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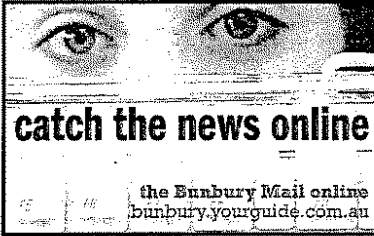
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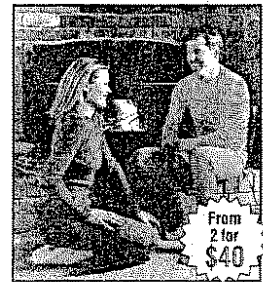
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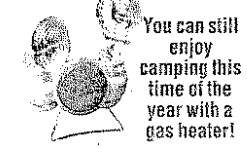
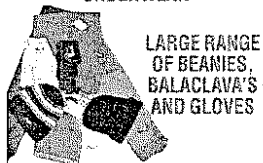


It's a goal!

More than 150 pint-sized soccer enthusiasts attended a three-day clinic at Bunbury's Forrest Park last week. Hosted by Perth Glory's development program Glory Zone, the event culminated in several 'World Cup' grand finals on Thursday where the players represented teams from all over the world. Pictured is South Bunbury Primary School's Louis Asser, celebrating after a great goal for his team. Picture: Yasmin Pearce



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On the job

City unemployment continues to fall

By YASMIN PEARCE

UNEMPLOYMENT has dropped in Bunbury for the fourth quarter in a row, boosted by strong economic growth in surrounding regions.

Federal Government figures show the city's unemployment rate stood at 5.7 per cent for the quarter to March.

This was a drop from 6.3 per cent in the December 2004 quarter and 7 per cent for the March 2004 quarter.

The city's jobless rate is higher than the State average of 4.8 per cent, the Perth figure of 4.9 per cent and Busselton, where unemployment has dropped to 4.3 per cent.

But Bunbury is lower than Collie's rate of 7.6 per cent (down from 11 per cent in the March 2004 quarter).

The city, which has a labour force of about 16,000 people, also appears to offer better job prospects than the City of Mandurah, where unemployment stands at 8.3 per cent from a workforce of about 21,000.

In surrounding shires, Eaton's rate was 5.4 per cent while the rest of the Dardanup shire had an unemployment figure of 2.4 per cent.

Dalyellup, with a labour force of about 1,640 people, had an unemployment rate of 4.9 per cent, higher than the rest of the Capel shire at 3.7 per cent.

To the north, Australind, with a labour force of more than 5,700 people, recorded only 2.8 per cent unemployment.

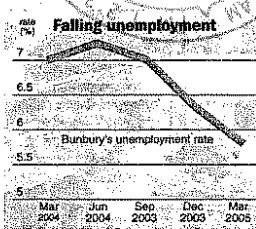
Workpac Bunbury branch manager Jamie Pirie said local unemployment was bound to keep falling, with continued jobs in the mining sector a major factor.

He said local businesses and industries were now paying more competitive rates, such as up to \$43/hr for boilermakers, to try to reduce people doing fly-in, fly-out work.

"It certainly is a workers' market at the moment and a lot of people can pick and choose their rates and rosters," he said.

Bunbury Chamber of Commerce and Industries chief executive Allan Birrell was cautiously optimistic about the figures.

He said a drop in unemployment could be due to seasonal variations, but the drop from the same time last year suggested it was part of a

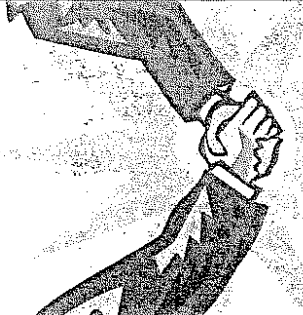


Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

longer-term pattern.

Bunbury MLA John Castrilli said there was always room for improvement. But because the Greater Bunbury Region was seen to be doing well, it tended to attract people moving from other towns to look for work which influenced the statistics, he said.

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JULY 14-20, 2005

Boom hurts first home buyers



REAL ESTATE
MICHAEL BENNETT

THE non-stop flow of positive news regarding the flourishing state of the Bunbury real estate and housing market was bound to turn sour at some stage.

In any housing market it has been well documented that following a boom there comes the inevitable lull.

And while Bunbury has not yet reached that stage of the cycle, cracks are starting to appear.

Coupled with the unrealistic demand for new housing it appears that within a few months Bunbury has turned from the promised land of housing into a city that is fast becoming out of reach to the average home buyer.

While homes are still selling, and selling well, the negative spin on Bunbury's housing tale has crept gradually to the forefront.

Recent reports on the construction crisis taking hold in Bunbury has forced questions regarding what impact this will have on the cost of established housing.

Many believe, and rightly so, that it will push prices up even further making both building a new home and buying established housing beyond the capabilities of many local and young home buyers.

Already the established housing is reaching unreasonable levels as properties are being sold often before they come on the general market.

Analysts predict that with the real surge in population still three to four years away established housing prices will not drop any time soon.

Bunbury REIWA president John Saunders said that all avenues of the market were stretched and demand far outstripped supply.

"We are seeing a shortage of



Bunbury REIWA president John Saunders is realistic about the effects increased housing costs will have on the region.

established homes, rental properties and new homes, it is the demand that has created this market," Mr Saunders said.

