

BATTLERS SNAP UP HALF-PRICE HOUSES

\$50,000 lifeline for Rocky's first-home buyers



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ROCKHAMPTON battlers are snapping-up "half-price houses" as interest rate hikes and the property market squeeze force them to look for alternative options.

The demand for relocatable homes has soared during the past 12 months and at least one local business is taking advantage of current conditions.

□ PAGE 2: Continues.

Cut price start for buyers

■ From page 2

The development application is to build a 1.62 hectare depot on Rockhampton's south side on the block at George, Wood, Arthur and Murray streets.

"The Busby Group consists of a number of divisions including house removal, transport, demolition and its contracting division and employs about 100 people, representing 100 families in the Central Queensland community," Mr Busby said.

"The company injects a lot of money into the economy and has a turnover of more than \$20million."

Meanwhile, Master Builders Central Queensland manager Tom Mammen said the building industry had quietened considerably in recent months.

Mr Mammen said in the past with a shortage of tradespeople some builders had been booked out 18 months ahead of time.

However, that's now changed and he urged people considering booking to shop around.

"Demand has probably dropped about 9% from last year," Mr Mammen said.

"The market has slowed down and freed-up labour."

He said relocatable homes had their place in the market mix, but were not for everyone.

The Master Builders Association is lobbying the government to release more land, a move which would help reduce the costs of buying a new home.

First-class interest in second-hand homes



IN DEMAND: Ricky Keenan and Ron Busby stand outside one of the homes set for relocation. Picture by TAMARA MACKENZIE.
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■ From page 1

Meanwhile, some builders of new homes are struggling in a slowing market which has dropped pace significantly this year.

Making the most of the interest in relocatable homes, the Busby Group has lodged a development application with Rockhampton Regional Council to build a house removal depot on the city's south side to store up to 14 homes.

While the group's house removals operation co-ordinator Ricky Keenan wasn't saying how much the development would cost, he did say it was "a significant investment" for the company

and represented a desire to meet demand.

Mr Keenan said the purchase of relocatable homes offered buyers the potential to save tens of thousands of dollars.

He said it often made the difference for those trying to break into the housing market.

Depending on quality, homes range in price, from \$50,000 to \$230,000.

A standard three-bedroom Queenslander would cost between \$75,000 and \$80,000, and apparently there's plenty available.

Mr Keenan said demand had more than doubled.

In recent times the business has averaged relocating

and re-stumping at least one home a week.

"We've been flat out it's gone crazy in the past 12 months," Mr Keenan said.

"People are screaming out for them.

"It's helping people get a start in life because it's hard enough getting a home for many these days."

He said first-home buyers, in particular, found buying a home and relocating it to a block was cheaper and quicker than building or finding a place.

People who go down this track need to have appropriate council approvals, a process the Busby team can assist with.

This takes between two

and three months.

The group's commercial manager Ron Busby said the homes, which have all been lived in, were structurally sound and had to have relevant authority approval.

Mr Busby said many of the homes were traditional Queenslanders, homes which were no longer made to the same standard.

The company relocates homes across Central Queensland.

Home owners needed to get other things like electricity connected.

"It ends up at least half price compared to building a home."

□ PAGE 4: Continues.