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SURROGACY IN SISTERHOOD

Record prices put the squeeze on home buyers

By JENNIFER McALEER, urban affairs reporter.
 Residential property sales in Melbourne during the past few months have been almost frenzied. Buyers race from inspection to inspection, then flock to auctions, creating competition that is resulting in record prices.

The sales at the top end of the market make the headlines. For example, a Toorak agent has just sold four houses in South Yarra, Toorak and Kew. The bidding at the auctions soared above the reserves, by hundreds of thousands of dollars in each case. The four

homes changed owners for a total of almost \$12 million. They are astounding results. But that is not the section of the market that interests 95 per cent of Melbourne's population. They are much more excited — or frustrated — when they hear that a small flat in Elwood sold last week for \$144,500, or about the charming two-bedroom weatherboard in North Balwyn that was sold at auction for \$200,000. On Sunday in North Fitzroy a renovated Victorian home was expected to sell for just above \$200,000 but sold for \$277,000.



THE PROPERTY PUSH
 Agents say they are finding it very difficult to predict prices because they are rising week by week. Prospective buyers accuse them of underquoting, of trying to

entice people to auctions so the prices are pushed up. On the other hand, home owners are encouraged to sell by promises of widely rising prices. Some agents however, seem to be reacting to the criticism and are putting on a cautious face. The trick is to talk up the market but not to the level where buyers think their quest is hopeless. Prices have increased substantially overall but there are still the ordinary, expected results, said Mr Graeme Hall from the St Kilda agent Biggin and Scott.

"We don't want people to be frightened. It doesn't do anybody any good when the market gets so hyped up. The talk scares people away, and then we have a downturn." The president of the Real Estate Institute of Victoria, Mrs DI Baker, said last week the residential market was "very strong and buoyant" but "property boom" was not a term that she liked to use. "It exaggerates the situation a little. Prices have gone up, but it's hard to generalise, because in some areas the growth is large and in others it's not."

Mr Peter Elton, from the agent Kastalan Elton, has a similar opinion. "I don't think it can be called a boom," he said. "It's definitely a good market, but there is still some trouble selling property that has a 'wart', like bad position. People are paying good money, but I believe they are being selective." According to a market-research consultant, B.S. Shrapnel the median price of a house in Melbourne was \$86,700 in June 1987, and is expected to be about

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Victoria to lose federal seat

By SHAWN CARNEY
 Victoria is likely to lose one of its 39 House of Representatives electorates because its population has failed to increase in line with the national average.

The Australian Electoral Commission will today begin assessing all States' entitlement to lower house representation by comparing population figures in each state with the national total.

The electoral officer for Victoria, Mr Denis Reynolds, confirmed that the state would lose a seat under the formula. Western Australia is expected to pick up an extra electorate.

The abolition of a seat in Victoria is likely to require changes in the boundaries of many of the remaining 38 electorates. Some seats could be transformed from safe to marginal and vice versa, perhaps leading to preselection battles.

For example, if the safe Labor seat of Scullin, held by Mr Harry Jenkins, were wiped out, it could alter the nature of many nearby electorates. This is because the 62,000 electors now in Scullin (based on Broadmeadows and Thomastown) would have to be accommodated in other seats.

Many could be absorbed into the neighbouring electorates of Jagajaga, Bantman and Wills, all safe Labor, but the boundaries of the nearby marginal seats of McWen, held by Labor, and Monzie and Chisholm, held by the Liberals, would also be affected.

Those marginal seats could be changed from Labor to Liberal, or Liberal to Labor, depending on which areas were included in the new boundaries.

Another problem could arise if the member for a seat that is eliminated wants to remain in Parliament. Labor Party officials have already started talking about persuading some MPs to retire if the

seat of a more valued member is abolished.

For example if the seat of Melbourne Ports, held by the Minister for Immigration, Mr Holding, were abolished, another member of his Labor Unity faction might retire from Parliament, leaving a seat for which Mr Holding could seek re-election.

