

Vacancy rate slides down to 1.75% City in grip of rental crisis

CAIRNS house rental vacancy rates have continued to tumble further into crisis territory.

The latest Herrron Todd White CairnsWatch shows the February trend vacancy rate has slid down to 1.75 per cent.

While units are now sitting just above "stress" levels at 2.1 per cent, houses are at an unprecedented low

Roger Dickson
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of 1.4 per cent. HTW research director Rick Carr said he had never seen such a tiny availability rate for houses.

"It's unprecedented," he said. "It is completely uncharted territory." Mr Carr put the rental squeeze

down to Cairns's strong economy and its associated population growth.

"People have not stopped moving to Cairns. Our economy is in good shape and there are still more jobs available than there are locals.

"So we are continuing to draw in population growth." The rental squeeze is also starting

to be felt when it comes to what people are paying for accommodation.

The December quarter residential tenancies authority figures show that the weekly rent for three-bedroom houses has risen by \$35 to \$285 over the last two years.

Two-bedroom unit rents have leapt even further rising \$40 to \$220 in the same period. While house

vacancy rates are at an all time low based on HTW records, Mr Carr said the pinch on unit availability had lessened for the time being.

"I think what has happened is quite a lot of units have come on to the market recently," he said.

"While they are being absorbed by the rental market the pressure has eased slightly."

House buyers and sellers support green

WHILE Cairns City Council seems determined to get an exemption from a July 1 State Government mandate on compulsory water tanks, a new survey shows many buyers and sellers think they add value to a home.

Last month, Cairns Mayor Kevin Byrne said the idea was absurd and there was no way council would enforce legislation.

But a realestate.com.au national survey of 1257 people held last month showed more vendors were seeing green credentials as selling points, and that buyers were responding with one in 10 people prepared to pay up to 20 per cent more for a "green" home.

Of the most desirable environmental additions to home, water tanks led the way in the survey with nearly 50 per cent saying one would enhance the value of a home.

Solar heating and hot water came a close second with water saving devices coming third.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents said a home with environmentally friendly features would make it more saleable, with more than half saying the value of a green property could increase by 5-10 per cent.

The website's general manager, Shaun Di Gregorio, said he had recently seen a significant jump in advertisements noting the sustainable features of a property.

"In fact, over the last three months, there has been a 19 per cent increase in the use of green buzz words, like water tanks, water-efficient shower heads, energy-efficient and 5-star ratings, popping up in listings advertising copy," Mr Di Gregorio said.

TOP RANKING GREEN FEATURES

1. Water tanks with 49.59% support
2. Solar heating & hot water system (45.53%)
3. Water saving fittings & fixtures (37.31%)
4. Energy efficient appliances (36.44%)
5. Bore water (22.68%)
6. Drip irrigation system (22.68%)
7. Compost (10.09%)



For sale: Port Douglas is set to experience one of its largest auctions when 10 properties go under the hammer.

Super auction

PORT Douglas is about to experience one of its largest ever auctions with 10 properties set to go under the hammer.

Agent Tony McGrath of L.J Hooker Port Douglas said a mix of properties, including seven residential and three commercial titles, would be available to bidders at the April 21 auction to be held at Treetops Resort.

He said the three commercial properties, including two shops and a shed at Port Traders, had surfaced as a result of the changes to the super funds legislation. "The new laws allow the vendors, who are over 60, to sell the properties and put the money into their super funds without being hammered by tax."



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