

Opening Remarks

By Dato' Jeffrey Ng Tiong Lip, Chairman of REHDA Institute

**At the Asia Real Estate Leaders (AREL) – Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Study Trip & Housing Dialogue (11 - 13 March 2025)**

A very good morning and a warm welcome to:

- Professor Diego Ramirez-Lovering, Professor of Architecture and Associate Dean, Monash University;
- Senior representatives from Malaysian authorities, including the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, PR1MA, State Housing Board of Penang;
- Datuk Ir. Ho Hon Sang, President of REHDA Malaysia;
- Patrons of REHDA and REHDA National Council Members;
- Directors of GreenRE;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the REHDA Institute, it is both an honour to welcome you to today's Housing Dialogue, which forms part of the Asia Real Estate Leaders (AREL) Study Tour to Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. As both Tan Sri Eddy Chen and I are proud Monash University alumni, this collaboration holds special significance for us. I trust that some participants have graduated from Monash, too. Monash, ranked among the top 50 universities globally, has been a valued partner of the REHDA Institute since our groundbreaking Affordable Housing Report in 2018.

As a think tank focused on housing, the REHDA Institute is dedicated to building a robust regional network for research, education and training. Our core initiatives unite influential stakeholders from the real estate and property development sectors, not just in Malaysia, but across the broader Asia-Pacific region.

Melbourne was chosen as our study trip destination due to it being ranked as the world's second most liveable city in 2024 by The Economist Intelligence Unit. Melbourne's dedication to balancing historical preservation with modern innovation and sustainability makes it an inspiring destination for study and exploration. This unique blend of preservation and progress ensures that Melbourne remains a dynamic and relevant global hub in 2025.

The city excels in urban renewal initiatives, where older, dilapidated structures are often replaced with cutting-edge infrastructure designed to enhance liveability and environmental sustainability.

Aligned with the Malaysian Government's key priorities, such as urban renewal, strata laws, affordable housing and senior living, the REHDA Institute has invested significant effort over the past few months to collaborate with both Malaysian Government stakeholders and our counterparts in Melbourne to make this trip a success. This ensures that our delegation connects with the right individuals and explores the most relevant sites.

Today's Housing Dialogue is designed not only to facilitate insightful discussions but also to create ample networking opportunities. It offers delegates the chance to engage with key industry stakeholders, expanding their knowledge while also providing local Victorian stakeholders with the opportunity to connect with the Malaysian delegation.

Since the reopening of borders in 2022, the REHDA Institute has had the privilege of leading several study tours, connecting with housing advocacy groups and research think tanks in cities like Bangkok, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City and now Melbourne.

Today's dialogue couldn't be more timely. As we discuss Planning and Urban Redevelopment Laws in Australia, we draw relevance from Malaysia's newly released Urban Renewal Act Draft Bill, which will play a critical role in shaping sustainable urban planning. Our recent study trip to Hong Kong in March 2024 provided key insights on a comparative study in urban renewal practices regionally.

For instance, the meeting, site tour and presentation by Ms. Tania Quick, Director of the Fishermans Bend Taskforce—Australia's largest urban renewal project, spanning 480 hectares—along with the visits to the Affordable Housing site at Community Housing Victoria and the senior living developments, would not have been possible without the strong strategic relationships we've cultivated within our Melbourne network. These exclusive opportunities, typically out of reach, make this trip not just an excursion, but a meaningful and strategic exploration.

For any development, the timeframe for the approval process and the most efficient time from start to completion of a project are critical for cost management. In Victoria, the process for redevelopment or collective sale requires that at least 75% of the owners agree to the sale. In general, 75% is the most common threshold for strata redevelopment across Australian States (including New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia), although there may be some variations, especially regarding the age of the buildings and types of development. We also aim to learn from the Australian experience the challenges faced and the efficient and equitable manner in resolving issues related to the dissenting 25%.

In Malaysia, developers are required to provide price-controlled housing, a unique mandate that distinguishes us globally. It's therefore invaluable for us to observe how Australia approaches social, affordable housing and open market housing. For instance, our visit yesterday to the Community Housing Victoria site in Prahran highlighted an innovative model that combines urban redevelopment with social housing through rental models, ensuring public ownership.

This model has been recommended in several of REHDA Institute's Affordable Housing Reports previously. Moreover, we have heard how social housing and affordable housing are mixed within the same project whilst in some projects, they are separated. We would like to know which model is advisable and if there are variations depending on the localised nature of the development in terms of demographics.

Our Melbourne visit is a key opportunity to engage with leading Australian experts in areas such as mixed-use developments, retirement villages, sustainable development, social housing and urban townships. The lessons we gather here will sharpen our strategies and expand our networks, offering invaluable market intelligence and feasibility insights.

The Malaysian Government and private sector can learn from Australia's senior living and aged care system, particularly the Aged Care Bill 2024, which will take effect in July 2025. The Bill introduces a rights-based framework prioritising the dignity, autonomy and preferences of older individuals, which Malaysia could adopt to enhance elder care. Australia's aged care system is at an advanced stage and it also enforces strict standards and codes of conduct for aged care providers, ensuring accountability and quality, which could help improve Malaysia's care system and reduce neglect.

Many Australians have embraced senior living, whereby between 2.5% to 4.5% of people aged above 55 years are living in retirement villages. This is due to their lifestyle preference and this may not be applicable in Malaysia. Even though Malaysia might not be totally ready to embrace senior living in the same way, we can still learn from the best practices and gradually adopt in our Country.

As Malaysia assumes the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2025 with the theme 'Inclusivity and Sustainability,' we are confident that the ASEAN Real Estate Conference (AREC), initiated by the KPKT Minister in July, will provide an excellent platform to showcase the achievements and capabilities of top Malaysian developers. This will not only strengthen their presence within ASEAN but also facilitate expansion beyond the region. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Honourable Minister for driving collaborative, win-win business initiatives within the ASEAN framework through AREC and for hosting such a prestigious conference in Malaysia.

Looking ahead, the REHDA Institute will continue to organise strategic study tours to enhance our learning and expand our regional networks. Potential future destinations include Sydney, Taiwan, China and Korea, depending on demand from our industry. There was also a suggestion to visit Vienna due to a great affordable housing project. These exchanges are essential as we align with international best practices, particularly in areas such as affordable housing and senior living developments. We invite you to participate in these upcoming initiatives and encourage you to reach out to our Secretariat team for further information.

Finally, I extend our heartfelt thanks to our local Associations and local partners who supported us to make this trip a reality, your support has been invaluable. Let's seize this opportunity to build lasting connections, exchange knowledge and drive our industry forward. I wish you all a productive and engaging day ahead.

Thank you.

Dato' Jeffrey Ng Tiong Lip
REHDA Institute Chairman
12th March 2025