



# Beaches are going cheap

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CHAMPAGNE homes at beer prices could yet be available on Cairns northern beaches with the property market turning in favour of buyers.

Brisbane property valuer and real estate consumer advocate Iain Herriot believes the beaches are the place to get a bargain because of their tendency to rebound in value and because owners are keen to sell.

"As the money belt keeps tightening, Cairns homeowners who have overextended will be desperate to off-load their properties," Mr Herriot said.

"High-end properties are discreetly ending up on the market at cheaper prices because their share market investing owners have been subjected to margin calls and can no longer maintain their cost of living."

The change in Cairns' property market from bullish to bearish was reflected in median house price fluctuations.

Kewarra Beach grew 15.9 per cent in the December 2007 quarter but went backwards by 1.8 per cent in the March 2008 quarter.

The market gave retired builder Kevin Hall a nasty shock when he listed his home at Chatham Terrace, Smithfield, for sale.

Mr Hall chose to sell so he could do more sailing. After waiting for a buyer for about three months, he eventually settled for



\$100,000 less than he had wanted to sell for.

"There's no guarantees in this world and we didn't have a crystal ball," Mr Hall said.

"But if you are going to buy you should probably jump in now as this is as cheap as it is going to get."

Real estate agent Steve Cordenos said the market was quiet but it would rebound.

He said the economic downturn would see a shortage of house building, creating extra demand for existing houses.

"We've worked through pilot strikes, 18 per cent interest rates and the property market will always bounce back," he said.

Another agent, who declined to be named, agreed it was a buyer's market.

"There's no doubt people are dropping their prices, especially in Kewarra Beach," the agent said.

Ray White Northern Beaches principal Ed Bullis has sold northern beaches' property for two decades and said the market was ready to bounce back.

"Sales dropped by 50 per cent from January to June but we have already seen some pick up," Mr Bullis said.



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**Hard sell:** Natiesha Brischke from Steve Cordenos Real Estate outside a house on McAlister Ave, Kewarra Beach, which is among a number of northern beaches properties on the market.

Picture: NELLIE PRATT