in the privacy options above does not guarantee that confidentiality will be granted. DELWP will consider requests for confidentiality on a case by case basis. Please provide reasons why your comments should not be published and also state whether you would like your comments to be published anonymously or withdrawn if you are not granted confidentiality.

COPYRIGHT AND THIRD PARTY INFORMATION*

I am entitled to deal with the intellectual property rights (including copyright) of all material (both mine and any third party's) in my comments and have obtained the necessary consent(s) from any and all third parties owning the copyright for such dealings.

☐ **I agree**.

Where personal information about other people (including photos) is included in my comments, I have notified them of the contents of this Privacy Collection Notice and obtained their consent to their personal information being disclosed to DELWP and published on the internet.

☐ **I agree**.

END OF SUBMISSION FORM

APPENDIX B

BETTER APARTMENTS COMMUNITY SURVEY

OFFICE OF THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, LAND, WATER & PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

On 14 May 2015, Victorian Minister for Planning, Richard Wynne, launched a discussion paper titled Better Apartments (www.delwp.vic.gov.au/better-apartments) to kick-start a state-wide conversation with the community and industry voices to shape the living environment within an apartment.

The Victorian government is taking action to improve apartment design and amenity for the long-term benefit of the Victorian community. This survey is one of the opportunities for you to have a say in how the internal design aspects of apartments in Victoria can meet the needs of people living in apartments into the future.

This survey will take about ten minutes to complete and the data collected will be de-identified to ensure anonymity of all respondents. If you'd like to receive more information about the process of the Better Apartments discussion and stay involved in the discussion, please provide contact details at the end of the survey.

The survey will be open until 31 July 2015.

* indicates a question that requires an answer.

YOUR INTEREST IN APARTMENT DESIGN

*1. Are you a community member or do you work in a role or organisation relevant to * apartment design?

- ○ I'm a community member
- ○ I work in a role or organisation that is relevant to apartment design

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOU

*2. Which statement best describes your current living * arrangements:

- ○ Married/have a partner with a child/children living with me
- ○ Married/have a partner with NO children living with me
- ○ Single with children living with me
- ○ Single with NO children living with me
- ○ Prefer not to say

*3. In which age group do you belong:

- ○ Under 18 years of age
- ○ 18-24 years of age
- ○ 25-39 years of age
- ○ 40-54 years of age
- ○ 55-70 years of age
- ○ Over 70 years of age
- ○ Prefer not to say

*4. Which statement best describes your interest in apartment living (choose the one that best relates to your reason for completing this survey):

- ○ I currently live in an apartment
- ○ I have previously lived in an apartment
- ○ I am planning to live in an apartment
- ○ I currently own an apartment but don't live in it
- ○ I have previously owned an apartment but didn't live in it
- ○ I am planning to buy an apartment but not live in it
- ○ I have a family member or friend who currently lives in or rents, or is planning to buy or rent an apartment
- ○ Other (please specify)

APARTMENT LIVING

5. Is this as * an owner or renter?

- ○ Owner
- ○ Renter
- ○ Other (please specify)

*6. How many bedrooms are in your apartment? For those of you who previously lived in an apartment, how many bedrooms were there? For those who are planning to buy an apartment, how many bedrooms are you looking for?

- ○ Studio
- ○ 1 bedroom
- ○ 2 bedrooms
- ○ 3 or more bedrooms
- ○ Other (please specify)

*7. In which area is your apartment? For those of you who previously lived in an apartment, where was it? For those who are planning to buy an apartment, where are you thinking of living?

- ○ Melbourne CBD
- ○ Inner Melbourne suburbs
- ○ Outer Melbourne suburbs
- ○ Regional Victoria
- ○ Other (please specify)

MORE ON APARTMENT LIVING

*8. Which statement best describes the length of time you plan to live in an apartment?

- ○ This is a short term option for me as I plan to move to a different type of home (e.g. townhouse, house)
- ○ This is a short term option for me as it won't meet my needs as I get older/my family situation changes
- ○ This is a medium term option for me as I plan to move to a different type of home (e.g. townhouse, house)

- ○ This is a medium term option for me as it won't meet my needs as I get older/my family situation changes
- ○ This is a long term option for me as it will continue to meet my needs into the future
- ○ This is a long term option for me as I may not have many other options
- ○ Not applicable
- ○ Other (please specify

*9. What do you like most about apartment living? For those who previously lived in or owned an apartment, what did you like about apartment living? Choose up to five options.

- ○ It provides an opportunity to make money as an investment
- ○ It is an affordable way of getting into the housing market
- ○ It is close to where me and/or my family members work and/or study
- ○ A smaller home better suits my stage of life (e.g. single, married, children, retired)
- ○ A smaller home better suits my lifestyle
- ○ I'm close to dining, recreation, sport and/or entertainment
- ○ There is a strong sense of community
- ○ It is low maintenance
- ○ I enjoy the view/outlook
- ○ Utility costs (water, power) are more affordable
- ○ Being closer to everything cuts down my transport costs
- ○ I can have my pets
- ○ I have good access to car parking
- ○ I feel safe
- ○ I have good storage space
- ○ It's quiet
- ○ Other (please specify)

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT APARTMENT LIVING

* 10. Now, what do you like LEAST about apartment living? For those who previously lived in or owned an apartment what did you like least about apartment living? Choose up to five options.

