

Australian Education City one step closer in Melbourne's western suburbs

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A BOLD vision to transform Melbourne's west with a \$30 billion "super city" is nearing reality with the State Government to decide on the project within months.

A high-level consortium has been solidly negotiating with government officials over the past year after the plan was first mooted in 2015.

The Herald Sun can reveal that up to 80,000 residents and 50,000 students are planned for the precinct which would see local and overseas universities collaborate to provide world-class education across several campuses.



An artist's impression of the \$30 billion Australian Education City proposed for Melbourne's west.



The \$30 billion "super city" is close to becoming reality.

The backers of Australian Education City want to turn a huge parcel of surplus land at East Werribee into a dynamic centre with 30,000 dwellings, medium to high-storey towers, universities, schools, a research and development hub, and a thriving town centre.

The Herald Sun has been given exclusive new images of the proposal.

AEC is hoping to leverage off Melbourne's reputation as a top international education centre, and its first masterplan boasts it will create 100,000 jobs linked directly to education, research, and service industries by 2050.



The project will create 100,000 jobs, backers say.



The Australian Education City will include schools, universities and 30,000 dwellings.

"A significant proportion of these jobs will be high-skill, high-wage employment such as professors, lecturers and administrators at the university campus, and managers, researchers and technicians working in the research development park," said an AEC fact sheet.

In addition, 1000 construction jobs would be created in the first year of the masterplan reaching a peak of 16,500 by the end of year five, it said.

The consortium, which includes former state premier John Brumby on its advisory board, said that dwellings would be located in several distinct areas.

"From homes perched on the waterfront, or presiding over a green heritage park ... from quiet streets with Hills hoists and picket fences to busy activity centres with restaurants and cafes and bars," it said.

AEC currently has exclusive right to negotiate development of the 400ha East Werribee Employment Precinct, which is state government-owned land around Sneydes Rd that was previously used for agriculture and research.

State Finance Minister Robin Scott said that AEC's exclusivity period for the precinct had been extended to September.

"The current proposal is being assessed and considered, with a decision expected to be made later in 2017," he said.



An artist's impression of the super city's aerial view.



A decision on the hub will be made later this year.

AEC spokesman Ross Martiensen said the consortium was committed to delivering master planned innovation precincts to service Australia's growth.

It is understood that talks are under way with local and overseas educational institutions to provide tuition to a potential student population half local and half from abroad.

An analysis by consultant Savills said the East Werribee site was only 20 minutes from Melbourne's well-established and highly successful education sector popular with overseas students.

"Chinese property investors and developers have strong links with Melbourne in business and education, many having themselves having attended school here and or have relatives that live here," said a statement by Savills director Julian Heatherich.

"Should Australian Education City get the tick of approval from the Victorian Government this sort of facility and others like it are going to attract a premium the likes of which has hitherto not been seen in Melbourne's west."

AEC is led by Chinese Australian businessman Bill Zheng who also chairs Investors Direct Financial Group.

Former Docklands authority and Sydney's Barangaroo Delivery Authority boss John Tabart is CEO of the group.

Project partners include Telstra, PwC, IBM, Cisco, Urbis, Jacobs and Honeywell.

<https://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/future-melbourne/australian-education-city-one-step-closer-in-melbournes-western-suburbs/news-story/de7f28255d509ed632b14d329b8b0d17>