

Boom turns islands into luxury hot spot



Upwardly mobile: Lisa Godden, who made her first property investment at 20, has worked her way up the market to a property at Sovereign Island

Picture: Tony Phillips

Maurice Dunlevy

FORTY-FIVE homes costing an average \$1.5 million each are being built on the Gold Coast's Sovereign Islands in a \$67 million construction spurge that has turned the waterfront enclave into Australia's latest property hot spot.

Luxurious even by Gold Coast standards, Sovereign Islands, which racing car legend Dick Johnson calls home, is famous for its palazzos, which have sold for up to \$8 million.

Sovereign Islands real estate has had its ups and downs, but a market spike a year ago has spawned a construction boom that shows no signs of easing.

"You only have to look at the traffic each morning to get an understanding of the size and scale of the construction activity that exists here," project spokesman John Ashmore said.

Located 45 minutes from Bris-

bane and 15 minutes from Surfers Paradise, the Sovereign Islands development is accessed by a 300m bridge.

The suburb consists of 700 homes on six linked islands and has been developed by the Lewis Land Group of Companies since the 1980s.

Mr Ashmore, who heads a Lewis and Colliers PRD Marketing joint venture, said construction was running at record levels, employing hundreds of workers.

Buyers prepared to pay some of the Gold Coast's highest land prices have fuelled the construction boom.

Blocks in the latest land release, a precinct known as Knightsbridge, are typically 750 to 800sqm in size and sell for between \$1.7 and \$2.3 million.

According to Mr Ashmore, land prices had put upwards pressure on house prices, with one of the islands' most expen-



sive homes on the market for about \$12 million.

The Sovereign Islands boom has also rubbed off on nearby Ephraim Island, where buyers from Britain, Brisbane, Sydney and the Gold Coast have bought apartments costing up to \$1.08 million in the past fortnight.

The \$555 million Ephraim Island project is a joint venture

between Lewis Land and Mirvac.

The development includes 14 north-facing beach houses which have sold for more than \$4 million each.

According to Colliers PRD, the northern end of the Gold Coast, or North Shore as it is becoming known, is experiencing massive development as big names including Stockland, Mirvac, Australand, Mulpha and a host of private companies plough billions of dollars into the area.

"The common denominator through all this development is lifestyle, and the lifestyle that is on offer in this area is without peer," Colliers PRD projects division director Tim Holmes said.

At the southern end of the coast, the Canberra-based Amalgamated property Group has rolled out a \$35 million penthouse-style apartment development on the Burleigh

Heads beachfront. To be known as Ivory, the APG development will consist of 13 luxury residences with starting prices of \$1.28 million.

Positive market sentiment has also allowed the Gold Coast-based Potter Group to push ahead with plans for a \$2 billion housing estate touted as a "next generation" Sanctuary Cove on Queensland's Fraser Coast.

The site, only 2km from the Hervey Bay CBD, has more than 1.5km of beach frontage.

The estate will take between 10 and 15 years to complete and will eventually house about 6000 people.

Graham Marsh will design the 18-hole championship golf course, which will be the centrepiece of the resort community.

The Potter Group has entered into an agreement with local landowners to develop the community, which will be known as Golden Waters.