

## Premier defends pay rise for MPs

QUEENSLAND MPs are to get a 3.1% pay rise next year – their first since July, 2007.

Premier Anna Bligh said the rise would take MPs' base salary to \$130,540 a year.

"This pay rise takes effect from next year and met my commitment for no pay rise for MPs this year, regardless of any increase for federal politicians," Ms Bligh said.

MPs will also get a 2% increase in their allowances.

Opposition frontbenchers are to get \$4000 extra in allowances – their first allowance rise since 1996.

The government is also providing the opposition with an extra taxpayer-funded vehicle.

The rise is supported by both the government and opposition.

But the Queensland Greens said it was a slap in the face for Queensland workers and threw doubt on the need for asset sales.

"If Bligh can afford to pay pollies more, then she can afford to increase Queensland workers' wages and she can afford to retain our state assets in public hands," the Greens' lead Senate candidate for Queensland, Larissa Waters, said. – AAP

THE

# Coast builders



**TOUGH TIMES:** Builder Col Carrigan at one of his award-winning residences at Buderim.

## Number of houses one-third and value

By **OWEN JACQUES**  
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THE number of houses built on the Sunshine Coast dropped by almost a third in the past 12 months and the total value of construction on the Coast fell by 10%.

The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics confirmed what many in the building industry had experienced as new projects were delayed or cancelled.

In the year to mid-2008, 2786 new houses were built. By the middle of this year, that number had fallen to 1925, or about 31%.

The value of residential buildings on the Coast fell from \$1.2 billion to \$859 million.

The effect has been felt by some of our most experienced builders, even as experts talk about "green shoots" appearing in the industry.

Saltwater Constructions owner Col Carrigan has been in the game for about 38 years and because he specialises in multi-residential projects such as townhouses and units, he said his company felt a drop far more dramatic than one-third.

"I would say it has dropped between 50 and 60%," Mr Carrigan said.

"Multi-residential developments are few and far between.

"And smaller builders, the father and son teams, they really struggle.

"We're doing quite a few renovation works now because a lot of people aren't selling or moving, they're upgrading what they have."

Mr Carrigan has also had to face having some projects he planned for drying up before construction could begin.

"It's happened a couple of times in the past year but we

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