

Flats answer to home crisis

MELBOURNE'S growth-fuelled housing shortage could be solved by building a string of apartment blocks up to eight storeys high along transport corridors, says Lord Mayor Robert Doyle.

But Cr Doyle said it would happen only if expensive union work practices were kept out.

"That's how we get the extra people in, that's how we make the housing affordable, that's how we attract the high value jobs," he told the *Herald Sun*.

"Instead of being able to sit back and think about it, we've got to actually act."

Melbourne's population grew by a record 93,500 last year and is on track to almost double to more than seven million by 2050 on migration and fertility trends.

Cr Doyle said Melbourne would save a fortune on infrastructure costs if most of the new housing

John Masanauskas

was confined to six to eight-storey apartment blocks along train and tram routes.

Asked if he would like that sort of lifestyle, he said: "I would live in an apartment now, I would have lived in an apartment when I was younger, I probably wouldn't have when I was married with three kids."

Community activist Mary Drost, convener of the Planning Backlash group, said people didn't want to live like rabbits in high-density housing.

"The majority of Australians don't want to live like that. The majority prefer to live with a house and garden. I mean, it's a terrific lifestyle," she said. "Why should we pack them in like this, why should we keep bringing in people to ruin our lifestyle?"

Monash University demographer Dr Bob Birrell said his research showed that more people living in

high-rise flats on transport routes would worsen car congestion.

Dr Birrell said most people living near trains and trams today don't use public transport to get to work because jobs were widely dispersed across the city.

The Government wants more apartments built, but most of the growth is still occurring on the city fringe and in vacant suburban lots.

This week, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal gave final approval to a 10-storey development above Camberwell station.

Boroondara mayor Cr Jack Wegman said the project should have been confined to a maximum of four storeys.

"It's a matter of balance," he said. "In some areas eight-storey developments may be appropriate, but we can't continue destroying the amenity of local areas unabated."