

Builders' reponse best yet in both number & quality

THE VITALITY of the local housing industry has been demonstrated by the 14th annual Homes of the Year Competition. At a time when builders could be excused for pulling back they have produced their best effort ever, both in quality and number.

The end of WA's domestic construction boom has been foreshadowed by a predicted 11 per cent drop in home approvals for the current financial year.

Firms have already been affected by cuts in the First Home Owners Scheme and rising interest rates, and there has been a decline in investor interest with proposed changes to capital gains and negative gearing.

But the good news for the industry is that there is no tax haven like the family home. It is exempt from the assets test and safe from a capital gains tax... a bigger home can be a worthwhile investment.

Builders with vision have understandably put their best foot forward for the 1985 contest, and entered a record number of homes. The 182 are significantly up on the 135 last year.

On top of this the Housing Industry Ball was booked out a month in advance, something that has never happened before.

The contest continues to acknowledge and promote the best in Perth's housing, helping to improve the quality of life in better home environments. Extra leisure time increases the challenge.

Aspirations

The contest also acknowledges the aspirations of many people, particularly those looking to a second or third home to meet growing family needs... and their own progress up the ladder of success.

This year the judges have not selected any joint winners but their 22 awards are the most for many years. They cover all price categories and all classes of homes, from the cosy cottage to the mighty mansion.

There had to be three judging panels because of the sheer number of entries and the time available. There was no restriction on entries but builders only nominated their best designs.

The annual awards have long been regarded as the "Oscars" of the local housing industry.

Prices have been edging up all year and they are expected to continue for some time. Builders are still working on tight margins and including "give-aways" and cash bonuses in order to induce sales.

With the shift in emphasis up-market the judges have come up with an appropriate overall winner in the Carnegie. It fits into Display Category (\$50,001 to \$60,000) which is now attracting second and third-time buyers.

The Golden Key is not awarded every year. It goes to the best overall design in all categories and is selected at a combined meeting of judges.

The low-energy home of the future was taken another step forward with the Design for Climate award to Bristle Ltd for an imaginative design in Kardinya.