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# Pipeline of work ahead

## Rainy days over for in-demand home builders

BUILDERS in the Far North are enjoying confidence not seen since before the Global Financial Crisis, and the housing stimulus extension promises a bright year ahead.

Master Builders Far Northern regional manager Sharon Vella said tradespeople in the construction industry were putting on apprentices to keep up with burgeoning demand.

"It is a huge investment — there is a belief that there is ongoing stability in construction," she said.

She said that sort of confidence within the industry had not been seen since 2007.

"After that we had the GFC and we really had not come out of that," Ms Vella said.

"The industry is heading back toward where we should be. Prior to this there was only a trickle of apprentices coming through."

The regional home builders grant has been extended to the end of March this year and will see eligible new home buyers continue to receive \$5000 after the purchase or construction of a new house, unit or townhouse valued at less than \$750,000.

"It will make a real difference and create more opportunities in regional areas," Ms Vella said.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows new dwelling approvals in the Far North have increased 83 per cent over the past three months, second in the state only to North Queensland, which enjoyed an 89.4 per cent rise.

"No one thought this was going to happen," Ms Vella said. "But there were significant increases as soon as the stimulus hit."

She said the two factors that could slow down the market were the availability of housing stock and the timelines for bank approvals.

"People may have more delays than they are used to, but they'll end up with that beautiful house. This has given an opportunity for a lot of people to come into the market."

The extension of the regional home builders grant is expected to inject certainty into the industry over the next 12 months.

"There is work to sustain them over the next 12 months," Ms Vella said.

The original deadline had seen a rush on contractors.

"The extension of the time frame gives builders a longer pipeline of work, which is exactly what they need as uncertainty around the pandemic continues," Master Builders Queensland chief executive Grant Galvin said.

"Many builders had been forced to turn potential new customers away because they couldn't meet the previous 31 December deadline.

"With Treasury forecasting 86,000-plus (people) will move to call Queensland home in the next four years, this extension will give our industry the tools it needs to get on with leading our state."

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