- ○ It is my only option given that any other type of housing is unaffordable
- ○ It is not an ideal living arrangement when you have children
- ○ It is not close enough to schools
- ○ It is not close enough to where me and/or my family members work or study
- ○ The smaller size doesn't suit my stage of life (e.g. single, married, children, retired)
- ○ The smaller size doesn't suit my lifestyle
- ○ I'm not close to dining, recreation, sport and/or entertainment
- ○ There is not a strong sense of community
- ○ It is high maintenance

- ○ I don't enjoy the view/outlook
- ○ Utilities and other living costs are not affordable
- ○ My transport costs are expensive
- ○ I can't have pets
- ○ I have limited access to car parking
- ○ I don't feel safe
- ○ It is noisy
- ○ There is limited storage
- ○ Other (please specify)

FOR THOSE IN A ROLE RELEVANT TO APARTMENT DESIGN

Please note that you can also provide a more detailed submission on the issues raised in the Better Apartment discussion paper via the online submission form at www.delwp.vic.gov.au/planning/policy-and-strategy/better-apartments.

11. Please indicate the type of organisation * you belong to:

- ○ Community-based organisation
- ○ Local government – metropolitan
- ○ Local government – regional
- ○ State government department or agency
- ○ Planning or development industry organisation
- ○ Sole Provider or company involved in the development industry
- ○ Architect or building designer
- ○ Planning or development consultancy
- ○ Other (please specify)

*12. Please provide the postcode of your organisation/workplace:

APARTMENT LIVING FOR THE FUTURE

*13. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about apartment living with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 being Strongly Agree.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
You can never get everything you want in an apartment (e.g. you will always have to compromise on something)	○	○	○	○	○
It's not possible to design an apartment in a way that makes it suitable for every life stage (e.g. single, married, children, retirement)	○	○	○	○	○
Apartments can be designed so they meet the needs of everyone who wants to live in them (regardless of age or ability)	○	○	○	○	○
It's important that an apartment is pleasant to live in and has a good outlook/view and outdoor spaces , but it's not worth paying more for it	○	○	○	○	○
An 'airy' apartment that has good natural daylight, direct sunlight and good ventilation is essential and is worth paying more for	○	○	○	○	○
Location is the most important thing when it comes to choosing an apartment	○	○	○	○	○
Location is not so important if the apartment has good access to public transport and/or a car parking space	○	○	○	○	○
There should be minimum apartment sizes to ensure apartments have reasonable sized rooms and storage	○	○	○	○	○
Environmentally-friendly aspects in an apartment such as recycling facilities, water efficiency and sustainable energy sources (e.g. solar panels) are 'nice to haves' rather than 'must haves'	○	○	○	○	○

MORE ON APARTMENT LIVING FOR THE FUTURE

*14. When you think about the need for apartment living in Victoria to meet the needs of the community in the future, what are the more important things to consider? Choose up to five options.

- ○ Adequate natural daylight
- ○ Access to direct sunlight
- ○ Reasonable size and space including ceiling heights and storage
- ○ A quality outlook
- ○ Natural ventilation
- ○ Noise minimisation
- ○ Access to outdoor spaces
- ○ The ability to adapt if the environment or the occupant's requirements change
- ○ Natural landscaped areas
- ○ Universal floor plans that work well for everyone, regardless of age or ability
- ○ Sustainable energy and resource usage
- ○ Systems that help manage waste including supporting recycling
- ○ Car Parking
- ○ Easy and friendly access to enter the building and to move from floor to floor
- ○ Other (please specify)

AND A LITTLE MORE

* 15. Now which are the LEAST important things when you think about apartment living and meeting the needs of the community in the future. Choose up to five options.

- ○ Adequate natural daylight
- ○ Access to direct sunlight
- ○ Reasonable size and space including ceiling heights and storage
- ○ A quality outlook
- ○ Natural Ventilation
- ○ Noise minimisation
- ○ Access to outdoor spaces
- ○ The ability to adapt if the environment or the occupant's requirements change
- ○ Natural landscaped areas
- ○ Universal floor plans that work well for everyone, regardless of age or ability
- ○ Sustainable energy and resource usage
- ○ Systems that help manage waste including supporting recycling
- ○ Car Parking
- ○ Easy and friendly access to enter the building and to move from floor to floor
- ○ Other (please specify)

ANY FURTHER COMMENTS

16. What other things need to be considered when designing apartments for the future?

*17. What are the top three challenges to ensuring apartment living in Victoria is focused on meeting the needs of the community in the future? Choose up to three options.

