



Panel discussion proves popular

GOOD agents don't mind sharing information. It's a great sign of confidence in what they do. That was evident last Thursday night in Noosa for the second Real Estate Panel.

Moderator David Garwood hosted a very lively discussion between panel members Grant Smith of Century 21 Grant Smith Property, Vicki Stewart of Stewart Tandy & Associates, Dan Sowden of Ray White Maroochydore, Lou Cooper of RE/MAX Property Specialists, Jackie Crane of Amber Werchon Property and Sunshine Coast Newspapers property editor Erle Levey.

"It is very innovative," Mr Garwood said. "And the numbers here tonight reinforce that. The discussion has been a very lively. Bouncy."

It was obvious from the outset that the property market has changed in past six months. Yet panelists also recognised that the real estate industry has changed more in the past eight to 10 years than it did in the past century.

"There is no one way to do it all," Mr Garwood said. "We have seen that from the last time we had a panel discussion.

"In this industry people with an open mind will always learn something."

Last week's panel discussions centred on auctions and other methods of marketing properties, the use of technology and the impact of social networking. Grant Smith, who at 23 is principal of Century 21 Grant Smith Property, is in the top 2% of Century 21 and attributes his company's success to the adoption of IT and modern market technology. Based in Buderim, he said the market was very consistent, with \$520,000 the average sale price.

"We have experienced consistent sales," he said. "The average is about 92 days on the market. It's a traditional market place. Established. To crack into it needed innovation."

Vicki Stewart, who has 22 years of experience in the industry and is co-principal of Mooloolaba-based agency Stewart Tandy & Associates, said that even in a year where the world economy had taken a battering they had seen sales increase on last year.

"We will continue to do what we do," she said. "We are a boutique agency that cares for our clients."

"My role is a facilitator. The more time you spend with the vendor the better."

"It doesn't matter what the market is like. It's how we do business. The Sunshine Coast is a very desirable location."

As co-director of Ray White Maroochydore, one of the Top 5 offices in Ray White Queensland, Dan Sowden admitted his office was auction orientated. He said the No.1 factor in sales was the number of days a property was on the market.

"The difference between an auction and private treaty is the agent and time ... 60 days or 30 days."

Yet he agreed if an agent has the ability to run auctions they could run the same model inside private treaty.

"You should end up with the same result."

RE/MAX Property Specialist's Lou Cooper has embraced modern methods of social networking as part of her sales program and to increase her profile in the Noosa Heads-Noosa-ville market.

"Noosa taken a hit at the top end of the market," Ms Cooper said. "Some of those properties were over-priced. They have either taken a drop in price and moved on or taken them off the market."

"The best advice I can give to agents is to be honest about the market ... not tell them what they think they would like to hear."

Sales success comes from organisation and the ability to structure your business, according to Amber Werchon Property's Jackie Crane.

Ms Crane, who has seven years experience selling mainly in the Buderim-Alexandra Headland area, success due to organization to be ready, how to structure your business

"Buderim is my focus ... it has been going well in the past six months. The Sydney and Melbourne markets have taken off so there is a lot of positivity."

"The first six months took a hit when those



The Real Estate Panel, L to R, Erle Levey, Jackie Crane, Lou Cooper, Dan Sowden, Vicki Stewart, Grant Smith and David Garwood



Christine Turner of Minyama, Amber Werchon of Amber Werchon Property and Roslyn Steinhaus of Caloundra City Realty



Vicki Stewart and Angela Wadham of Stewart Tandy & Associates



Amber Cooper and Lou Cooper of RE/MAX Property Specialists with Adam Leach of Elders Palmwoods



Karen Johnston and Peter Flint of Elders Nambour



Terri Frawley and John Bellgrove of Ken Guy Buderim

markets were low but we have seen it turn around. My past four sales have all been to southern buyers."

A transition is taking place in the market, the agents agreed, with buyers not seeing the changes taking place.

"We were aware of the importance of our time," Grant Smith said, "who we should be doing business with."

He said the sale of a 100-acre property recently for \$2.5m was the asking price. Lou Cooper said it was an agent's role to get the seller understand what the market was doing ... what they can get for a property and exchange it to where they are buying into. Yet Jackie Crane

said it was always a perception as to whether it was a buyer's or seller's market.

"Buyers think it's still a buyer's market but it's turning," she said. "It's a fair, stable market."

And, yes, there were multiple offers being submitted for properties. As for the use of IT and social networking, David Garwood suggested agents either loved it or hated it. Lou Cooper said that as a baby boomer she had always embraced technology.

"We need some good systems in place and part of that is knowledge. Knowledge is doubling. We have to stay with it or we will become dinosaurs. It is time-consuming but they are the

type of people you will be selling to".

However, Dan Sowden and Vicki Stewart warned that agents must be aware of the privacy issues which come with social networking.

"You must realise you can undo any sense of privacy you may have," Mr Sowden said.

While Vicki Stewart said that agents led a very public life and should treasure their privacy. Yet Grant Smith regarded Facebook as the online barbecue.

"It's what people are saying. Look outside the square at recruitment opportunities, listing opportunities, talk about your successes."

"You are targeting people on a social level. It's not spam but what's happening."