Family First

worth fighting for

Below is a **Family First Victoria response** to the Liveable Victoria questionnaire. It is framed to support more housing and strong communities while protecting local democracy, neighbourhood character, heritage, infrastructure and Green Wedges.

Party: Family First Victoria
Contact name and email: Moira Deeming MP, Party Leader.
Moira.Deeming@parliament.vic.gov.au

Family First Victoria response

Thank you for the chance to respond. Family First believes your home and your land are yours, and that families, not planners, know best how to use them. Victoria has a housing shortage, and the biggest cause is that too many rules make it slow, costly and uncertain to build a home. Our approach is simple, we are putting families back in front again. This means that Family First will let owners build, keep the rules few and clear, and make them the same for everyone, equally applied. Treat people fairly when government makes a decision that affects their street. Do the basics, like roads, schools and transport, properly. Our answers below follow that approach.

1. Repeal the Activity Centre Program including Amendment VC257?

No.

We wouldn't vote to take away the extra freedom to build that this gives owners. The old rules were tighter. But we don't back the top-down method, with officials picking centres and setting heights. Our fix is to go further: one simple rule for owners across the whole city, not 60 lines on a map.

2. Repeal the Precinct Structure Plans for the six SRL East Precincts?

No.

No. Those plans let owners build near the new stations. Our worry is the cost of the rail project itself, and who ends up paying for it. Depending on the terms, we would support

cancelling the SRL, but support lifting restrictions on housing, as a step towards allowing the market to fix the demand/supply problem.

3. Repeal the Low-Rise and Mid-Rise Housing Codes and reinstate ResCode pending new building standards agreed between government, councils, the community and the property industry?

No. A clear rulebook is fairer and quicker than leaving every call to officials and neighbours. If you meet the rules, you get your permit. Rules should be few, plain, and the same for everyone. We suggest that if part of the codes isn't working, fix that part.

4. Repeal the fast-track Development Facilitation Program, including Amendments VC242, VC243 and VC280?

Yes. A fast lane for big projects, decided by one Minister, isn't fair. A family building a granny flat or a small builder should get the same quick yes. We'd replace it with simple rules that apply to everyone equally, and allow families agency in their community.

5. Return responsibility to local councils and genuine community consultation for planning housing growth, preparing structure plans and making development decisions?

Yes. Decisions are better made close to the people they affect, and councils should answer to their residents. But what you can do with your own land shouldn't depend on a show of hands of people in your street. If planning follows the clear rules, it should go ahead at the desire of the family building the home.

6. Restore residents' rights to receive notice, make objections and seek independent review of planning applications?

Yes. If government is deciding something that affects your home or your street, you should be told, listened to, and able to appeal to someone independent. If a project simply follows clear rules, there's nothing to decide.

If elected will your party:

7. Ensure infrastructure and essential services are delivered before or alongside increased housing density?

Yes. Family First supports ensuring that infrastructure and essential services are delivered alongside increased housing density. We support lifting the restrictions to a sensible level around existing infrastructure, as scaling up existing schools and hospitals in the metropolitan areas is, in many cases, cheaper than building new schools and hospitals in regional paddocks with no current energy, roads, telecommunications, public transport or community.

New homes need access to schools, hospitals, roads, public transport, utilities, parks, childcare, emergency services and community facilities. Growth without infrastructure places unfair pressure on existing families and reduces liveability.

8. Strengthen the protection of built and natural heritage with improvements to the Victorian Planning Provisions and the Heritage Act 2017?

No. We'd protect places the public owns, like parks, reserves and public buildings. A private home or building belongs to its owner. If the community wants one kept as it is, the owner should agree, or the public should help pay.

9. Pause the implementation of recent changes to the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and review the Better Decisions Made Faster provisions to ensure resident rights and protection of heritage and amenity are central parts of the implementation?

Yes. A law that gives a Minister more say over what happens on your land should be looked at in the open before it goes further. We'd keep anything that reduces hurdles and red tape for ordinary families. We'd fix anything that puts too much power in one pair of hands.

10. Protect Green Wedges by prohibiting all urban-related and industrial uses and reaffirming the status of urban growth boundaries?

No. Farmers and other owners should decide what to do with their own land. A fixed line around the city pushes up the price of land. That shuts the next generation of families out of a home. We'd protect public parks and waterways, and trust owners with the rest. We don't support the current models where home and landowners in the metropolitan ring are using the government and council to block naturally increasing housing density - through development around infrastructure rich communities – this is ultimately what leads to new home-owners needing to look to grow Melbourne's footprint by creating new residential estates on what is otherwise rich, productive farmland.

11. Strengthen Rural Zones to protect agriculture, biodiversity, natural resources and landscape values?

No. The best way to protect farmland is to make sure natural housing density and city growth is possible within the metropolitan ring, and to make sure that farming pays. That means fewer rules, fewer charges, and the right to get on with the job without being shut down by complaints from new neighbours. Farmers know their land better than any planner does, and heavy handed zoning from government has never increased their ability to farm their own land.

12. Re-introduce mandatory building heights and design standards in place of discretionary and "deemed to comply" standards to protect

amenity, heritage and natural resources and improve certainty, consistency and lower development costs?

No. Clear rules that everyone can read in advance are the right idea. The way to get that is "meet the rules, get the permit". Hard caps that tell families what they can't build on their own block are not helpful, and have lead to the issues we see in the housing market today.

13. Adopt a new process to urban growth corridor planning that streamlines the approval process, increases average housing densities and provides new design and environmental standards, while providing for a range of affordable and other housing types and street-based retail centres based around public transport?

Yes. A faster, simpler process and a good mix of homes is what young and growing families need. That includes smaller homes and granny flats. We'd leave the exact density and design to owners and builders, who know what people want and can afford, rather than set it from above.

Closing statement

Families need more homes, and they need to be treated fairly while those homes are built. We'd rather give people the freedom to build, with clear rules and a fair say, than leave the decisions to a map drawn in Parliament or a show of hands down the street. We are fighting for fair laws for Victorians because at Family First we're putting families back in front again.