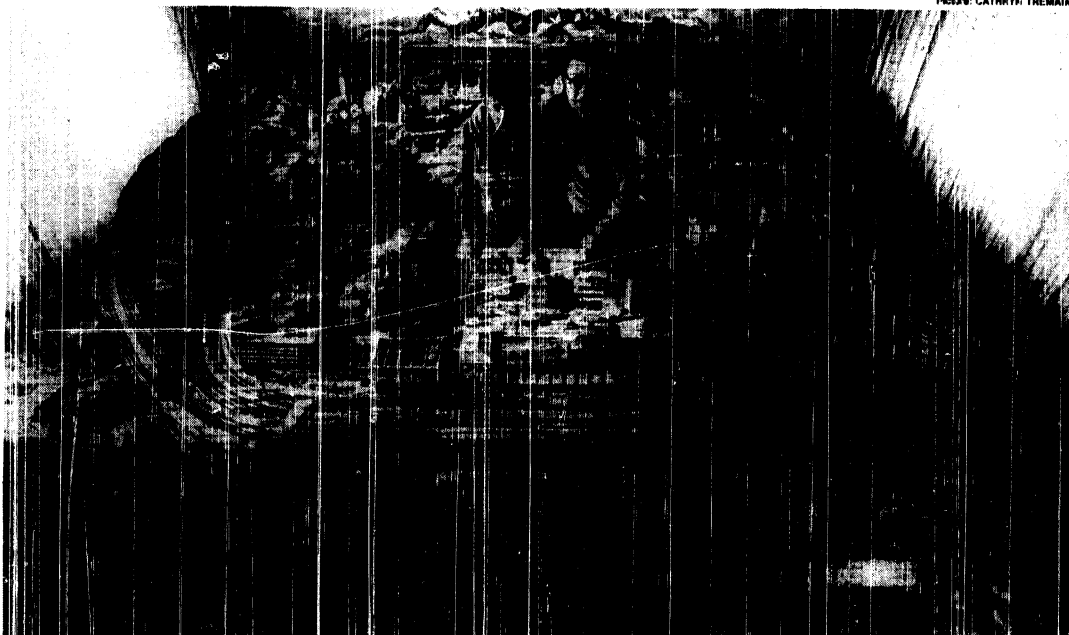
Under the electoral laws, any House of Representatives seat could be wiped out in the redistribution. This means that, technically, the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, or one of the seven Victorian MHRs in his Ministry, or an Opposition frontbencher such as his shadow treasurer, Mr Peacock, could find his seat abolished and would have to seek another.

However, the Electoral Commission is unlikely to abolish a seat if it would create a controversy. Although enrolments in some safe suburban Labor seats such as Scullin, Bantman and Jagajaga are as much as nine per cent down on the average, this does not necessarily mean that one of these seats would be abolished, because the flow-on effect of any redistribution has to be taken into account.

The commission will establish a redistribution committee next month which will invite written submissions and comments over six weeks. Mr Reynolds said Victoria that its committee, of which he will be a member, would be able to propose new boundaries by October.

The main political parties are expected to make submissions to the commission to maintain their present level of representation. Some unity groups also make submissions when the commission is invited to make submissions to the commission to maintain their present level of representation. Mr Reynolds said he hoped the distribution would be completed by March. Labor holds 24 House of Representatives seats in Victoria, the Liberal Party 12, and the National Party three.

With 5000 guests, seats are scarce in this sitting room



Marla and Willy Neumann with the city in the sitting room of their Brighton house.

You wouldn't believe what Willy Neumann, 31, keeps in his sitting room. Some people would say a train set. Yes, but it's so big and so detailed that it is an extraordinary model of a city. It contains a petrochemical plant, a vineyard, a castle, a soccer field, a brewery... look, you just wouldn't believe it.

Now Mr Neumann's wife Marla has put her foot down. She wants her sitting room back. It is a large and lovely sunlit sitting room at Brighton, and the model city occupies nearly all of it. "Nag, nag, nag," says Mr Neumann, who is a very humorous man. "She's nagged me into selling it." Mrs Neumann desires she nagged him, but does say it will be nice to have lounge chairs again.

