

**Submission
No 47**

INQUIRY INTO APARTMENT DESIGN STANDARDS

Organisation: Ignite

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31 October 2021

Ms Sarah Connolly
Chair
Legislative Assembly: Environment and Planning Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Ms Connolly,

Ignite Response to the Parliament Inquiry Into Apartment Design Standards

Thank you for granting Ignite an opportunity to respond and make a submission to the Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee's inquiry on our views of Victoria's apartment design standards, and its role in providing liveable housing to all Victorians.

Ignite is a not-for-profit organisation and alumni network supported by The University of Melbourne, and we partner with organisations in our industry to explore the built environment's role in supporting social, environmental, and economic progress. Within Ignite's program streams, our research division has been actively exploring how future apartment design could better serve the liveability needs of Victorians, particularly in;

- A. *Making high-rise apartment living child-friendly* ([Ignite Research Link A](#)),
- B. *Adapting to Working From Home post-pandemic* ([Ignite Research Link B](#))
- C. *Unlocking the largest market segment for apartment living with Build-To-Rent (BTR)* ([Ignite Research Link C](#))

More Australians than ever are taking up high density living in apartments, with the 2016 census indicating that one in every five occupied dwellings in Australia were apartments, compared to one in seven, back in 1991. (Source: ABS) With Greater Melbourne needing to accommodate two-thirds of Victoria's future population by 2056 within its established areas

(Source: Victoria in Future 2019, DELWP), we believe that Victoria's apartment design standards should be better tailored to address the challenges of family apartment living.

Terms of reference (a): Current Apartment Living Standards in Victoria

In our analysis of observing net dwelling increase between 2011 and 2016 (Source: ABS), there appears to be a significant shortfall of family housing stock being delivered within the inner and middle areas of Greater Melbourne. Furthermore, detached dwellings that commonly served a family unit, were replaced by higher density typologies, often delivering a higher 1BR/2BR yield.

Recent increases in apartment family living, have led to a rising number of children delaying their progression in reaching important child development milestones. And because young children and toddlers spend more time at home, the issues associated with living in buildings not designed for children in mind, are far greater.

In our research on looking at how to make child-friendly apartment design guidelines, our team took a first-principles based approach and started by asking child health experts what children need.

Terms of reference (b): Improvements that can be made to the liveability in apartments and apartment building developments, including communal areas

Our current research into the challenges of making apartments liveable for families, have resulted in a list of child-friendly apartment design guidelines that look into redesigning common apartment features. An iterative co-design approach allowed the team to design interventions which addressed occupants' livability and affordability concerns, while not penalising the developer, builder or architect; the key stakeholders responsible for widespread adoption. The recommendations looked at all liveable aspects of the apartment, from the unit to shared spaces, such as communal areas and building entries.

When our guidelines were applied to a pilot site in Docklands, construction costs per unit increased by only 2% - an amount offset by a 5% premium indicated by interviewed occupants, if their apartment building provided all design interventions proposed.

Terms of reference (c): Initiatives undertaken by other states or nations that have improved apartment design standards

To date, most global efforts to formulate child-friendly apartment design guidelines have been based on surveying parents who live in apartments, i.e. Toronto's Planning for Children in New Vertical Communities ([Document Link](#)). However, Ignite argues that this may not be enough.

Based on a preliminary, high level review, Victoria's Better Apartment Design Standards has improved the general livability of apartments but falls short in ensuring designs holistically support a child's development. For example, a minimally-complying apartment in Victoria today would only provide features that account for half of a child's development milestones, as identified in Australia's National Quality Standards (NQS) set by the Australian Education & Care Quality Authority.

The Ignite team looks forward to our future communications with the legislative assembly committee, and the future outcome of this inquiry to the betterment of the livability standards for future Victorians.

If you would like further information on the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to reach out to our team and send us an email through igniteabp@gmail.com, or by calling us on [REDACTED]

Yours Sincerely,

Arianna Garay | Ignite Research Member

On behalf of

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