- ○ Ensuring that apartments are affordable for a wide range of people
- ○ Ensuring there are a range of choices in apartment living to meet everyone's needs
- ○ Working with developers to ensure apartments meet the needs of the community in the future
- ○ Coming up with the right design guidelines to achieve the outcome of better apartment living
- ○ Working out what types of apartment developments the design guidelines should apply to
- ○ Apartments will start to all look the same and there will be less variety in the design
- ○ It's difficult to know what the community will need out of apartment living in the future
- ○ Making sure people in the building industry know what the guidelines are

WOULD YOU LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

Thank you for completing our survey. Would you like to receive more information about the Better Apartments discussion process? If so, please provide your contact details.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) would be collecting your personal information on this form for the purpose of informing the Better Apartments Discussion.

The contact information you provide will remain within the department and may be used to contact you to provide you further information as part of the consultation process or survey you about your experience with the department. The contents of your survey response will be identified and used separately for the Better Apartments Discussion.

You can contact Victorian Government Contact Centre on 1300 366 356 if you wish to have your contact details removed from the Better Apartments Discussion Contact list. DELWP is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. For more information read DELWP's Information Privacy Policy on our website.

18. Would you like to receive more information about the process of the Better Apartments discussion?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

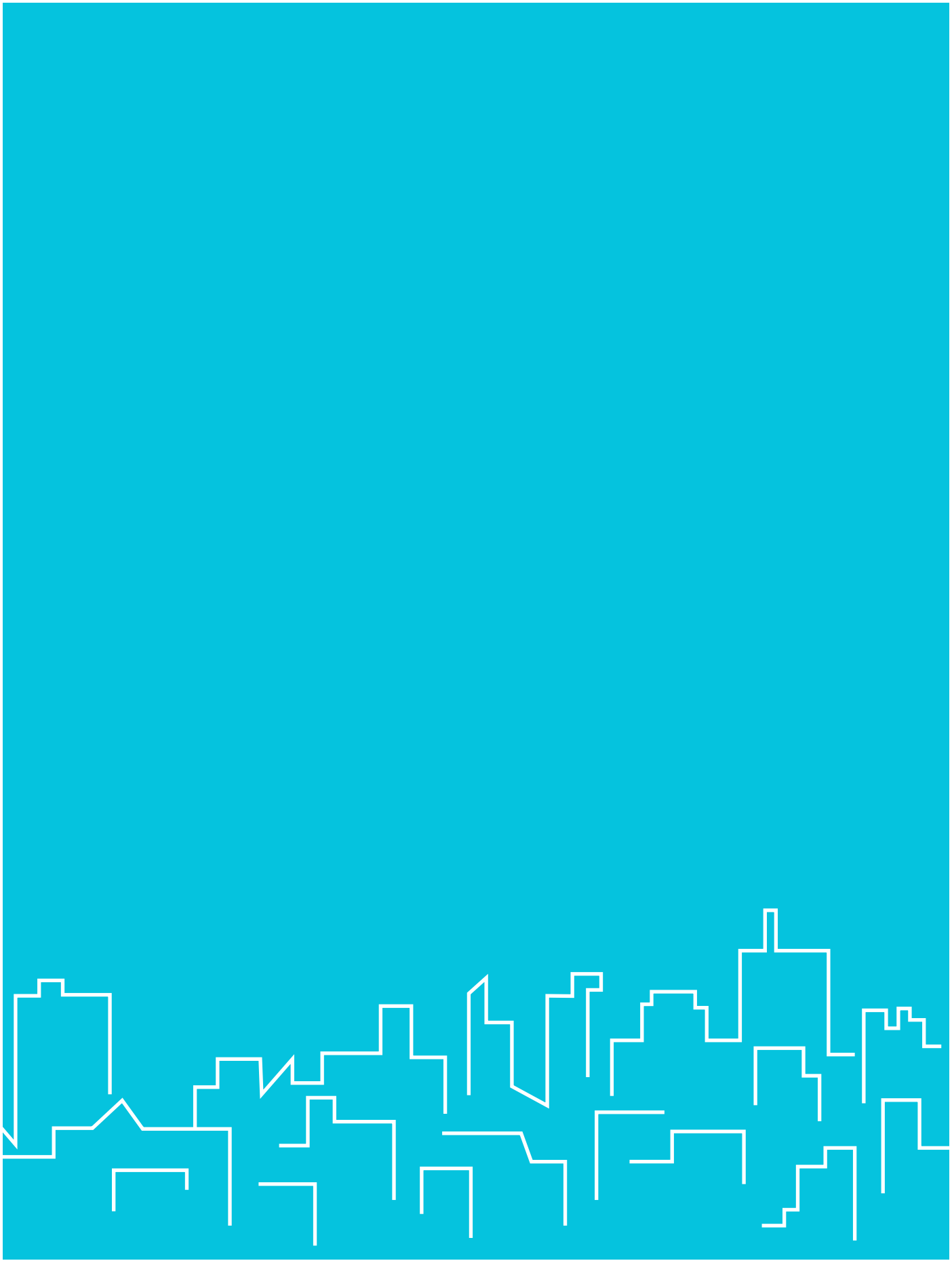
*19. Please provide your contact details:

Name:

Address:

Suburb:

State:

Postcode:

Email Address: