

FINANCIAL REVIEW**Developers on the nose with voters**

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Developers yesterday conceded they would need to address community concerns over future projects after opponents to development triumphed in several Victorian council elections.

However, developers and industry observers said the anti-development victories were limited to a few councils with controversial projects.

The poll in Boroondara, covering Melbourne's affluent inner-eastern suburbs, was won by opponents of a high-density project at Camberwell station and the redevelopment of the Kew Cottages care facility.

The results were also interpreted as a rebuff to the Bracks government's Melbourne 2030 planning template.

"I think we need to better educate the community about what development is about, what the implications of our ageing demographics are," said the general manager of Australand's Victorian apartment division, Robert Pradolin. "These are long-term issues and unfortunately council elections tend to be short term."

Municipal Association of Victoria president Geoff Lake said incumbents were returned in the majority of the 25 municipalities, demonstrating general satisfaction with councils.

Five mayors lost their robes, but not Melbourne Lord Mayor John So, who was returned with an increased majority despite a madcap city election filled with "stooges".

"The greatest changes have occurred in Boroondara and Nillumbik, where local tensions between development and protection of amenity have resulted in higher numbers of contesting councillors being defeated," Mr Lake said.

Nillumbik, on the outskirts of Melbourne where suburbia is encroaching on more rural residential areas, has a long history of pro- and anti-development skirmishes.

"I don't think it was an across-the-board phenomena," Mr Lake said.

Observers downplayed the implications for the 2030 program, established to find room for another million Melbourne residents over the next three decades.

"There's some specific issues there and the Bracks government hasn't handled things that well, but it's not an overall thing," said one developer with Boroondara interests.

Australand's Mr Pradolin said 2030 had been characterised by a proposal for a 14-storey development in outer-suburban Mitcham, in particular, but that was not the fundamental part of the template.

"It may be the case that developers may avoid some councils, although believe it or not developers are reacting to supply and demand in property, so there may be even more incentive to deal with councils that choke down development," he said.

Mr So won 42.16 per cent of the primary vote, ahead of Greens candidate Richard Di Natale with 9.23 per cent. Other candidates for the job included pollster Gary Morgan and councillor Kevin Chamberlain.

Mr So's Melbourne Living team won five of the nine council positions.