There is something in this situation that reminds one of the TV ad where a family eats on the sofaless floor, and a little girl says: "Why don't we eat at the table like everyone else?" You can imagine Mrs Neumann thinking: "Why don't we sit visitors in the sitting room like everyone else?"

Four years ago Mr Neumann, a doctor for the Royal Melbourne Hospital, began building a model soccer field in his basement. By the time he added such improvements as lion tamers in the fairground, rock climbers going up a wall, sheep on the farm, and a tennis court and swimming pool

Boy scouts, lion tamers and surfies have to go



Lahey at Large JOHN LAHEY

at the hotel, he ran out of space, so he brought it all up to the dining room, which is not large.

He began adding a cinema, four sets of rail tracks, pigeons on the roof of the bars, a hang-glider on a cliff-top, boy scouts holding a billy, dozens of little people at a shopping centre, the Queen at the town hall, the worshippers at the churches, and a car park for 50 cars. By now his city was hanging over the dining room buffet and encroaching on the lounge.

Well, I mean he still hadn't built his dockland, public lavatories, office blocks, taxation office, the back yards where women hang the washing, the park where the pianickers dance, the bridal party leaving the church, the payroll robbery, the poppet-head at the mine shaft, the blocks of flats or the surfboard riders. He thought he

would take half the sitting room. That would be rough, he said to himself.

Huh! The city grew and grew. Mr and Mrs Neumann cannot calculate the hours they spent on it. (Yes, she was roped in too.) Sometimes they spent entire holidays fitting together the parts that Mr Neumann imported in kits from Europe. At other times, they sat up until two or three in the morning.

"I remember there were more than 1000 parts in one building," Mrs Neumann says. She sounds awed. They do not know how many little people they eventually put in place. Their scale is one to 87. Five thousand is Mr Neumann's guess.

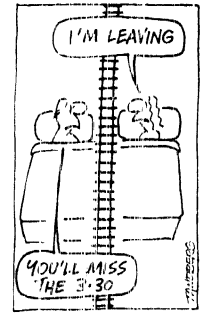
A wonderful thing happens when Mr Neumann gets at the controls of this city. Not only do the trains run, but the brewery chimney belches smoke, the crowd at the soccer field roars, the ferries wheel and the merry-go-round spins, the church bells ring, the brass bands get at the sounds, the traffic lights work, and a railway assistant at the truly wonderful station makes one of those half-audible

announcements about train so-and-so leaving something-or-other platform.

At night, the scene is incredible. Everything lights up. Thousands of tiny lights come on, inside and outside the buildings, drawing their power from overhead wires strung on poles not much thicker than a match.

Mr Neumann seems to have come to terms with disposing of his creation. He is not certain of the price. The parts alone cost about \$80,000, he says, but that was before the dollar's value dropped. The value now would be nearer \$100,000.

But what if he misses his city so much that he wants to start making a new one? "No," he says. "My imagination is a bit greater than trains. Next time I will tackle something different."



Experts see gloomy future for global AIDS battle

By MICHAEL HARRIS, medical reporter.
 Stockholm, Monday
 Scientists and researchers at the opening of an international conference on AIDS here yesterday expressed fear that the global epidemic was more frightening than they could have imagined.



AIDS epidemic has attracted

Dr Luc Montagnier of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, who with Dr Robert Gallo first isolated the virus, said the virus could hide in the bodies of some people and evade tests designed to detect antibodies.

Practice makes perfect sense, even at \$50,000

By MAURIE SCHWARTZ
 The Saudi Arabian Soccer Federation has mobilised a fleet of 100 petco-dollars to provide sparring partners for its national team, training in Melbourne for the Bicentennial Gold Cup.

It will spend almost \$50,000 to bring the national team of New Saudi Arabia's newly appointed coach, Carlos Alberto Parreira, each the training schedule was not extravagant by Saudi standards. "We fly teams in all the time," he said.

SUZUKI SUPER CARRY
 FROM \$11,950

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