

Fed: Opposition questions Lend Lease land deal Comland Latham

CANBERRA, Jan 27 AAP - The \$165 million price tag Lend Lease will pay as joint developer of former commonwealth land in Sydney and Melbourne seemed skinny, federal Opposition Leader Mark Latham said today.

Lend Lease will buy out the federal government's interest in the Comland joint venture.

The venture will develop new housing estates on two sites formerly owned by the defunct government munitions company ADI Ltd.

The sites are Edgewater and Waterford Green at Maribyrnong in Melbourne and the controversial St Marys site in western Sydney.

Mr Latham criticised the government for not conducting a public evaluation of the land and for failing to invite tenders.

"The price seems a bit skinny," Mr Latham told the Southern Cross radio network.

The opposition would raise questions about the deal during Senate estimates committee hearings after parliament resumes next month, Mr Latham said.

He described the lack of a tender process as sinister.

"They didn't seem to have an open tender process either which is always a big worry," Mr Latham said.

"If that hasn't happened in this case, then we'll be certainly running the government over the hot coals in parliament.

"It's a public resource; the purpose of the government should have been to maximise the public money.

"\$165 million in Sydney seems a pretty good price given the outrageous escalation in property values in the city.

"There wasn't an evaluation; they should have had a proper public evaluation of it as well."

AAP rmg/sb/tma