"There is no doubt that the construction delays will increase the demand for established housing and this will result in higher prices.

"The problem will not be for those who already own real estate but for first home buyers who cannot afford Bunbury prices.

"First home buyers will need to buy cheaper homes and land in smaller towns around Bunbury, places like Capel, Boyanup and Donnybrook," Mr Saunders said.

Good news comes in the form of land prices which has Bunbury placed cheaper than locations such as Busselton.

Busselton offers blocks for around \$115,000 while Bunbury still has blocks around \$95,000.

The catch comes when it is time to build the home.

Escalating construction costs and waiting lists make this exercise almost intolerable.

Mr Saunders predicts there will be no change in the foreseeable future.

Professionals Southern Districts sales executive Stan Clifton agrees that market prices have been pushed up by demands but has some advice for first home buyers.

"Because of the known delays in construction it has brought about additional pressure on resales and has increased the value of properties," Mr Clifton said.

"My advice to first home buyers is to watch the market carefully, reasonably priced homes can still be obtained, be aware of those homes when they come on the market and get in before investors."

REIWA campaigns for stamp duty reduction

THE recently announced State Government tax review will be attacked head on by REIWA in an attempt to reduce land tax and stamp duty on property purchases.

This is good news for home buyers but even if the campaign is successful any reduction will not take effect until July 2006.

REIWA president Greg Rossen said Western Australia's favourable economic position had provided the Government with a "once in a

generation" opportunity to deliver real tax reform.

"If we miss this opportunity we face a huge tax problem once the economic cycle turns and future governments will not have the easy option of increasing property taxes to fund budget problems," Mr Rossen said.

"There is no room for future increases in rates of property taxes like stamp duty and the message we get from the marketplace is that home buyers will not tolerate higher rates of

stamp duty," he said.

Each year 60,000 West Australians purchase a home and there are 100,000 individuals and organisations that pay land tax.

Mr Rossen confirmed that REIWA's network of 800 member real estate offices and 8000 staff would be encouraged to speak to clients about their expectations of tax reform.

Mr Rossen said REIWA looked forward to the tax review and the opportunity to represent the real estate sector of WA.

This message from REIWA comes at the same time as more positive signs for home owners as the Reserve Bank of Australia announced that interest rates would not rise for the fourth month in a row.

Economic analysts have gone as far as to predict that they will remain unchanged for the rest of the year.

The steady official interest rates will keep variable home lending rates unchanged at between 6.8 and 7.3 per cent.



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THURSDAY, JULY 7, 2005

Russell, mid-30s, heads to the kitchen for a new career



Russell Mullings is part of the apprenticeship boom in Busselton and Augusta-Margaret River. Picture: Janine Carter

RUSSELL Mullings started a chef's apprenticeship at Stilts in March, following a decision to change career in his mid-30s.

The former drug rehabilitation councillor had several violent run-ins in Perth, prompting him to leave that job. Then, he had to endure two years of unemployment.

He said he found work within two days of arriving in Busselton.

Having worked in kitchens in past jobs, Mr Mullings was eager to earn his chef qualification while still earning a living to support his young family.

"Stilts has shown me nothing but respect and support," he said.

Stilts manager Jared Cornelius said there was definite advantages to taking on a mature-aged apprentice.

"The difference between a younger and older person is the enthusiasm because it is something they want to do. Their drive and attitude shows they are committed," he said.

Region's job bonanza

By JANINE CARTER

Building, hospitality apprenticeships aplenty

APPRENTICESHIPS are booming in Busselton and Augusta-Margaret River and with employers signing up young people to learn a trade in greater numbers than ever before.

The news comes on the back of the latest Small Area Labour Market figures that show both shires have recorded a drop in unemployment.

The jobless rate has dropped from 4.6 per cent in both shires to

4.2 in Augusta-Margaret River and 4.3 per cent in Busselton — both lower than the Statewide and metropolitan Perth figures and the Bunbury figure of 5.7 per cent.

Daniel Leblanc, from WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry Employ Fast, said the New Apprentice Centre had signed up more local businesses in the past three months than previous comparative periods.

"We have taken on close to a dozen in three months, which is not common because the intake is normally in January and February," Mr Leblanc said.

"Taking apprentices mid-year is quite reassuring that the business community is seeing growth."

Despite the strong uptake, he said there were still some trades such as bricklaying, carpentry and joinery

that were not popular due to myths that they did not pay as much or were "uncool" to young people.

The trend for mature apprentices is also taking off as older people look for a change.

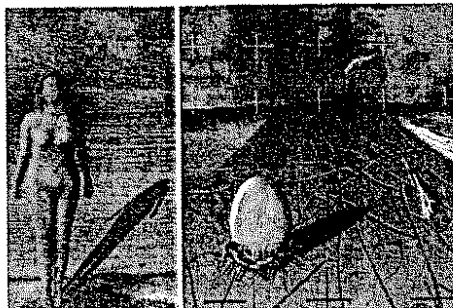
Job Find Busselton manager Lynette Sleight said there was still a shortage of qualified people in the trades and in hospitality.

"Unemployment has dropped so

there are a lot more people in work but the ones who aren't are not suitably qualified to take up qualified positions," she said.

It was the unskilled or labouring market that had more potential workers than jobs.

Ms Sleight said the seasonal nature of work in the area would affect job figures, as would the number of people who leave the area during winter.



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