

**Report** Sale to developers 'ill-conceived'

# Councils lash public land sell-off move

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The sell-off of the city's public housing estates to developers for a modest increase in new homes for the disadvantaged will still leave a huge shortfall on what's needed, a report for councils concludes.

And an academic with a long history studying public housing redevelopment in Melbourne says the Andrews government's public land sale to developers is ill-conceived and should be abandoned.

The state government plans to demolish nine ageing public housing estates across Melbourne.

The land will then be sold to developers to build thousands of new dwellings - some in towers up to 20 storeys high. The developers will be required to build at least 10 per cent more social housing than was demolished.

But there is a growing backlash against the plans, from housing estate residents fearing they won't be allowed back, and councils, which will have planning powers taken from them by the government.

Residents in streets surrounding the projects are also concerned over proposed medium-rise developments on what are now mostly low-rise estates.

Housing estates in Brighton, Prahran, Hawthorn, Brunswick West, North Melbourne, Heidelberg West, Clifton Hill, Northcote and Ascot Vale will be demolished and rebuilt as part of the plan. The Flemington and Preston estates are also being redeveloped.

Nearly 3950 social housing dwellings are in Brighton, Hawthorn, and Prahran. Bayside, Boroondara and Stonnington councils cover these areas.

The three councils commissioned consultants to assess whether the redevelopment plans would create enough dwellings to meet demand. The answer was: no.

The government's public hous-

ing renewal program would create an extra 368 social housing dwellings in Brighton, Hawthorn and Prahran, NERA Economic Consulting and Sensing Value concluded in their report.

But the consultants estimated social housing demand would rise to just over 5400 by 2022 - a shortfall of nearly 1100 dwellings.

Bayside mayor Alex del Porto, speaking on behalf of the councils, said the government's plan would "deliver very little new public housing ... and sidelines councils and communities from the planning process".

The councils argue the redevelopment program should be halted until a state parliament inquiry into the program finishes. They also say the redeveloped sites should be at least 50 per cent social housing.

Urban geographer and planner Kate Shaw, from Melbourne University, went further, arguing "100 per cent low-income housing is not only appropriate but perhaps even preferable" in some places.

"The sale of public land to fund upgrades is unsustainable. At some point more works will be required and there will be no public land left to sell," Dr Shaw said in her submission to the parliamentary inquiry.

"The current government commitment to increasing social housing stock on new redevelopment sites by a mere 10 per cent is disgraceful," she said. "Australia's rapid population growth and growing unaffordability problems are occurring in a time when public housing is decreasing both proportionally and in real terms."

Housing Minister Martin Foley dismissed the report, labelling it "cheap, politically inspired lies spread by Greens Party and Liberal-dominated councils".

"These projects are part of our work to get more Victorians into safe and secure housing," he said.