

Vast western housing site reaps state \$100m

Jason Dowling
City Editor

One of the biggest state government land sales in the past decade was decided in just a week.

A massive site in Werribee that within a few years will have 2000 homes and 5000 new residents sold quicker than an average family home settles after auction.

The new housing development site in Melbourne's west is almost the size of Docklands and will add pressure on the Napthine government for a new freeway link from the west to take pressure off the West Gate.

Tenders closed for the state-owned 125-hectare Werribee site between Hacketts Road and the Princes Freeway on May 15 and a week later it sold for "just over \$100 million".

The site, bordering Point Cook, was advertised by Biggin Scott Land as having "very attractive vendors terms" and not subject to a growth area infrastructure levy.

Jack Hoffmann, general manager Victoria and Queensland with winning bidder the Perth-based Satterley Property Group, said they were "looking at getting between 1800 and 2000 homes on the site".

He said he was hoping to have the housing lots ready for market within two years, and was surprised at the speed of the sale decision after tenders closed.

"They made a quick decision and we found out about it last week," Mr Hoffmann said.

He said the government did not come back to bidders after offers were lodged. "It was 'congratulations, you have got the site'."

Mr Hoffmann said the purely residential development would include tennis courts, football ovals and local parks.

"One of the attractive things for us for the site is it is one of the last remaining land holdings in Point Cook of substantial scale," he said.

"We anticipate when we come on to the market in 15, 18, 24 months time, there won't be much competition around in Point Cook."

He said Point Cook was not suffering from a saturation of housing sites seen in other greenfield areas.

The large housing development will increase pressure for a new freeway link from the west with congestion on the West Gate Bridge likely to increase if new residents are unable to find work nearby in Werribee or choose not to use the Hoppers Crossing train station.



Fast track to Australian

Daniel Hurst

If Pakistani-born leg spinner Fawad Ahmed had an ace serve and a mean volley, he would probably already be an Australian citizen.

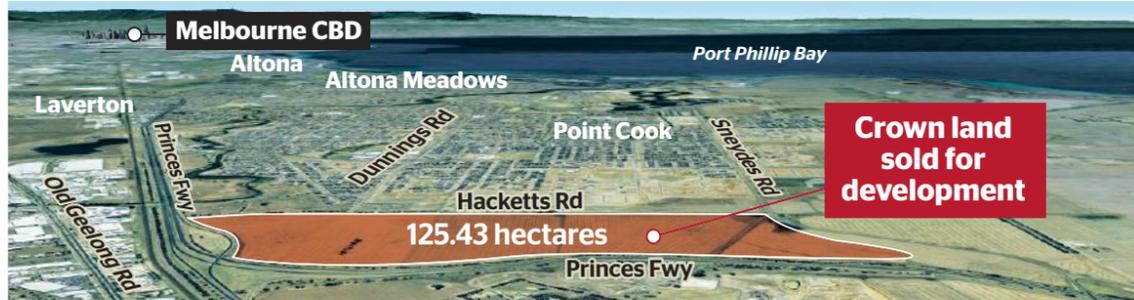
But his fault is that he is a cricketer rather than a tennis pro, with the Ashes tour hopeful thus failing to satisfy an obscure law that clears citizenship hurdles for certain elite athletes.

Likely recruits for the Australian Olympic or Paralympic teams and professional tennis stars already can

move into the fast lane because their activities are deemed to "benefit" Australia. The Fed Cup and Davis Cup are included on the list but not the Ashes. It's just not cricket.

Ahmed's prospects for Ashes selection now rest with a government that is wary about being caught out pushing through the desired legal changes unless sure they have broad parliamentary support.

Cricket Australia has bowled up the Gillard government for action and Immigration Minister Brendan O'Connor is considering the pitch.



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