

## \$20m plan for affordable living

# Rent rescue

PETER BEGG

A COMMUNITY housing service is preparing to build more than \$20 million worth of low-rental housing projects in Geelong.

Loddon Mallee Housing Service opened its Geelong office in Pakington St yesterday, reflecting the growth of its local presence.

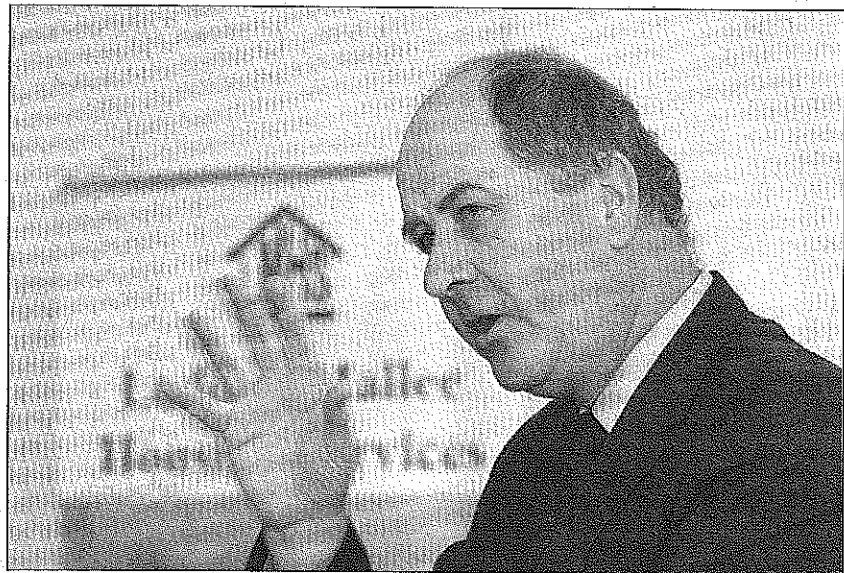
The service is building 30 dwellings for low-income people and families in the Geelong region, and plans to build another 60 properties here in the next 18 months.

The Bendigo-based service has established itself in Geelong because there is no affordable housing association here.

Loddon Mallee CEO Ken Marchingo said there were only eight housing associations in Victoria, and because they used a lot of government money, there was a very high bar for organisations to become registered.

"There is no housing association based in the western half of the state apart from ourselves," he said.

"There are some housing providers, that's a



**ACCOMMODATION PLAN:** State Housing Minister Richard Wynne opens the new Loddon Mallee Housing Service office on Pakington St yesterday.

Photo: PHILLIP STUBBS

lower level of registration and they can't do what we can do.

"What we are hoping to do is work our way through the community, identify the smaller providers, and work with them."

Mr Marchingo said there were 10,000 unemployed people in this region, 1000 homeless people and 2000 families

on housing waiting lists who would benefit from Loddon Mallee's services.

State Housing Minister Richard Wynne, who opened the Geelong office yesterday, said it was fantastic to have Loddon Mallee in Geelong.

"To have their services here on the ground means that we are going to have investment by

the housing association here in Geelong and they will be looking for more opportunities to put more affordable housing on the ground," Mr Wynne said.

"That means that people who are now doing it hard in the private rental market will have an option to be a part of the housing association."