

Couple scores a home run

Smart design, light materials, reduced waste cut family house prices



Looking at the new home of Arun and Smita Patil, left, Member for Dawson James Bidgood, centre, Plantation Palms Properties managing director Kim Clarke and Federal Minister for Housing Tanya Plibersek discuss the benefits of affordable housing in Mackay.

PHOTO: AMANDA BALMER 041109/101

By **FALLON HUDSON**
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STANDING in what will be his family's kitchen, Arun Patil could not wipe the smile of his face.

And why wouldn't he smile – Mr Patil and his wife Smita have had trouble finding their dream home after months of trying to find a house at a reasonable price.

Yesterday, he showed Federal Minister for Housing Tanya Plibersek around the construction of his home at Plantation Palms.

Not only did Mr Patil receive his new home within his budget, it was the first new home and land sold under \$350,000 in Mackay.

Plantation Palms Properties managing director Kim Clarke said one of the reasons that the home like Mr Patil's was affordable was due to its design, lightweight materials and the minimising of building waste.

He said some building sites had up to 30 per cent waste, where Plantation Palms had about 10 per cent.

"Recent escalations in house prices in Mackay have made the new housing market unaffordable for many would-be home owners".

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Plantation Palms is the largest residential development under construction in Mackay.
- 30 per cent of the area will be available to address the affordability crisis – providing house and land under \$390,000.
- Registration of the first stage was finalised in April. Since then 52 lots have been sold and 21 of these sales have been house and land packages sold to first home buyers.

"Why should firemen, nurses and young couples be stopped at buying a new house?" he said.

Before moving to Mackay from Melbourne to be an engineering lecturer at CQUniversity Mr Patil said he found it difficult to find a home under \$380,000.

He said they were very particular when it came to their budget and what they were willing to spend.

"We found a home in Andergrove, but we later found out termites caused a structural problem.

"We are very happy with our new home," he said.

Ms Plibersek was in Mackay yesterday to visit the site of one of the first National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) sponsored projects.

The site of the visit was 19 Stevenson Street, Mackay, where she inspected a project being developed by Gainspace Mackay.

The project consists of 35, three-bedroom townhouses, subsidised through NRAS.

She said the new homes showed that great results could be achieved when different levels of government worked together with local industry to provide affordable housing.

Ms Plibersek said her visit to Plantation Palms was unscheduled, but she was interested in what the development was doing to provide affordable houses for the Mackay area.

"It is a challenge here in Mackay because there is a strong demand for housing."

She said there were a lot of families in this area who worked in jobs that helped keep the economy going. They included teachers and hospitality workers who have not been in the position to build a new home.

"Now people are able to build a lovely home which is perfect for the family – it is a win for everyone," she said.

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