

Local homes to open doors for Sustainable House Day

NINE homes in the Townsville region will open their doors to the public tomorrow for this year's Sustainable House Day as millions of Australians continue to embrace renewable energy, recycling and other practices designed to lessen our impact on the environment.

The homes are at:

1. 84 Ninth Ave, Railway Estate
2. 20 Halloran St, Hermit Park
3. 61A Annville Rd, Jensen
4. 2 Edward St, West End
5. Rowes Bay Sustainable Education Centre (old Caretakers Cottage), Cape Pallarenda Rd, Rowes Bay
6. 4 McElligott Crt, Horseshoe Bay
7. 20 Wallaby Way, Horseshoe Bay
8. Solar Cities Smart Lifestyle Centre, 64-88 Horseshoe Bay Rd, Horseshoe Bay
9. 27 Barbarra St (cnr Granite St), Picnic Bay

Homes will be open to the public between 10am and 4pm and entry is free. Local community group, NQ Dry Tropics and local sustainability business ecoSAVVY, are coordinating the management of these homes for Sustainable House Day in the Townsville region.

NQ Dry Tropics chief executive officer Bob Frazer said the event gave people the chance to look at houses that had been designed, built, or fitted out with sustainability and our tropical climate in mind.

"They can also talk to the owners to hear about their personal experiences. Architects, builders and energy auditors will also be on hand at many of the homes to provide expert tips," he said.

Home viewers will be able to see benefits such as solar, ventilation, water harvesting and recycling, shading, the use of low and high thermal mass materials, window treatments, designs that embrace indoor/outdoor living and tropical design, energy efficiency and more.

For the first time homes will open for free this year thanks to the support of the Australian Government, providing a fantastic opportunity for people seeking to make their own homes or rental properties greener.

Investors return to property

INVESTORS have returned to the real estate market, lured by the security of property.

The return to property investment is what PRDnationwide research manager Dean Dederer calls a 'return to basics'.

"Many investors, from the professional to the mum and dad level, have been wearied by the recent economic meltdown and share market crash," Mr Dederer said.

"There is a level of comfort attributed to property investment. When compared to other investment classes, the attraction is that property is a tangible asset — you can see it, touch it, kick it, you know where it is. Australians love the bricks and mortar culture.

"Further, people understand how residential property works, as housing and accommodation is considered one of the essential human needs.

"It's only natural many investors would gravitate back towards more traditionally safe investment avenues, especially after being stung, or witnessing others around us get stung, by the recent economic meltdown."

Mr Dederer said many other asset classes such as the share market could be very volatile, with investors benefiting from potentially high returns in short time periods but also potentially devastating losses in equally short time periods. He said comparing various asset classes over a 20-year period, it could be seen that property generated returns higher than many other investments and provided a hedge against inflation.

Over the 20 years to December 2007, residential



investment property generated gross returns of 11.3 per cent per annum. Over the same period, inflation averaged 3.2 per cent per annum.

Mr Dederer said another attraction of property investment was that it was relatively free from uncontrollable external forces and the property owner could determine how the asset was managed rather than leaving key decisions in the hands of a large corporation or fund manager.

"There are also the taxation benefits associated with depreciation and/or gearing," he said.

"And servicing a mortgage provides a



disciplined means of investing, which equates to forced saving for many people." Mr Dederer said while residential property was a sound investment, diversification of assets was recommended. "Most financial advisors suggest that a successful investment portfolio should consist of a variety of asset classes to minimise risk and maximise returns."

Interest rates tipped to climb in October

AUSTRALIA'S 49-year low interest rates may come to an end as early as next month, according to several leading economists.

While home owners celebrated the Reserve Bank's decision last week to leave interest rates unchanged at 3 per cent, better than expected economic figures have increased the chances of rates being lifted by 25 basis points at the board's October meeting.

Australia's economy reported modest growth in the June quarter, growing 0.6 per cent which was well ahead of the expected 0.2 per cent growth.

The positive result now means the economy has recorded two quarters of positive growth, after a contraction in the December

quarter of 2008. The interbank financial markets suggest the official cash rate could be 178 basis points higher by September next year, implying more than seven rate hikes of 25 basis points each. Economists at JPMorgan and NAB have already brought forward their calls and have forecast the RBA will implement two rate rises by the end of the year.

RE/MAX Excellence agents Rohan Banning and Lyn Griffiths said the potential for several rate rises was a bitter sweet result for home owners and buyers.

"Economists have only made predictions of interest rates rises because the Australian economy is gaining strength," Mr Banning said.

"While no home owner wants to pay higher interest rates, they can gain some confidence from the fact that rising interest rates often precede a run of growth for house prices. This is causing a lot of people to jump into the property market now, while it is perceived to be at the beginning of a new growth cycle."

Ms Griffiths said even if interest rates were to rise twice this year, home owners would still enjoy some of the lowest repayment rates in years.

"What's important is that people really look at the broader outlook for Australia's economy and spend a lot of time talking to their lenders about how they could manage a

loan over the long run," Ms Griffiths said.

"Speculation of any further rate cuts has been put to bed, which suggests that it will never be more affordable to enter the market than now.

"But with Townsville's employment and population growth figures still holding strong, coupled with a national housing shortage, there are many reasons why owning a home can be a successful investment over the medium to long term regardless of interest rate activity."



Ray White Townsville City & Townsville Central win multiple awards

Townsville's leading real estate team proved again that it can mix it with the best in North QLD at the 2009 Ray White Bi-Annual North Queensland Awards held in Townsville last week.

Competing with the best from Cairns and Port Douglas through to Mackay, 3 Ray White Townsville City sales team members took out Awards for another outstanding first 6 months of 2009 and the Townsville Central Property Management team also won the Growth Award for the most new business clients.

Awards Won Included:

- No. 1 Property Management Growth North Qld – Ray White Townsville Central Property Management
- No. 2 – Number of Auctions Sold North Qld – Malcolm Thompson
- No. 3 – Number of Auctions Sold North Qld – Shay Bell
- Top 10 - Number of Sales North Qld – Kimberley Orr

Congratulations to the team and the agents above for an outstanding effort so far in 2009.

