

Push to cut home red tape

A CONTROVERSIAL plan to strip councils of powers to oversee small residential developments in special zones will be looked at by the State Government as a way to deal with the housing shortage.

The Master Builders Association of Victoria says developments such as dual occupancies and townhouses in established suburbs must be fast-tracked if Melbourne is to cope with rapid population growth.

MBAV executive director Brian Welch yesterday said planning costs were now up to \$30,000 for such developments amid stifling red tape.

"The least intrusive and the least costly way to meet residential demand is to better utilise our ageing suburbs where houses could be pushed over and more efficient housing built and in greater number," he said.

Mr Welch said it would suit

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people wishing to downsize without moving areas.

In a pre-Budget submission, to be released today, the MBAV calls for "as-of-right" development zones around principal activity centres and major public transport hubs.

Plans would not need council approval and priority would go to dual occupancy, low-rise townhouses, apartments and other medium-density housing.

Municipal Association of Victoria president Bill McArthur said the idea lacked vision and would not work, with planning applications often delayed due to inadequate information from builders and developers.

Planning Minister Matthew Guy said he would consider the MBAV proposal.

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