

Affordable housing project for Sydney

By Danny Rose

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A LARGE chunk of land in Sydney's innerwest will be turned into 700 housing units for "battlers" as part of a \$260 million affordable housing scheme.

The plan will transform an ageing depot belonging to the City of Sydney Council and a neighbouring NSW government site in Glebe where public housing was built in the 1960s.

"It's time to bulldoze them, to give new life to a great part of the city ... and provide for 700 affordable housing units for battlers, for families, for city workers," Premier Morris Iemma said.

"It's a great way that we can work together to ease the pressure on hard working families, and provide them with an opportunity for their first home, or a more affordable home, close to the city, close to work and close to transport."

The project, to be built on a 3.6-hectare site, will include a mix of units to be privately sold, public housing and apartments to be set aside for key workers including nurses and police.

About 130 families who live in the existing public housing blocks will be relocated to new homes over the next two years to allow the project to proceed.

Mr Iemma said those tenants would be given the option of moving back into a new public housing apartment once the redevelopment was complete.

The premier today signed a memorandum of understanding with City of Sydney Mayor Clover Moore to allow a feasibility study and detailed planning to begin.

"There is an urgent need, particularly for worker housing," Ms Moore said.

"For those people who run our essential services, whether they be the nurses, the police officers, the cleaners or the bus drivers."

Ms Moore said the project was designed to meet the parameters of the Federal Government's affordable housing initiative and talks were underway for possible federal funding.

The Sydney Chamber of Commerce and an industry group representing property developers welcomed the announcement.

"Business can't afford a situation where low-income workers are priced out of Sydney," chamber executive director Patricia Forsythe said.

The Urban Taskforce said the project was a step towards the 640,000 new homes needed to match Sydney's population growth over the next 25 years.

"Every new housing development gets us a bit closer to this goal," taskforce chief executive Aaron Gadiel said.

No timeline was given for the project's completion.