



Media release – 6 March 2018

Politicians cross swords while Ashburton public housing land sits vacant

Blocking progress on public housing projects leaves families and singles living in rooming houses and shelters, says homelessness peak

Victoria's homelessness peak has warned that stalling the redevelopment of the Markham public housing estate in Ashburton is depriving nearly over 60 singles and families from getting in to a safe, secure, affordable home.

The former public housing estate in Ashburton remains vacant due to a political stoush that has seen the Greens and Liberal Party join forces against Labor to block the redevelopment of the site.

"It's just not helpful to play politics with people's lives," said Jenny Smith, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons.

"It's time to get the Ashburton land working to reduce homelessness and ease the pressures on vulnerable people trying to find affordable rentals," she said.

As part of its Public Housing Renewal Program, the Victorian Government wants to build 200 homes on the vacant Markham public housing estate, where previously 56 public housing units stood.

To subsidise the cost of redevelopment, the land would be sold to developers with the requirement that two-thirds of the 200 homes be social and affordable housing for people on low incomes.

"Developing private housing alongside the social and affordable housing creates healthy, productive neighbourhoods with a mix of income-earners living side-by-side," said

The cost analysis of the public housing renewal project shows that the \$185 million spend will deliver 1,778 new public homes across nine sites under the private-public mix, versus just 617 new homes if the land was kept solely for public housing.

"It is sensible use of taxpayer money, and the delivery of the housing we so desperately need.

"Skyrocketing rents are driving thousands more people to homelessness services, but our services can't house people on vacant land," said Ms Smith.

Last year Victorian homelessness services turned away 92 people every day due to a lack of accommodation options and resources (AIHW, 2016-17). There are currently over 35,000 Victorians waiting for social housing.

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