

4<sup>th</sup> November 2017

### **Submission into the Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program**

I understand the need for renewal of public housing as well as the urgent need of providing additional housing to the existing housing.

The proposal put forward by the DHSS however seems rushed and not well planned and thought through. There are various issues that concern me.

1. The actual sale/give away of public land in order to achieve a mere 10% increase in the amount of units presently on the parcel of land.
2. The vagueness of the actual proposed development.
3. The sheer size of buildings proposed on the site not being adequate to the immediate surrounding environment of a maximum of 3 stories high buildings. This includes the most recent development on Abbotsford Street/corner of Arden Street.
4. Predominantly building 2 bedroom units, which do not provide enough space for families, of which there are a lot at present residing in the public housing site on Abbotsford/Molesworth/Haines Street.

Unfortunately, it seems that the department is trying to sell off assets for a quick profit, yet this will result in a loss of a very valuable asset forever. Public housing should not at any stage be in the hands of the private sector. This particular section of public housing has seen a replacement of windows and a complete outer overhaul just recently. The proposal suggests a total demolition of all buildings presently on the site at a cost to the taxpayer of about 185 million. The site will then be handed over to private developers and their only cost will be the provision of a certain amount of units for social housing within a premium site in the very sought after inner city suburb of North Melbourne. To me the only winner in this set up is the future private developer.

The Impact the increase in density will have on the community and the local environment is enormous.

The proposed amount of units to be built on the site is excessive and is not keeping with the context of the neighbourhood, which is very diverse and family oriented.

The actual height of the proposed buildings- up to 9 stories high- is excessive. The surrounding area has a maximum height of 3 stories. The visual bulk will have a negative effect on the neighbourhood.

The proposed development will be devoid of any green areas, including the playground presently on the estate, which is not only utilised by the children living on the estate but also children in the surrounding streets.

With the proposed amount of units on the site and the proposed site held back for a school, an extreme overdevelopment would result, which would also put extreme traffic strain on the surrounding streets.

Furthermore, the actual information regarding the space put aside for the school has been appalling. So called traffic experts were not even aware that Molesworth Street could only be accessed from Abbotsford Street.

Questions regarding the actual provision of parking to future residents on the Abbotsford Street site could not be answered. Parking in the area is already an issue, with an additional 200 units and potentially a school expansion this will create a lot of problems.

There has been no adequate community consultation. From one presentation to the next there were changes and the consultants / advisors could not answer the most basic questions, as they were not given the information.

The project drawings provided by the Department were completely misleading. Areas that are shown as green spaces are areas that are held back for a future school (vertical up to 9 stories), even though in a previous meeting it was said that buildings along Molesworth Street would not go higher than 3 stories.

The whole consultation process has been terrible and completely inadequate. It almost seems like a 'fait accompli', with the whole consultation process being merely a farce, going through the motions and ticking all the boxes.

One of the main issues of concern is the fact that the full authority for the site is being handed to the Minister for Planning under a Development Plan Overlay. Once the minister for Planning takes control of the site, the terms of the Development Plan Overlay ensure that residents will no longer have any right of appeal. In a democratic country, this should be seen as unacceptable by all.

The Department is trying to push through this change without waiting for the outcomes of the parliamentary review into the housing renewal program. It appears totally inappropriate from the perspective of the democratic process, as it locks in to a course of action that might be the one ultimately chosen by the government. The sale and planning changes for Abbotsford Street should be halted until the parliamentary inquiry into the public housing renewal program is completed. One wonders about the need to rush it through before the inquiry has the opportunity to report its findings.

Overall, in a time where there is a great need for an increase in public housing why are we giving away needed land to private developers for a minute increase in housing at a great cost to the taxpayer, yet a great financial gain to a private entity. This is public land and it should stay that way.

Sincerely

Kerstin Kilian

