

Buying property is fine in '09

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DON'T worry, be optimistic and get ready to buy in early 2009 is the advice from a real estate expert.

Ray White Surfers Paradise Group chief executive officer Andrew Bell yesterday dubbed 2009 'The Year of Optimism' during the presentation of his annual Gold Coast property report and forecast.

Mr Bell said there were positive signs in all five key drivers of the market -- the economy, interest rates, population growth, employment and housing affordability.

"The fundamentals are there and the property market 'planets' are in alignment," he said.

The 'planets' include an unusual combination of population growth, lower housing prices and historic low interest rates.

He said government incentives also created an opportunity during the first half of the year for buyers.

"These times don't come along very often," he said.

"The buyers have the market in their favour for once and the best advice is for buyers to look at the opportunities, figure out what they want and jump at it."

After an economic downturn and subdued growth in the property and construction industry last year, Mr Bell said consumer confidence was slowly growing again.

"I believe the worst of the storm for the real estate industry is over," he said.

"We have a very balanced and healthy market at the moment."

Yesterday's auction, which raised \$31 million for 43 properties, proved the Gold Coast was still the land of opportunity.

The auction is regarded as the early 'litmus test' for the market and yesterday's results were expected to be scrutinised by financial experts in southern states.

Mr Bell said the results showed the Gold Coast market at a turning point.

"I'm proud of the Gold Coast," he said. "People argue it's one of the toughest markets and yet we're performing at this level."

Mr Bell warned rising market confidence and population were expected to clash with a housing shortfall towards the middle of the year to force prices up.