



**FLEMINGTON ASSOCIATION  
INCORPORATED**

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## **INITIAL SUBMISSION ON FLEMINGTON HOUSING ESTATE RENEWAL PROPOSAL**

6 June 2017

### **PURPOSE OF THE SUBMISSION**

1. This submission, on behalf of the Flemington Association (the Association), is to:
  - a) raise concerns with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regarding the initial consultation process and plans for the proposed renewal of the main Flemington Public Housing Estate (the Estate) under the “Public Housing Renewal Program” (PHRP);
  - b) seek further information on what is proposed; and
  - c) recommend a way forward that strengthens consultation and achieves best planning outcomes.

The submission will also be forwarded to Moonee Valley City Council, the Minister for Housing and members of parliament.

2. The Association is concerned that steps are being taken by the government and DHHS to rapidly redevelop the Estate without a proper analysis or consultation with those likely to be affected and without clear objectives as to what will be achieved.
3. The PHRP will have a very significant impact on the Flemington community, including those who live on and around the Estate. Accordingly, the Association submits the following is fundamental:
  - a) a Community Consultative Committee (CCC) should be established, including a broad cross-section of community representatives; and
  - b) a Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) should be undertaken, in an integrated manner, and after a proper analysis of the site and surrounds, that includes land owned by the government and council.

### **FLEMINGTON ASSOCIATION'S ROLE**

4. The Association is an incorporated body that primarily represents those who live in Flemington (including Travancore and Newmarket). This includes long and short-term residents in private homes, rental accommodation and public and social housing.
5. The Association has an ongoing interest in ensuring good planning outcomes for Flemington and our surrounds and in encouraging engagement by the Flemington

community in planning issues and decisions. Association members work closely with other community groups, local institutions, members of parliament and councils. For example, our members have attended and participated in the Flemington Neighbourhood Renewal project over several years and regularly contribute to planning proposals that impact upon Flemington.

## BACKGROUND

6. The PHRP for the Estate was announced in September 2016. A consulting firm was engaged to solicit some preliminary input from community groups and people who live, work or study in Flemington. As the firm's report attests, the consultation process was very limited in its scope.<sup>1</sup>
7. Many local community leaders indicate that there remains a lack of appreciation on the Estate and beyond as to what is being proposed. DHHS information and media reports, for example, focus primarily on the walk-ups being replaced, with little, if any, information about what additional development might take place on the Estate.
8. The only information that has been provided to the broader community is one sketch plan showing possible development sites and a range of potential heights of structures on these sites. Otherwise, the information disclosed simply states that there will be a 10% increase in public housing, with no particulars as to what this means and no details as to the anticipated increase in total housing (or anticipated residents), the anticipated changes to density, amenity and public space and the potential impacts on the community. No information has been provided as to what studies or information has been considered. No strategies or overall objectives have been disclosed.
9. The Association's primary role is to inform the Flemington community and encourage engagement. The points identified in this submission are intended to help inform us and the broader community and to facilitate discussions. Without further evidence and community input, the Association is not in a position to meaningfully comment on what should be done with the redevelopment of the Estate.
10. The Association has long advocated for improvements to existing public housing in Flemington. In the past, Association members have supported appropriate mixed residential use that encourages a diverse and interactive community. We appreciate that this might mean some private development on the Estate will assist in funding renewal of the Estate, particularly the walk-ups, and potentially help bridge social and economic gaps.
11. However, Association members are clear that success can only be achieved with proper planning and a transparent process that works collaboratively towards the best possible outcome for Flemington.

## OUTLINE OF MAIN ISSUES

12. Based on the very limited information at hand, the Association identifies the following as some of the key issues for the PHRP on the Estate.
  - a) It is imperative that there is high-quality design that has regard to the interests of existing Estate residents and surrounding residents and to the needs and expectations of future residents and the broader community.

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<sup>1</sup> *Flemington Estate Renewal Project: Phase one engagement report*, DHHS (Capire Consulting Group), November 2016

- b) Any design must ensure the built environment engages appropriately with the surrounding neighbourhood and facilities and neighbourhood activity centres.
  - c) A unified and comprehensive plan is vital for all publicly-owned land (local and state government) and all proposed land uses. Pursuing proposals in a piecemeal fashion will work against the desired high-quality outcome.
  - d) Renewal should prioritise interaction between the new communities and existing communities, aiming for improved social connectivity.
  - e) Emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring minimal impact upon existing residents during any construction phase, including the sensitive relocation of residents from affected buildings and, where possible and desirable, their integration back to the Estate.
  - f) This is a fantastic opportunity to create more open space and more effective use of open space in an area that has minimal open space but is expected to accommodate a much larger population. Loss of open space will not be acceptable.
  - g) Design aspects must encourage a safer environment. Glib references to “passive surveillance” from intensive development are not persuasive.
  - h) Walking, cycling and public transport must be encouraged over car reliance.
  - i) Motor vehicle access to the Estate should be designed to minimise impact on local roads and encourage the flow of vehicular traffic onto major arterial roads.
  - j) Engagement with those who live on the Estate is critical.
  - k) There also needs to be meaningful engagement with the broader community, including other residents, businesses, community groups and providers, and consideration of the long-term impact of renewal for the Estate on the community.
13. Critical to the issues outlined above is a careful, considered planning process with direct community input. This will also assist in ensuring the community owns and embraces any new development.
14. We are encouraged by and look to similar processes as those undertaken for redevelopment of housing estates in Kensington and Carlton, where community consultative groups were integral to the planning, with mostly positive outcomes. We are keen to draw on what has worked in the past to ensure the best planning process is applied to any redevelopment of the Estate.

## SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

15. In addition to the broad issues outlined above, the specific questions below have been identified:
- a) What is the proposed planning process?
  - b) Who is to be involved in the planning process?
  - c) How is the community to be informed and engaged?
  - d) What funding has been set aside for the planning and engagement process?
  - e) What is the current composition of the Estate and the planned demographic?
  - f) What is proposed in terms of the number of additional residences and anticipated number of new people living on the redeveloped Estate?
  - g) Why does there appear to be a proposal for a two-staged approach rather than an integrated, comprehensive master plan for the area?
  - h) How is the planning process for the Estate to be linked to other government and council planning strategies and objectives that apply to Flemington and surrounds?
  - i) What is the proposed statutory planning process?

- j) What strategy has been developed for sensitively relocating residents and returning those who wish to return to Flemington?
  - k) What is being contemplated to ensure minimal impact on existing residents during construction phase?
  - l) What assessment has been made as to the anticipated loss of access to space and natural light for those in the existing high-rise and what will be done to ameliorate any loss?
  - m) Who is proposed to manage the Estate once it is complete and how is it proposed to be managed, given it will accommodate a larger number of public housing residents plus residents in private and social housing?
  - n) What environmental considerations have been given to ensure the proposal is a sustainable one focusing on future needs?
  - o) What is involved in the selection process for developers?
  - p) How is development of the public housing to be managed vis-à-vis the private and social housing?
  - q) What background material has been considered and is to be considered? In particular, what consideration has been given to the following:
    - i) the existing demography of the Estate and surrounds and the impact any changes are proposed to have on local demographics?
    - ii) similar developments in Victoria, interstate and overseas, and the lessons learned from such projects?
    - iii) the impact of the proposal on local schools, roads, facilities, shopping precincts, community hubs, recreational facilities and open space?
    - iv) other government and council planning strategies and objectives that apply to Flemington and surrounds and how they might apply to and intersect with redevelopment of the Estate?
    - v) studies done, and information obtained, regarding:
      - safety issues on the Estate, including identified and perceived criminal activity and threats?
      - current car use to and from the Estate and its impact on surrounding roads?
      - existing car parking needs and uses on the Estate and around the Estate?
      - the existing, perceived and likely needs of residents of the Estate in terms of access to educational, recreational and community facilities?
      - access to and use of existing public transport uses and how these might be enhanced?
      - existing pedestrian and cycling movement through the Estate and how this might be improved?
      - interaction between the Estate and other nearby housing estates (such as those in North Melbourne, Kensington and Ascot Vale) and the overlapping facilities?
16. These are some of the many questions raised by the local community with the Association. We are aware that other issues have been raised with DHHS by the Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre on behalf of residents of the Estate, and other questions having been raised by community leaders on the Estate.
17. While it is understood that DHHS and Council will engage qualified and talented planners in the process ahead, experience shows that “planning experts” can only be assisted in their endeavours by people who are experts in their relevant local area. It is fundamental that the planning process meaningfully engage locals in the process through a CCC.

18. One local example of the perils of not properly planning or consulting is the community playground sandwiched between the Estate and the Moonee Ponds Creek. It was built hastily with considerable funds from the federal government, administered by Moonee Valley City Council. While the Association of course supports expenditure on local recreational facilities for young people, particularly teenagers, we sought greater consultation and input and questioned aspects of the proposal. These included the lack of facilities (improved slightly, after our concerns were raised), the location of the playground (in an exposed site, mostly isolated from people), the failure to integrate the playground into an overall masterplan and the real risks of the space becoming a “dead zone” that might make the area feel less safe. Fast-tracking developments and not adequately having regard to community input do not result in the best outcomes.
19. It is often said by many that, while the Estate is clearly an integral part of Flemington (and has been for almost 60 years), it is likely that it would have been built very differently if it was built today. We hope this is not simply idiom.
20. We urge DHHS and those involved in the PHRP of the Estate to have regard to best practice and to work with the Flemington community to ensure the best outcome for existing and future residents of the Estate, whether in private, public or social housing, and the broader Flemington community.
21. This requires, at a bare minimum, that there is proper consultation and a cohesive, integrated plan for the Housing Estate and its surrounds. We look forward to contributing to such a process and working together to achieve the best possible outcomes.

## CONTACT DETAILS

22. Inquiries can be directed to the Association via [info@flemingtonassociation.org.au](mailto:info@flemingtonassociation.org.au). Committee member John Dickie can be contacted on [REDACTED]. Our president, Les Potts, can be contacted on [REDACTED].