

end to rock bottom

PREMIER John Brumby's constituents are living in squalor as they wait for a new housing development to be built.

And they have challenged their local MP to spend a night on their sofa and experience the misery first hand.

Public housing residents in the Westmeadows Estate near Broadmeadows have been left languishing in their run-down homes because the Office of Housing does not want to spend money on the units, which will be bulldozed next year.

For the past six months, residents claim, urgent issues such as broken windows, doors without locks and vermin infestations have been ignored by authorities who don't want to repair them to save money.

Mum-of-four Ashley, who preferred not to give her surname for fear of retribution, said her house was "constantly" being broken into because the back door couldn't lock.

"Nothing gets fixed. Even when the repairmen come they won't do anything that's going to cost a lot of money," she said.

"I've had three people out to quote the door and window but no one comes to actually fix it, it's been more than six months now."

Another resident said her house had been flooded from recent rain and had mould growing along the walls.

And mum-of-four Jody Willis said her back window had been broken and her back door missing a lock for six months.

She invited her local member, Mr Brumby, to spend a day in her house with her and her four children, Aaron, 10, Shane, 8, Tanika, 6, and six-week-old Shayla.

"If Mr Brumby spent 24 hours in this house, there would be no more questions asked," she said. "He's so out of touch with us, he has no idea."

Anne Wright

The Westmeadows Estate is being redeveloped as part of the State Government's Affordable Housing Initiative and is due for completion in 2013.

Victorian Public Tenants Association co-ordinator Jackie Dacey said it was unacceptable that public housing tenants were living in sub-standard conditions.

"Even if there are plans to sell this property, there is still an obligation to maintain the property in good repair," she said.

Victoria's Housing Minister Richard Wynne said the project was on schedule for a November finish and tenants were being re-housed in stages.

Mr Wynne said maintenance work was still being

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- Mum ASHLEY

carried out on the units while they housed people.

Opposition housing spokesman Wendy Lovell said the development was behind schedule.

"It's a sad indictment on the Premier that these people are living in sub-standard accommodation in his electorate," she said.

There are now 38,980 Victorians on the public housing waiting list - a tenfold increase since last December.

A spokeswoman for Mr Brumby said the Government would this year build the biggest amount of social housing since the 1950s.

"The Premier has visited The Mews on a number of occasions," spokeswoman Jessica Harris said.

"Maintenance work will continue to occur at the estate."



Mr Brumby, would you live here?



Home wears: Tunbridge Mews residents in Westmeadows are living in highly dilapidated public housing.

Pictures: JON HARGEST