



BALLARAT HOUSING: DOZENS MORE APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED TO COUNCIL

More of Ballarat's most vulnerable residents could soon be living in modern housing after a dozen applications for new social housing were submitted to council. There is a chronic shortage of places available, according to Centacare Ballarat's chief executive Tony Fitzgerald, and any new stock helps.

The investment, from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, could not have come at a better time, he added - as well as putting a badly-needed roof over someone's head.

If the applications are approved, the construction boom will provide a sugar hit to a regional economy ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic. "It's a two-fold kicker," he said. "The return on investment in social housing is five to ten times the money back from an economic and social perspective." The applications, from a number of builders, are for addresses in Wendouree, Sebastopol, Ballarat East and Mount Pleasant. All of them are for subdividing properties already owned by DHHS, increasing the use of the land by proposing one and two bedroom units.

Two of the proposals in Wendouree are for three new units. Mr Fitzgerald said having flexibility in the new houses was important. "The fastest growing cohort experiencing housing stress or homelessness is single women over 55 - some are coming out of broken relationships and they don't have the super(annuation) they need in later years because they've taken time out of the workforce to raise children, if they go back it's only part time," he said. "The one bedroom, two bedroom unit, that's where the greatest need is."

The modern housing is also better for residents than the decades-old stock currently available - energy requirements and building standards, for example, reduce the costs of bills. A state government spokesperson said in a statement \$209 million had been committed over three years to build 1000 homes for about 1800 people.

"Everyone deserves safe and secure accommodation - that's why we have a \$2.6 billion program to address homelessness, and to increase and renew public housing in Victoria before, during and long after the coronavirus pandemic," they said.

"The program includes a massive boost to our social and affordable housing stock - including in regional Victoria - financial support for the housing sector, increased housing for family violence survivors and major upgrades to some of our older public housing - making it more liveable for Victorians who need it most. On



top of this we've recently invested over \$500 million as part of our \$2.7 billion Building Works package to not only maintain and build new affordable homes - but to create new jobs for Victorians in the wake of this health crisis."

Construction will commence once council approval has been finalised. Builders selected through a public tender process are also part of the Public Tenant Employment Program (PTEP) which helps public housing residents gain the hands on experience and training they need to enter the workforce.

The projects under the 1000 Homes program are on top of the nine new properties to be constructed in Mitchell Park as part of the \$1 billion Social Housing Growth Fund. The government is also undertaking a masterplan with the local community for the revitalisation of public housing in Delacombe.

Article courtesy of the Ballarat Courier, text by Alex Ford and photo by Adam Trafford

Photo: A social housing flat, from June, that will be subdivided and rebuilt.