

**Submission
No 41**

INQUIRY INTO APARTMENT DESIGN STANDARDS

Organisation: Flemington Association

Date Received: 31 October 2021



**FLEMINGTON ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED**

PO Box 509 Flemington Vic 3031
info@flemingtonassociation.org.au
www.flemingtonassociation.org.au
ABN 29 680 884 811

**Environment and Planning Standing Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament of Victoria**

To whom this may concern,

The Flemington Association ('the Association') welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Apartment Design Standards.

The Association works to care for and enhance the special character and amenity of Flemington, Newmarket and Travancore, for the benefit of all residents and has a keen interest in built form. A significant proportion of residents in Flemington and Travancore live in apartments, with approximately 60 per cent of Flemington residents, and 78 per cent of Travancore residents living in an apartment, compared to only 11.5 per cent of Victoria's population. The proportion of residents living in apartments has increased over time, with higher density developments supporting a growing population and urban renewal.¹

The Association has structured this submission around the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, focussing on areas that are of highest priority following consultation with our membership.

Current apartment living standards in Victoria

Residents living in apartments in Flemington and Travancore report limited access to open space, including safe outdoor communal areas, poor ventilation and air flow within individual units, and inadequate noise insulation. As apartments continue to form the bulk of new developments in inner city suburbs such as Flemington and Travancore, these issues increase in prevalence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need to address these issues, as well as emerging issues, such as the need for apartments to have spaces for families to work and learn from home. The pandemic, along with an increase in the gig economy, has also seen workers locked away without any sense of space, location or city.

¹ ABS, 2001 and 2016 Census, Quickstats, Flemington and Travancore.

Improvements that can be made to the liveability in apartments and apartment building developments, including in communal areas

As the population continues to grow, it is important that apartment living promote the health and wellbeing of residents. Our membership also hopes that these standards apply to both private and public housing developments.

The Association acknowledges that work is nearing completion on the Updated Better Apartment Design Standards and Guidelines and welcomes many of the changes outlined in the preview documents available on the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning website. As a result, the Association's comments in this section focus on areas to improve liveability in apartments not covered in the preview documents.

Section 1 - Siting and Building Arrangement

Communal open space: There needs to be a safeguard so that, when a developer provides open space that abuts existing public space, it is not acquired over time by the development and treated as private. There should be no per-capita reduction in public space.

There is also a need for pathways that integrate and engage so that a development's open space allows its residents to be knitted into the wider community.

External walls and materials: The preamble to this standard makes passing reference to materials needing to mitigate fire risks, but this does not appear to be mentioned specifically in the objective, standard or guidance. Such reference should be made more explicit to avoid potential recurrence of the use of dangerous materials, as was experienced in the recent past in relation to flammable cladding.

Section 2 - Building Performance

Noise impacts: When considering noise impacts from internal sources, there is an emphasis here on plant, machinery and internal services. Another source that should be taken into account is noise generated by adjoining apartments within a block. This is likely to become more of an issue with the inevitable lifestyle changes arising from people working from home more often.

Section 3 - Dwelling Amenity

While this section is understandably generalised to account for all types of households, it would be valuable to include specific consideration of needs of families living in apartments. With the advent of the need for families to work and learn from home, this is an important area to be addressed.

Windows: An additional consideration is that of horizon views. In particular, residents working from home, whether at a desk in a study or at a kitchen table need to see a horizon, landmark or similar to give them a sense of their community.

Finally, an issue that does not seem to be covered by the proposed standards is the need to ensure connectivity to the internet, which would be regarded as an essential service. Internal design can certainly affect this.

Initiatives undertaken by other states or nations that have improved apartment design standards

While not an initiative, we refer the Inquiry to a recent article by the Churchill Fellow Natalia Krysiak published by the University of Queensland in February 2021, titled 'Design and Planning Policy for Family-Friendly Apartment Living'.² The article refers to learnings from other jurisdictions, including Vancouver, Toronto and London, on the needs of families and children living in apartments and outlines options for treatability.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide a submission to the Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Apartment Design Standards. Should you wish to discuss this submission further, please contact us at [REDACTED]

Kind Regards,

Flemington Association Committee

² <https://stories.uq.edu.au/policy-futures/2021/design-and-planning-policy-for-family-friendly-apartment-living/index.html>