

Going, going, gone

Lisa Dennis

The dilapidated mudbrick home at 1 Wilkie Street Castlemaine, formerly built for public housing, was demolished last week to pave the way for a new housing project.

The house was built in 1993 after Mount Alexander Shire Council entered into a funding agreement with the Director of Housing (DoH) for a project to provide housing accommodation for people in need within the shire. This project involved the purchase of two adjacent blocks of land and resulted in the building of the mud brick dwelling.

The other block remained undeveloped.

In September 2000 council entered into a management agreement and lease with Castlemaine and District Accommodation and Resources Group Inc (CADARG) for the ongoing management of the property. The agreement and lease expired in September 2009 and there have been no tenants in the house since mid-2012.

In the time that followed vandals wreaked havoc on the abandoned property, smashing windows and walls and destroying the remaining furniture.

In a bid to see the site redeveloped and facilitate additional social housing, council divested its 10 per cent share of the property in November 2015.

Council worked with the Office of Housing to invite registered housing associations to submit an Expression of Interest to redevelop the property.

A Department of Health and Human



"CHL is excited to work with all the partners in providing a mixed housing model which creates versatility and much needed affordable housing in the local community."
- CHL Vic State Manager
Shari McPhail

NEW ERA: 1 Wilkie Street was demolished last week to make way for the new development.

Services spokesperson said the property was transferred from council to successful submitter Community Housing (Vic) Ltd in 2015 and the agency has a proposal to build five units on the property, with two to be retained as social housing.

"The department believes this a good outcome as it will mean these properties will remain as social housing," the spokesperson said.

Community Housing Limited (CHL) Group Victorian State Manager, Shari McPhail said in November 2016, Mount Alexander Shire Council approved CHL's proposal to build two three-bedroom units and three two-bedroom units on the site.

"The contemporary design of the units

feature open kitchens, accessible bathrooms and internal circulation space and, once complete, will be suitable for older people or people with a disability," Ms McPhail said.

"Demolition of the existing dwelling has been completed with construction of the new dwellings anticipated to begin in the next eight to 12 weeks."

Ms McPhail said two units will be leased by CHL to people in need with the remaining units offered off the plan for sale in the open market.

"CHL is excited to work with all the partners in providing a mixed housing model which creates versatility and much needed affordable housing in the local community."

Witnesses sought

Castlemaine Police are investigating a spate of burglaries and criminal damage in the Taradale and Elphinstone region.

Senior Sergeant Pete Carey said police are investigating a burglary at the Taradale Wine and Produce Store which occurred sometime between 9pm on Tuesday, January 21 and 11am on Wednesday, January 22. A till and other items were stolen.

"We can't be sure if they are linked but we believe that on the same night there was a break-in at the Taradale Cricket Club," Sen Sgt Carey said.

On this occasion alcohol was stolen.

Police are also looking into a third incident at the Elphinstone Hotel but are unsure if the three matters are related.

On the same night a group of young people tried to gain entry to the hotel and damaged a window at the front of the premises.

"We are looking for two females in their early 20s, one was wearing high heels, and three males also in their 20s. They were travelling together in a vehicle which was spotted driving around the area for some time," Sen Sgt Carey said.

Anyone with information is urged to contact Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000.

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Long list of priorities

Justice for Centrelink debt recovery victims, funding for vital community projects and greater support for women's sport and female-friendly facilities were top of the agenda for Lisa Chesters MP this week as parliament resumes for 2017.

Ms Chesters said she would return to Canberra with a long list of priorities for the Bendigo electorate.

"Central Victorian women need their Federal Government to get behind the local growth in women's sports like football and cricket," she said.

"Given the recent media reports on the Federal Government's failure to help fund female-friendly change facilities, I plan to demand from the minister responsible to do their part and help fund facilities and development opportunities for women's sport." Ms Chesters said she would also continue to call on the government to sus-

pend the unfair Centrelink debt recovery program.

"Far too many central Victorians have been unfairly caught up in the scandal. Many in our community have been deeply distressed, with some receiving debt notices in the tens of thousands of dollars," Ms Chesters said. "The government itself has admitted that at least 20 per cent of those letters went out in error. Malcolm Turnbull must show some leadership and suspend his government's robo-debt mess."

Ms Chesters said she will be standing up for Central Victoria's interests in parliament, as she has in the past. "Standing up for locals for local jobs first, stopping cuts to Medicare and ensuring our manufacturers get a fair deal are always towards the top of the priority list," she said.

"I will continue to be a strong voice and advocate for our community."

BROILER BOMBSHELL

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Broiler Farm campaigner Marg Lewis said there were plenty of shires further north happy to accommodate broiler farm industry. "This sort of development is just not compatible in this rural living environment and will have a devastating impact on the Moolort Plains, not to mention local infrastructure such as roads.

It is disappointing that community concerns have been ignored," she said. "The community and local farmers have raised in excess of \$500,000 in a bid to fight this battle so far and now face more costs," she said. In a personal statement Bendigo West MP Maree Edwards said she was shocked and saddened.

"This is a devastating result for the Baringhup community and the region more broadly," Ms Edwards said. "I am truly disappointed and genuinely feel for all those who have fought so hard to stop this chicken factory from proceeding at great personal and financial cost. "I have grave concerns for the environment of the Moolort Plains,

the Loddon River and for the many small and medium businesses and farming families who live in the vicinity - not to mention the people who call Baringhup home.

"I have spoken to the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Agriculture and advised them of the decision and expressed my deep concern.

"It is my personal view that the Broiler Code urgently needs reviewing and having not done so already has left the Baringhup community to face a very uncertain future, and the Shire of Mount Alexander with a potential heavy cost burden to maintain infrastructure around Baringhup. "What I find extraordinary about the desire to build a chicken factory at Baringhup - despite community objections - is that there are Shires further north of this area that are very keen to have these factories built there.

"This is the wrong place to build such an intensive chicken factory.

"I will continue to pursue any avenues available through State Government to see if there is any possible way to intervene."

adm
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