

Strap in for boom ride



INVESTMENTS . . . Wayne Lamont of Lamont construction in Ocean Breeze Estate Photo: DARREN HILDER

By TONY RAGGATT
business editor

STRAP yourselves in, the housing industry is in for a wild ride this year.

Leading Townsville home builder Wayne Lamont says the unprecedented boom in home building will continue.

The builder, who heads up the successful Lamont Constructions juggernaut, said the insatiable demand for new homes seemed to just keep on growing.

The only difficulty was the constraints placed on the market by a shortage of labour.

"If pre-bookings and the level of interest are any indication, strap yourself in because (this year) will leave 2007 in its wake," Mr Lamont said.

"In the past month, our phone has been running hot with callers wanting to get in early next year.

"It is a great position for the industry to be in because that certainly allows us to put on more tradesmen and apprentices to feed the demand.

"In fact the only thing holding everyone back from completing even more homes is a shortage of skilled and general labour.

"The old adage of supply and demand really gives



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the customer the assurance that their asset will be worth more in the years ahead if we are struggling to keep pace with what's required."

According to the latest Midwood Queensland Investment report, the Townsville and Thuringowa councils will have approved 1458 home applications in 2007, up from 1368 in 2006.

For the same periods, unit approvals soared from 475 to 658.

"The Townsville property market is booming," the report said.

It said its high forecast of 1232 home and unit approvals for the six months to December 31 was 'probably not over-stated'.

Official figures are not available yet.

"There are a number of mega subdivisions proposed for Townsville," the report said.

After a record 2007 and building 300 homes Mr Lamont said his company was on track to build more than 400 homes in 2008.

He said he could see much of the action at Townsville in 2008 occurring along the northern

banks of the Bohle River where Stockland was embarking on its 4200-lot Waterway Gardens project; and at Kelso where the Santalucia Group was opening up new subdivisions from its big land stores.

One difficulty, however, was simply supplying such a burgeoning market and trying to meet expectations.

Lead times were stretching out to at least nine months.

The concern about labor shortages follows reports last week that builders were struggling to keep up with demand for housing. Experts say we are falling about 200 homes short every year — and it will get worse with the surge in demand.

Mr Lamont noted that the locals had joined southern investors who were investing in the city.

Some of his buyers were repeat buyers upgrading to better homes or people with older homes who were taking advantage of higher values to upgrade to new homes.

"Locals are getting into the investment thing now, not just southerners," he said.

"I've got clients on third and fourth investment homes."