

Melbourne housing crisis: Density balance key to housing affordability

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ANY moves to increase housing density in established suburbs must be done carefully to avoid upsetting local residents, the federal government says.

Assistant Treasurer Michael Sukkar said most economists agreed that the best way to improve housing affordability was through more density in middle-ring suburbs.

“But they tend to be the toughest areas to do it because people have quite rightly bought in a suburb, partly because of the character of that suburb and they don’t want it to change,” he said.

Mr Sukkar urged state governments to focus higher density around train stations and tram routes.

“And the more density you pump into public transport corridors the more pressure it takes off the more traditional suburbs,” he said at an Affordable Housing Development Summit in Melbourne.

Mr Sukkar, whose portfolio includes housing affordability, said that both federal and state governments needed to unlock more surplus land for housing.

One example was the former Maribyrnong defence site that is slated to have thousands of new homes pending decontamination of the area.

The Andrews Government is facing some local opposition under a \$185 million program to renew public housing estates by allowing private units also.

Boroondara Council is fighting a plan to redevelop a housing estate at Bills St, Hawthorn, with up to 400 units and towers up to 12 storeys high.

Local councillor Coral Ross said Boroondara was opposed to Planning Minister Richard Wynne becoming the planning authority for the site as this would remove the right of locals to object and to access an independent appeals process.

“We are deeply concerned by the Victorian Government proposal and approach in redeveloping public housing estates,” she said in a letter to residents.

Housing Minister Martin Foley said the Government made no apology for redeveloping run-down estates and providing more social housing.

“We’re getting the planning right to make the most of our population growth opportunities by building new communities in the inner city, allowing appropriate development in the suburbs and encouraging sustainable growth in the regions,” he said.

Mr Foley said the Government was also building the \$11 billion Melbourne Metro Tunnel and removing the state’s 50 worst level crossings.

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