



## Keep Victoria's land registry in our hands

February 2018

The Victorian Government funds important supports in our community, like child and maternal health centres, public housing to address homelessness, support services for victims of family violence and mental health services. It needs revenue to fund those things.

In 2017 the Andrews Government announced it would look at privatising one of Victoria's oldest state owned assets, Land Use Victoria, to a private operator, giving up over \$380 million of revenue a year.

### What is a land registry?

Land Use Victoria is responsible for the registration of land and the protection of property rights in Victoria. This system, the Torrens system of land registration, was pioneered in Australia and is considered one of the best systems of land registration in the world.

An important function of any land registry is to guarantee title of property and compensate against loss of damage or instances of fraud in property transactions. This is made possible by way of a government consolidated fund which acts as a guarantee for title for property in Victoria. This system ensures the integrity of the Victorian property market.

### Why should you care?

The Victorian land registry is crucial to guaranteeing the property system of Australia. This guarantee maintains confidence in the Australian property system. This is pretty important given that over

60% of the Australian banking system's loans are in residential property.

It is unclear how the Victorian property market will be guaranteed if the land registry is sold off to a private operator.

Also, the land registry is estimated to earn more than \$380 million in registration fees for the Victorian government annually. Selling the registry means that the government will lose a lucrative annual source of income.

\$380 million is enough to pay for the government's plan in the current budget to construct, plan and buy land for new schools, as well as fund teachers and principals in 346 struggling schools, with the assistance of expert teachers in classrooms.

\$380 million could fund 14 Family Violence Support and Safety Hubs for survivors of family violence. These hubs are crucial in providing support at the right time to survivors and links survivors and their children to the support and services they need.

\$380 million could boost access for Victorians to mental health services, providing up to 579 additional inpatient services and approximately 75,000 hours of community care.

\$380 million could potentially buy 18 more E-Class trams for Melbourne's tram network.

\$380 million could help reduce waiting times for elective surgery in our public hospitals, helping deliver 6,600 new elective surgeries.

### **Selling a monopoly is bad economics!**

A state land registry is a monopoly, that is, it is the only entity that can provide the land registration service in Victoria. If the Andrews Government decides to sell the land registry to a private operator, the private company will have a monopoly over the registration of land in Victoria. This means that the private operator would be free to set the prices for registration fees without any competition, making it even more expensive to buy and sell property in Victoria.

This sort of price-gouging has already occurred in other places in Australia and around the world. In the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Ontario, registration fees nearly quadrupled when their registries were sold off, forcing other Canadian provinces to shelve plans to sell off their respective land registries.

Privatisation of services has shown time and again that it often does not lead to better outcomes for all, but is simply the transfer of public wealth into

private hands. As a church, we hold that God's love extends to all and that love is reflected when the policies and practices of society aim to benefit everyone in society, rather than a select wealthy few.

If there is enough community concern it will be possible to persuade the Andrews Government not to privatise the land registry. In 2016 the UK government announced plans to sell off the UK Land Registry. However, the UK government was forced to stop the sale following a petition which was signed by over 300,000 people.

The NSW and South Australian governments have already made the mistake of selling off their land registries. Let's not make the same mistake! The privatisation of one of Victoria's oldest institutions is not just bad economics for the government, but is a bad outcome for every Victorian.

# **What You Can Do**

## **Write polite and respectful letters to:**

The Hon. Daniel Andrews, MP  
The Premier of Victoria  
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne, Victoria 3002

[daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Salutation: Dear Premier

The Hon Tim Pallas  
The Treasurer of Victoria  
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne, Victoria, 3002

[tim.pallas@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:tim.pallas@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Salutation: Dear Treasurer

## **Points to make in your letters or emails:**

- Express a deep concern that the government is looking to sell a state-owned asset that has been in public hands for 155 years without consulting the community.
- Express deep concern at the loss of the revenue the land registry brings in to fund things like responses to family violence, public housing and mental health services.
- Say that privatising the Land Titles Offices has been a disaster in New South Wales, Canada and the USA, leading to increased costs and a potential loss of integrity in the property markets.
- Ask that the Victorian Government publicly announce it will abandon its plans to privatise the Victorian land registry.