

Fluffy dual occupancy passes Assembly

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The first cleared Fluffy blocks will be released for sale in the coming weeks after zoning changes allowing the blocks to be effectively subdivided were passed by the ACT parliament on Thursday.

More than 50 asbestos-contaminated homes have been demolished under the buyback scheme but the government has been holding off selling them until the dual occupancy changes were finalised.

At present rules covering the residential zone only allow dual occupancy on blocks of 800 square metres or larger and even then the two homes can't be sold as separate titles.

The new rules applying to Fluffy blocks will allow sections of 700 square metres or larger to be subdivided and sold as separate titles by the new buyers, a change designed to maximise prices.

Most of the homes demolished so far will fall within the new unit title rules.

Also on Thursday, the government brought forward debate on its land rent changes for Fluffy owners. The debate was to have been held next week, but the Labor party brought it unexpectedly to the Assembly, pushing the land rent changes through at the same time as the dual occupancy changes.

The move outraged the Liberal opposition, which said Fluffy owners had been denied the chance to watch the debate and express their opposition. Liberal deputy Alistair Coe said the land rent debate had not even been listed on the daily program and the move to bring on a snap debate was sneaky and designed to avoid two Fluffy debates in two weeks.

The land rent changes allow Fluffy owners who meet income thresholds (\$160,000 for a couple) to rent their land instead of buying it back. But they will have to pay market value if and when they can afford to buy the land in future, unlike other land renters, who are required to pay only unimproved value.

The move has upset owners like [Christina Pilkington](#), who is struggling to find the money to buy back her cleared Ainslie block for which the government wants \$725,000.

Planning Minister Mick Gentleman said the government had brought on debate on both issues to provide certainty for Fluffy owners, whose land could now be valued. Those who wanted to buy back their land would be given first right of refusal before the blocks went to auction.

Mr Gentleman also raised the possibility of a freeing up of dual occupancy rules more widely in the city, saying the government would consult on the issue. As it now stands, the only legal dual occupancies in the main RZ1 suburban zone are the granny flat style, where the two homes must stay under one title and cannot be sold separately.

Mr Coe said the Liberals were also open to wider dual occupancy, but it should not be done in an ad hoc way. He likened the Fluffy changes to throwing darts at a map, with strata title allowed, not for good planning reasons but because the blocks happen to have been contaminated with Mr Fluffy asbestos.