

Friday, May 4 2001

KEW RESIDENTIAL SERVICES TO BE REDEVELOPED

The Premier, Steve Bracks, today announced the \$100 million land and residential redevelopment of the century-old institution formerly known as Kew Cottages.

“It is not acceptable in the 21st century to house residents with disabilities in such outdated conditions,” the Premier said. “Overcrowded and cramped dormitories will be demolished.

“The land will be sold and the proceeds used to rebuild about 20 new homes for 50 to 100 residents on-site.

“The remaining residents will be relocated closer to family, friends and support services in new homes across Victoria.”

The Premier said a new residential subdivision would also be built as part of the development and up to 250 new homes would be built and sold to the general community.

Mr Bracks said the needs of every resident have been individually assessed over the past year.

“The location of their new homes will be based on their long term requirements,” he said.

“This is large and complex project that will improve the lives of more than 460 people in our care,” Mr Bracks said.

“I must also praise the work of the Kew Cottages Parents Association - their dedication to improving the lives of Kew residents is inspiring.”

Planning and approval processes will begin almost immediately with work expected to start within 18 months.

“If Kew Residential Services was not redeveloped, most units would soon need rebuilding or renovating and it would cost millions of dollars,” Mr Bracks said.

“At the end we would still have a large segregated institution.

“Instead, the renaissance of this 27 hectare site will span six to 10 years and it will deliver 700 new construction jobs, boosting the Victorian economy.

“There will be a net increase of two hundred disability jobs. There are currently 600 jobs at Kew Residential Services and Kew staff will have the opportunity to take up suitable positions in new services.”

Community Services Minister, Christine Campbell, said it was expected about 50-100 residents who had a strong connection with the Kew area would chose to live on site in new homes, supported by professional disability workers.

The remainder of the current 462 residents will relocate to new supported homes where they will be closer to family and friends in suburban or rural Victoria.

“For the first time in their lives, every resident at Kew Residential Services will each have his or her own bedroom and access to a full 30-hour-a-week day activities program,” Ms Campbell said.

Ms Campbell said since the Bracks Government took office, a One Community vision for disability services has been implemented.

“There is not one group of people in our community with a disability and then the rest of us. There is one community and we are all equal partners,” she said.

“The redevelopment of Kew Residential Services demonstrates our commitment to uphold the rights of people with a disability to be active and accepted members of our community.

“We are saying that the Kew residents are a part of our community, not apart.”

Ms Campbell said the One Community vision supported people with a disability and maximised their independent living.

“Last year we injected extra record funding of \$96.6 million into disability, increasing the budget by a massive 16.9 per cent,” Ms Campbell said.