

Two major residential developments are set to be built in Knox this year, despite some initial concerns from nearby residents. **Michael Gleeson** reports

Meeting eases fears

THE boss of the massive housing project under way in Ferntree Gully wants to set a few things straight – starting with the fact the development is not public housing.

Steve Bevington is the managing director of Community Housing Ltd, the organisation appointed by the State Government to build 79 two- and three-storey units on the former Ferntree Gully Primary School site in Dorset Rd.

In a wide-ranging interview with *Knox Leader*, he said the houses would be made available to low income earners and people on public housing waiting lists.

But he said they would be rental properties where tenants paid between 50 and 75 per cent of the market rate, thus differentiating them from other forms of state-funded housing.

He said he believed initial community opposition to the development was largely due to people not knowing the finer details.

“When people first hear about projects that are initiated with public funds, they have all kinds of fears,” Mr Bevington said.

“But when the projects get up and running and people move in, there’s never been a problem.”

This is the largest-ever Australian project for CHL, which runs properties in most other states, as well as East Timor, Chile and India.

Mr Bevington said the plan was to finish building by February 2011, after which tenants would start to move in.

He said priority would be given to people already based in Mel-



Community Housing Ltd boss Steve Bevington surveys the Ferntree Gully site.

Picture: LAWRENCE PINDER N26KN601

bourne’s outer-east. In addition to the 79 units, there will be a playground, communal garden and a vineyard.

As previously reported by the *Leader*, no Knox Council planning permit was required for the project, prompting residents, Ferntree Gully state Liberal MP Nick Wakeling and local councillor

Peter Cole to criticise lack of community consultation.

But Mr Bevington said this was another misconception.

“Even though there wasn’t the council planning process, there’s been an exhaustive internal approval process which has been at least as intense as any council process would have been,” he said.

In an attempt to boost community awareness, CHL recently hosted a briefing session at the council offices, where locals had the chance to ask questions about the project.

Dorset Rd resident Keith Williams, an outspoken critic of the original consultation process, said he was very happy with the

information given at the meeting.

“They (the CHL reps) were very helpful and answered all the questions that were asked. We’ve finally been able to find out what’s going on; I just wish this had happened earlier,” Mr Williams said.

▶ **Anyone with questions about the project can call CHL on 9856 0050**