

# Rental properties become scarce



Roslie Browne,  
LJ Hooker Maitland



Jenny Howell, Century 21  
Ransom Real Estate

**N**SW faces a rental crisis with vacancy rates deteriorating for the second consecutive month.

The overall rental vacancy rate in Sydney fell to 1.1 per cent for March 2010. In Newcastle the rental vacancy rate fell 0.4 per cent to 1.5 per cent and 0.6 per cent to 1.1 per cent in Wollongong.

Overall across the Hunter region, the percentage of rental vacancies decreased 0.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent.

Those figures are reflected on the ground in the Maitland area with real estate property managers reporting fewer rental vacancies.

Managers have also reported a rise in rents during the past six to 12 months.

"Rents have risen in the last six months unbelievably across the board," Tony Cant Real Estate property manager Jessica Egan said.

She said an average three bedroom home cost around \$250 to \$290 a week to rent six or so months ago and that had risen to about \$290 to \$330.

Jenny Howell from Century 21 Ransom Real Estate agreed and said rents "had risen a fair bit in the last 12 months – at least 10 per cent".

There are also fewer properties available and more people wanting to rent.

Ms Egan said Tony Cant usually had a maximum average of about 10 properties for rent each week and more people vying for those properties.

"There used to be around 10 to 15 people applying to rent any one property but in the last six months that has risen and there could be anywhere up to 30," she said.

Janelle Osborne from Leah Jay Property Management agreed and said there had been a noticeable decline during

the past six months in the number of rental properties available.

She said Leah Jay was averaging four to five properties a week compared to this time in 2009 when the average was about 13.

"Certainly we are finding at the moment and particularly in the last month, there are less (properties to rent) because there are less people giving notice to vacate," Ms Osborne said.

Many factors have combined to create the shortage of rental properties.

Maitland is the fastest growing regional city in the state.

With this comes a growth in the transient population as well as the stable population.

For example the mines around Singleton are being expanded bringing more people to the area and the F3 link is bringing workers involved with its

construction who need to be housed but who are not permanent residents.

So when demand outstrips supply, and there are many good tenants vying for the same property, real estate property managers are faced with the sometimes daunting task of selecting one tenant.

Property managers said bidding for rental properties as reported in the Sydney market was not common around Maitland, although some said occasionally

prospective tenants offered to pay more than the asking price per week or six months rent in advance in an effort to secure the property.

But this was often discounted because it was the quality of the tenant that mattered in the long run.

■ See story on page 14 on how to improve your rental prospects.



Jessica Egan,  
Tony Cant Real Estate



Janelle Osborne, Leah Jay  
Property Management