

MINUTE PAPER

157

UBJECT:

REDEVELOPMENT NARRABUNDAH PREFABRICATED HOUSING AREA

REF:

Commissioner

At folio 155 is a report from Mr Love on proposals to upgrade the Narrabundah prefabricated dwelling area.

This is the first **knowledge** I personally have had that positive redevelopment plans are under-way so I would like to take the opportunity to raise a few issues and make some suggestions on the proposal. I believe that there are a number of very basic matters that warrant further consideration.

The Narrabundah pre-fab area has an infamous reputation and it would seem to me that drastic measures have to be taken if the area is to achieve some dignity. In recent years much lip service has been given by Housing Authorities to the need to ensure that a social mix is achieved when placing tenants in Housing Authority dwellings. In the Narrabundah pre-fab area no positive attempt at such has ever been made - only low income **families** are sent to the area. From papers on file it seems that at this stage, upgrading plans see the area as remaining one for low cost accommodation and this unfortunately usually results in tenancies by low income earners.

It is generally agreed that the state of repair of the pre-fabs is such that a reasonable life remains. However, many of the dwellings are empty as more and more people vacate, and there is a great reluctance on the part of even emergency housing applicants to take a pre-fab dwelling. The area has a stigma and I think it particularly unfair on children that they have to live in an area that is looked down upon by the rest of the community.

It appears to me that the challenge is to make people want to live there. If this cannot be done it will remain a ghetto and any upgrading of present dwellings will be wasted. We need to upgrade the image as well as the dwellings.

I understand that **in all**, over 300 dwellings form the development, and the upgrading would have to be progressive based on, I suggest, a master plan that ought to be **prepared** before any upgrading **commences**.

I suggest that the overall redevelopment plan for the area really warrants the expertise of a consultant who could advice on available options not only on physical improvement of the dwellings, but improvements to the environment and the mix of people that would be desirable.

Some years ago I recall that the Department received a letter from a lady suggesting that the pre-fab cottages could be used in part to provide

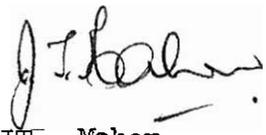
small homes for aged persons. I appreciate that there is no shortage of accommodation for aged persons, but the suggestion **appeals** to me as a basic idea on which the Department could build, if it did wish to change the image of the area. It could be that some aged couples, presently living in larger homes, could be happy to move to the smaller 2 bedroom cottages without large grounds to maintain if they were attractively presented and in a pleasant environment. To achieve a pleasant environment would involve more than upgrading of the homes - it could mean some redesign of street layout, removal of some cottages, redevelopment of some sites etc.

Other groups that could be interested would be young couples who presently qualify for flats only but who **may be** interested in a small house, possibly with a view to purchasing and extending; single persons who would prefer a small house to a flat; transients, (say building workers) in Canberra for a particular short term purpose; **Indo** China refugees have been suggested. With such a mix and realistic rents (not low rents) the area must lose its low income ghetto image. Of course some low rent housing should also be made available.

CONCLUSION

For a long time I have considered the **Narrabundah** pre-fab area **possibly** the greatest challenge we have in housing in the A.C.T. It would be quite an achievement to make what is presently an undesirable neighbourhood into one that has social acceptance, a reasonable social **mix**, and without massive cost involvement. However, to do this it seems to me that we need first to consider the mid-to-long term role of the housing in **the** area and to prepare a master plan for the development that will ensure that **not only** are the dwellings upgraded, but that the area will achieve social acceptance as a desirable place in which to live.

There are many options open, and imagination is called for. For this reason I am inclined to think that we ought to be seeking the expertise of a consultant to investigate the matter and present a series of options for consideration before any partial upgrading commences.



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2.2.1978