

Brizzie trumps Coast buy-up

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FOREIGNERS are still eagerly buying land on the Gold Coast but have formed an even stronger love affair with Brisbane, which has overtaken the Coast for overseas investment.

A record \$474.8 million was spent on the Coast this financial year by the likes of Kiwis, Russians and Brits, but that figure was outshone by Brisbane's whopping \$627.7 million windfall from foreign land acquisitions.

A detailed local breakdown of the Foreign Ownership of Land Register 2007/08, to be released today, is predicted to show New Zealand overtaking Japanese investment on the Coast and a strong Russian presence in prestige apartments.

While the Gold Coast still enjoyed a significant slice of the \$1.76 billion spent in the Sunshine State, it was not enough to match Brisbane's sudden 269 per cent increase from \$170 million last year.

Statewide, UK investment almost doubled to about \$466.4 million and remained at the top in a tradition that has continued since 2002-03, when Malaysia was overtaken.

New Zealand followed a distant second with \$156.2 million in land purchases, a slight increase on last financial year. Japanese investment dried up and was overtaken by the US, Korea (making its debut), Canada and the Cayman Islands tax haven, which rounded out the top six.

However, the Japanese continue to retain a large percentage of foreign-owned land bought during the heyday of that nation's Aussie investment between 1999 and 2002, when it topped the list.

In the Gold Coast local government area, the total land owned by overseas investors is now 5557ha, made up of 5940 parcels.

The Sunshine Coast enjoyed \$100.8 million in acquisitions, bringing that region's total to 3383ha. Investment in Cairns hit \$56 million and 2034ha (made up of 1093 parcels).

Real Estate Institute of Queensland chairman Peter McGrath said he would be surprised if New Zealand did not top the Gold Coast list this year, mainly due to residential investment, strong migration and mum and dad buyers.

Mr McGrath said the Russians had also been making a mark in high-end residentials, such as the Q1, and were said to be buying up apartments in the Hilton in Surfers.

He said the UK would remain a strong investor because of slowing European economies, but it could 'go either way'.

Mr McGrath said the local \$41 million increase came largely on the back of last year's booming house prices.

"The healthy growth (in total local investment) reflects rising prices of Gold Coast real estate, right across the board, not just at the top end," he said.

"Most of that increase occurred in the first half of last financial year."

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