

Bid to roof in Jolimont

Yards an ugly duckling

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AMBITIOUS plans to develop eight city blocks on decking over the rail lines from Federation Square to Richmond are gaining momentum.

Grocon chief Daniel Grollo and Melbourne Lord Mayor John So are calling for the State Government to forge ahead with the plan, which would transform the city.

Both leaders said yesterday it was vital that the Government pursue the regeneration of the "ugly" north bank of the river as a priority if Melbourne is to fulfil its potential.

"It needs a courageous decision," Mr Grollo said.

"That area could go from being the ugly duckling to the prime development land in Melbourne.

"The new land would sit next to the Yarra River and face the Royal Botanic Gardens.

"It could be used for everything from a sporting precinct between the MCG and tennis centre, to residential, to unique commercial opportunities closer to the city.

"There might be some short-term costs. But you can manage it in a way that the cost of the decking is not an issue.

"There's a million ways they can do it. The only thing lacking is the courage."

Cr So backed Mr Grollo's calls.

"It is the Government's role to have the vision to look at how they can max



Train of thought: The Jolimont railyard plan.

imize opportunities and have the infrastructure in place for the city in the years to come," Cr So said.

Melbourne Council set out the decking vision for the eight city blocks (about 1.5km) from Federation Square to Richmond Station in a blueprint for the future of the city in 2001.

Federation Square is already built on a deck above the rail lines.

Inspired by the idea, Mr Grollo's company Grocon and Becton bid to build the Commonwealth Games village on decking over a section of the Joli

mont tracks. But the Government scuppered the plan, dismissing the bid in favour of Royal Park.

But Mr Grollo said now it was time to look forward and, though the Commonwealth Games village would not be at Jolimont, Grocon would be eager to be involved in any other decking development proposals.

Matt Phelan, spokesman for Major Projects Minister Peter Batchelor, said the plan was not on the short-term agenda, but investigations had already begun about its viability.