

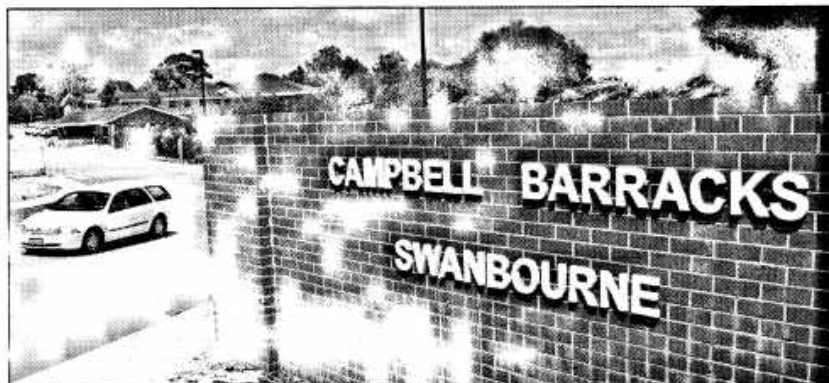
Call for homes on army land

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The Defence Department could give up sensitive sites such as the Special Air Service Regiment barracks in Swanbourne to make way for medium-density homes and help ease the housing shortage, Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan says.

Ms MacTiernan also believes the Federal Government should consider selling off other valuable defence sites such as Karrakatta and Leeuwin barracks, questioning why the department needs land in such premium residential areas.

"If we were able to free up land in such areas it would be fantastic," she said. "One does have to query whether they (defence) need to be in these sorts of locations."



Prime location: The SAS headquarters at Campbell Barracks in Swanbourne.

The comments follow the completion of an audit by the Federal Treasury of all Commonwealth land around Australia.

Treasurer Peter Costello ordered the audit amid the debate over housing affordability and is tipped to

announce select land releases as the election bandwagon moves around the country.

Ms MacTiernan said Karrakatta Barracks would be perfect for medium-density housing because it was close to the Perth to Fremantle rail

line and was near schools and hospitals.

She said any release of Commonwealth land had to take place in areas close to the city if it were to have any effect on land supply.

"What we have got in Perth is some military properties that are right in prime real estate areas," Ms MacTiernan said.

She said the SAS barracks, which runs along Swanbourne beach in one of Perth's most exclusive quarters, was an "excellent area" though she admitted defence chiefs would fight tooth and nail any effort to move them on.

Defence Minister Brendan Nelson flatly dismissed the Minister's suggestion that Australia's most elite fighting force could be pushed off their home base.

"Swanbourne won't be going

anywhere," a spokesman for Dr Nelson said yesterday.

Land experts say the audit is most likely to look at defence land near Midland, which is home to the Bushmead rifle range. The land is considered to be close enough to the city to meet the Federal Government's criteria for release, though there would be heritage and environmental issues to overcome.

Real estate experts have previously dismissed the idea that the Swanbourne and Karrakatta sites could be released to ease housing pressure as the land would end up being too expensive to help those looking to get into the market for the first time.

Labor has promised to establish a \$500 million housing affordability fund to help first-homebuyers. It would also spend \$600 million to provide cheap rental properties.