

Residents 'betrayed'

Star Weekly, Esther Lauaki

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Western suburbs residents have been "betrayed" by the state government, following its decision to scrap plans for the \$30 billion East Werribee employment precinct.

The proposed Australian Education City (AEC) was to deliver universities, massive employment opportunities and new rail lines on what is the largest undeveloped parcel of publicly-owned surplus government land in metropolitan Melbourne.

But planning for the project has been scrapped amid concerns over its viability. Western Metropolitan MP Bernie Finn said axing the proposal was a "tragedy" for Wyndham.

"I'm bloody angry," Mr Finn said.

"The Australian Education City would have provided thousands of jobs for residents.

"We've lost a future for our kids ... this is the ultimate betrayal of the western suburbs."

Wyndham council deals and investments, major projects director Kate Roffey told

Star Weekly that East Werribee remained one of the state's seven national employment and innovation clusters.

"Wyndham City Council is disappointed that the Australian Education City proposal may not be proceeding but we are confident that the state government has undertaken an exhaustive process and the decision was ultimately made in the best interests of any future development.

"Our priority is to see the potential for the East Werribee site recognised and used for key commercial purposes that will bring job density in future focused industries, such as research and development.

"The site should not be used primarily for residential development.

"This area needs to be a high-density employment area, not a place for more houses ... The size and location of the site lends itself to the development of a major commercial precinct of state significance."

Late Friday, a state government statement said: "Following careful examination, the Australian Education City proposal for the East Werribee Employment Precinct will not proceed.

"The Government thanks the Australian Education City group, including local and international partners, for its time and involvement in the project and process.

"With the continued growth in Melbourne's West, the Government will undertake further work to better understand the investment required to support the region's transport infrastructure needs, particularly in light of its commitment to the Suburban Rail Loop and Melbourne Airport Rail Link.

"The Government acknowledges the importance of strengthening ties between universities and industry in Melbourne's West, and increasing job opportunities."

The state government has refused to divulge why the project has been scrapped, or whether compensation will be paid to the Australian Education City group.

<https://wyndham.starweekly.com.au/news/residents-betrayed/>