

NEWS RELEASE

April 24, 2008

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY THROUGH THE ROOF

**Launch of Inner Melbourne Housing Affordability website
Inner Local Area Planning Support Conference
Thursday, 1 May 2008
10 am, Theatrette, Spring Street Conference Centre**

A website, brimming with statistics and indicators on housing affordability in inner Melbourne, will be launched by the Minister for Local Government, Dick Wynne, at the Local Area Planning Support Conference at 10am Thursday, May 1, Theatrette, Spring Street Conference Centre.

This website, established as a joint initiative of the Cities of Melbourne, Yarra, Stonnington and Port Phillip provides useful and accessible data on affordable housing needs and targets at the regional and local government levels. More than 350,000 people live in the four municipalities, the area bounded by Port Phillip Bay, Flemington, North Carlton, North Fitzroy, Abbotsford, Toorak, East St Kilda and Elwood.

According to Lord Mayor John So, the beauty of the website is that it offers consistent data covering the four different municipalities and inner Melbourne as a whole over the period 1986-2006.

“The database is very easy to use, even for those of us not experienced in crunching stats,” he said. “A series of drop down boxes means you can instantly search the database and come up with stats, tables or charts which address your specific criteria. What would have once taken months of work now takes seconds.”

Stonnington Mayor Cr Claude Ullin says that the website is designed to be used by any individual or organisation interested in being informed about housing affordability.

“The website was designed with a number of target users in mind – local government, State Government, housing associations, other housing organisations and agencies, peak bodies, researchers, residents, developers, students and consultants – but it will make useful, if depressing reading, for anyone wanting to rent or buy a home in inner Melbourne,” he said. “Housing affordability has gone through the roof.”

“As of 2006, 97% of the houses and 77% of units sold in inner Melbourne were at the top end of the market,” says Yarra Mayor Cr Jenny Farrar. “Low-medium cost housing in inner Melbourne has disappeared faster than you can say ‘sold’. People on ordinary incomes are being pushed to the outer limits of Melbourne. Those who depend on Centrelink payments can only live in inner Melbourne if they’re lucky enough to obtain public or community housing.”

Port Phillip mayor Janet Cribbes said that seeing the housing affordability figures in black and white should put a rocket under all levels of government.

“With the new Federal Government focus on homelessness and the rights of ‘working families’, there hasn’t been a better time this century to start tackling housing *un*-affordability,” she said. “Over the past decade, Federal Government investment in public and community housing fell to an all-time post-war low. The economy is still booming and frankly there are no excuses for inaction anymore.”

A \$100,000 grant from the Victorian Department of Planning & Community Development's Local Area Planning Support Program funded the website. The lead consultant was Swinburne Institute for Social Research, with the Swinburne Information Technology Innovations Group being sub-contracted to create the website: <http://www.imrhai.com.au/>

(If you have any problems with the hyperlink of this address, either put the cursor over the above address and press control + click on the address or copy the address into an internet page search window.)

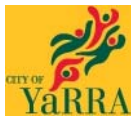
The website presents data at four geographical levels: the Inner Melbourne Region (including both parts of Stonnington); four municipalities – Melbourne, Yarra, Stonnington and Port Phillip; suburbs within the Region; and the Melbourne Statistical Division/Melbourne Metropolitan Area.

The housing data is presented in two forms, tables and graphs, and includes housing affordability indicators, data on house sales and prices and demographic information.

The Cities of Melbourne, Yarra, Stonnington and Port Phillip together developed under the Inner Regional Housing Statement. The City of Port Phillip is the lead council on this initiative.

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