

# Warning for migrants to Northland

by Amanda Cameron

Maori thinking of returning home to Northland should wait until they can afford decent housing, says Te Tai Tokerau MP Dover Samuels.

Samuels, the Associate Minister of Housing, said Northland-born Maori were returning home to traditional land in increasing numbers, mainly due to the lifestyle.

But he warned it would be better for people who were contemplating returning home to Northland to think twice about it, "especially if they believe the only way they can come home is to be dependent on the state".

Samuels says that by June, the Housing New Zealand Corporation had assessed 1527 families living in substandard housing in Northland.

However, the full extent of substandard housing in the region was unknown.

Samuels, who holds the specific portfolio for Maori housing, said that around 80% of people living in substandard housing in Northland and the East Coast Bays were Maori.

"The main reason is reverse migration," he says.

Maori returning home were mostly doing so because of the lifestyle, he says.

"But the desire to return home must be considered alongside the responsibilities,"

Samuels says.

"My advice is to wait until you have some resources, some plans in place to pay a deposit on your house, pay the repayments, make sure there are schools for your children and work opportunities available."

Samuels says the Ministry of Housing would be taking a multi-pronged approach toward combating the problem of substandard housing.

"If we built 1000 houses tomorrow that still wouldn't solve all the problems," he says.

Approaches include working with Transit New Zealand to purchase houses that need to be relocated because of roading developments, working with the Ministry of Economic Development to provide employment opportunities, and partnering with local iwi to train rural youth as carpenters and builders.

The Government provided a corporation-run rural housing programme that helped 898 New Zealand families out of substandard housing since it began three years ago, Samuels says.

Kaye Taylor, chief executive officer of Kia Ora Ngapuhi Housing, which helps administer a corporation low-deposit rural lending scheme, says the housing programme has been very effective.

"We've seen some atrocious housing situations," Taylor says.

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Dover Samuels



TALES FOR TWO: Tessa Broadbent with her best friend Salouan.

PHOTO: KATE PALMER

# Conversation has gone to the cats

by Adam Stevenson

Three quarters of pet owners talk to their pets as they do to a friend, while 23% have shared a secret. One in ten have offered romantic advice to their pets.

These facts emerged in a recent survey by Advance Food Company that shows New Zealanders are very affectionate towards their pets.

More than 1000 cat and dog owners were asked about their relationships with their pets.

Angela Ross, of the Thames Veterinary Centre, admits to preferring her dog Angus' company to humans.

"My partner always tells me I

don't get enough human contact. I don't listen to him though."

That plus the fact she buys Angus the latest pet toy every week, puts Ross at about average on New Zealand's pet-loving scale.

Advance marketing manager Janine Chamley says the relationships New Zealanders have with pets are similar to either a child or a friend and this is hugely significant.

At Twentymans Funeral Services in Thames, for example, two American rag-doll cats are a comforter for grieving relatives and are now considered part of the company.

Tommi, the older of the two,

even sits in at funeral services.

"Rag-doll cats are genetically more docile and affectionate than other cats," says managing director of Twentymans Adrian Catran.

"People find that sitting and cuddling the cats takes their pain away," Catran says.

Chamley says Advance carried out the pet survey to truly understand the unique relationships New Zealanders have with their pets.

And if you're worried about the time you got your cat drunk and then ate its cat food — don't.

You are among the 8% who have fed their pet alcohol and the 4% who have eaten pet food.

# Bay of Islands builder wins green award

by Amanda Cameron

A planned subdivision on a historic piece of land in the Bay of Islands has become the first coastal development in the country to receive an Environmental Tick.

The inaugural award from the Environmental Defence Society, a legal action environmental advocacy group, recognises coastal developers who do more than the minimum required under the Resource Management Act.

Society chairperson Gary Taylor said Bluewater Holdings won the award last month for applying best practice principles in its development of the historic Walter C Mountain Landing property on the Terakihi Peninsula.

"It is a stunning example of how the coast can be developed and is a model for others to follow," Taylor says.

Helen Pick from the voluntary environmental group Coastal Watchdog says the land holds archeological remains of value to Maori and other New Zealanders.

"It is one of the most precious historic landscapes in New Zealand and any disturbance should be considered very very carefully," Pick says.

She says the Coastal Watchdog is unable to comment about the award at this stage for legal reasons.

Taylor says the award is not a "green wash" exercise for developers.

It is designed to act in tandem with litigation to encourage responsible development of the New Zealand coastline.

"We've spent 30 years litigating and trying to oppose coastal subdivisions," he says.

"Coastal development happens whether we like it or not and we want the good stuff not

the bad stuff.

"But that's our opinion and not everyone agrees with us."

Bluewater Holdings, owned by Kiwi expat Peter Cooper, bought the 340-hectare farm from the Mountain family in 1999.

In a press release, Bluewater spokesman Peter Jones says the company had fenced off the bush and wetlands to prevent stock damage, and planted more than 250,000 native plants.

It has applied for resource consent to subdivide the property into 40 lots.

The titles to these will hold a binding covenant to prevent further subdivision.

Other plans include restoring the wetlands, creating public reserves, and preserving public access to the peninsula and its beaches through a conservation covenant.

"This is a unique and special place which includes 5km of

coastline, five white sand beaches, three streams and three wetland areas," Jones says.

"Our philosophy is that as custodians of the property we have a responsibility to the protection and improvement of the land.

"It would have been a lot quicker and easier to do a standard subdivision," he says.

Instead, Bluewater spent a lot of time and effort consulting with local iwi and hapu, the local community, and environmental and interest groups.

"We want to make sure that when future generations look back on our work here they feel that we did the right thing."

Mountain Landing Development was evaluated against a rigorous set of criteria developed for the Green Tick certification scheme.

The scheme became the Environmental Tick last month after a complaint that the name

breached trademark copyright.

The Bluewater development was the first property evaluated by the environmental society under the new certification scheme.

The second development to be evaluated, a planned resort and overall development at Cape Kidnappers in Hawkes Bay, has also earned an Environmental Tick.

Cape Kidnappers Station Limited received the award at the New Zealand Coastal Conference in Auckland last month.

The society expects its Environmental Tick will become sought after by developers.

There is no limit on the number of ticks that can be awarded, but Taylor thinks there will only be a handful each year.

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