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Backlash against towers

By MARK SKELSEY State Political Reporter
November 17, 2003

FOR the past eight years, the State Government has been telling us that Sydney's future is up -- not out.

While land releases have dropped to record low levels, about 100,000 units have been built as developers reach for the skies with apartment towers.

But in an interview with The Daily Telegraph, Planning Minister Craig Knowles has admitted this urban consolidation path is causing community anger. And he has indicated the Carr Government will pursue a new "balance" of development in future.

"Sydney has been on a consolidation path, for all the right reasons, but there's plenty of evidence that levels of resistance are now very high and they don't want any more," Mr Knowles said.

That's a significant admission.

Although Mr Knowles is still looking for consolidation opportunities around railway stations, he has made it clear he wants more fringe land released.

Combined with information contained in the Government's submission to a Productivity Commission inquiry, it looks as though Macquarie St is about to change tack on its development strategy.

The submission shows land releases have fallen every year since 1999-2000, when more than 8000 blocks were released.

Figures just released for 2002-03 show just over 4000 blocks were released -- the lowest number in 20 years.

For many people, the Australian dream of a new house with a backyard in Sydney's west has remained just that: a dream.

Mr Knowles denies the Government didn't do enough to release land in the past.

He has asked Camden Council to "expedite" releases at Elderslie and Spring Farm so rezoning is possible before Christmas. But it will take time to bring the land on stream, with only about 6000 lots to be released each year over the next five years.

The submission reveals the Government wants to release 90,000 lots of land around Marsden Park, Riverstone and Schofields aerodrome over the next 20 years, with the first lot on the market in 2008.

In Sydney's southwest, farming land around Bringelly, Oran Park and Leppington will be released for 90,000 housing lots.

The submission reveals there will be ongoing consolidation in existing suburbs, but mainly on former industrial sites not in residential streets.

Over the next 10 years, the North Arncliffe redevelopment area will gain 7000 dwellings, the Sydney CBD 9600 and the Canada Bay local government area 6000. The Rhodes peninsula, formerly contaminated industrial land, will have 3000.

North Arncliffe resident Peter Duvall has seen light industrial factories at the end of his street turned into seven-storey apartment blocks, but he's not unhappy about the

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