

Home prices shoot up following Inpex announcement

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A Darwin real estate agent says one house jumped in price by \$500,000 last weekend following the announcement of a new gas plant.

Nick Mousellis from Ray White Real Estate says investors have been waiting for confirmation that Darwin will be the onshore location for the Inpex plant.



The new suburb of Lyons has been built to ease the existing housing shortage. (Cathy Harper)

He says people selling houses have increased their prices since the announcement on Friday.

"It'll just force the cheaper properties upwards ... from the very, very affordable up to the very, very expensive marketplace."

Palmerston agent Loesje Ashby from Colliers says she had five offers emailed to her by interstate investors within two hours of the Inpex announcement last Friday.

Ms Ashby says she saw record numbers at open houses on the weekend, and 80 per cent were investors.

"I think it's going to come back to the stage where properties will no longer last long on the market.

"The urgency is coming back again.

"I don't think we can go too crazy with the prices, because there still are a lot available on the market.

"But we are starting to see a huge change."

Darwin could become next Pilbara

The Greens are warning that such rises could signal the start of the same social problems regions like Western Australia's Pilbara have experienced since the start of the resources boom.

Senator Scott Ludlum says the shortage of housing and skilled labour in Darwin is likely to worsen.

"It can set up a rather vicious boom and bust economic cycle, and that's at quite an extreme stage in the Pilbara, and that's why we're always concerned about the sort of develop at all costs.

"We have to get everything out of the ground right now as fast as possible."

The Darwin regional head of the Salvation Army, John Friend, says there needs to be planning for social concerns such as the lack of rental properties.

"[Our five family crisis units are] consistently full and the concerning thing for us over the last 12 months is we now have large numbers of single income families needing family crisis units because they can't afford rentals."

And the acting commissioner for consumer affairs says the shortage of rentals is leaving people more vulnerable to internet scams.

Gary Clements says there's been a number of complaints recently about false offers of rental properties over the internet.

"These people send them an email saying 'Yes, I have a property, just send me \$500 or \$1000 as a way of locking that in ... and if you do that now you'll be lucky enough to get the property'.

"But of course what it is is just a scam. They're just trying to hook money out of these unsuspecting people."

Local contracts

Meanwhile, the Territory's Minister for Business, Kon Vatskalis, says many Territory businesses will need to review their application practices to ensure they can compete for the lucrative contracts to work on the gas development.

He says the Government acknowledges there aren't enough skilled workers in the Territory to fulfil all Inpex requirements, but the Government is helping business operators secure some of the contracts and keep profits flowing locally.

"I want to make sure that this money will stay in the Territory. I don't want Victorians or people from NSW coming here and get the contracts. I want as much as possible from this money to stay in the Territory."