

Record year and more to come, says Garbutt business

Kitchen kings

MARTIN RASINI



TOWNSVILLE cabinetry business Moduline has defied softness in the construction industry to achieve record sales of 1000 kitchens this year.

Customer service officer Lawrie Presto took measurements for the 1000th kitchen last week, a result well ahead of last year when Moduline built and sold about 750 kitchens.

The Garbutt-based family business was set up by patriarch Gus Meroli 55 years ago and also has operations in Cairns and Ingham. It credits competitive pricing, commitment to customer service and hard work for its success.

"While pricing is clearly important and margins have been trimmed - we have found ourselves competing against five or even seven quotes compared to two or three in previous years - people also want good old-fashioned service," general manager Stephen Tetley said.

"Customers need to be able to trust a business to do what it says it will do and we work hard to ensure we warrant their trust.

"We offer a full design service and we like to think that we do a good job with project coordination, provision of plumbing and electrical services, tiling and the like."

Mr Tetley said the Moduline kitchens ranged in price from \$5000 to \$15,000. The bulk of customer interest was for products in the \$8000-\$9000 range.

About two-thirds of sales had been kitchens for new homes with the remainder servicing the renovation market.

Mr Tetley said customers this year had benefited from the emergence of a range of alternative products during the past 18 months.

"Previously the choice was between melamine and the dearer



BIG YEAR . . . Lawrie Presto at the Moduline showroom

Photo: MEGAN TAYLOR

two-pack cupboards and shelving, but there is now high-gloss board, a product in-between," he said.

"Customers also have a choice of tops - stone, reconstituted stone, and acrylic, with which joins can be hidden, as well as laminates.

"While the bread-and-butter kitchen remains melamine with laminate top, high-gloss board

and acrylic benches are growing in popularity and the tough market over the past two years has seen the price of stone benchtops fall."

Mr Tetley said Moduline was confident the Townsville and North Queensland home-building and renovations industry was set to improve.

"Townsville now has a shortage of housing and we feel very

positive about the future," he said. "We have invested substantial sums in new machinery and equipment to position ourselves for the future and we have sought to retain staff and offer a high level of service.

"Moduline Townsville operates south to Bowen and west to Mount Isa and our aim is to be the North Queensland cabinet-maker of choice."

CopperString shapes up as a money-spinner

THE \$1.5 billion CopperString transmission line project will generate 5200 jobs and boost national income by \$6.5 billion over the next 20 years, according to an economic impact study.

The study has been compiled as part of the project's environment impact statement, which has been released for public comment.

The CopperString project is a proposal by development company CuString Pty Ltd and construction company Leighton Contractors Pty Ltd to construct an electricity transmission line that will connect the Mount Isa region and the northwest Queensland electricity supply network to the national transmission network.

The project involves construction of about 720km of high-voltage transmission line between a preferred connection site of Woodstock near Townsville and Cloncurry in northwest Queensland plus an additional 400km of tangential lines to connect existing and under-development mines in northwest Queensland.

Its estimated capital cost is \$1.5 billion with around \$300 million to be spent on imported

TONY RAGGATT



components. Expenditure is expected to start in 2011 and peak in 2013.

According to a 40-page economic impact study, the project will provide significant economic benefits to the Queensland and Australian economies by providing northwest Queensland with a substantial piece of infrastructure providing lower-cost electricity to underpin growth in the mining and minerals processing sectors.

It says potential negative economic consequences will be largely borne by landholders directly affected by the transmission line and are related to stock control and loss of grasslands.

The report says the project involves construction spending of \$1.5 billion, supply of 400 to 500 megawatts of electricity transfer capacity, savings on the cost of electricity of an estimated \$380 million a year and

increased government revenues of around \$2.8 billion.

Overall, it says real income is increased nationally by \$6.5 billion compared with a reference case where an additional large-scale electricity supply option did not proceed.

Also, it is forecast there will be increased employment in Queensland of around 5200 jobs over the period 2011 to 2030 or around 250 additional full-time equivalent jobs per year.

The report says these impacts do not include the potential benefits of the project enabling the construction of new renewable energy projects in the region.

Northwest Queensland electricity users are currently supplied by a mix of on-grid and off-grid electricity with on-grid demand of around 300 megawatts supplied by the gas-fired Mica Creek power station and a second gas-fired plant owned by mining company Xstrata.

A number of mines are supplied with around 90 megawatts of electricity on-site by either diesel or gas-fired generation.

Virgin-Air NZ unite to win over market

VIRGIN Blue Holdings Ltd received an early Christmas present after a proposed alliance with Air New Zealand Ltd on trans-Tasman routes was approved by the New Zealand transport minister.

The decision by Minister of Transport Steven Joyce lets the two carriers code-share on Australia-NZ services, co-ordinate schedules and pricing as well as offer reciprocal frequent flyer benefits including lounge access.

The three-year authorisation was the final hurdle to the partnership becoming a reality, after the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission gave the tie-up the thumbs up last week.

Virgin Blue now has two "game-changing" global partnerships chief executive John Borghetti is seeking to build into a viable international network and challenge Qantas Airways' dominance.

FOR SALE

● Ray White Commercial Townsville has listed a development site at 2 Miles Avenue, Kelso. The 1041sq m site is zoned traditional residential and is located in a commercial precinct. The sale price has been reduced to \$215,000.

● Graeme Russell of Ray White Commercial in Townsville has listed 198 Nathan Street - a smart new commercial project located just down the road from the new Myer Centre under construction in Aitkenvale. The price is \$450sq m per annum (net) + GST

● A generic warehouse facility is available in Punari Street, Currajong. The steel framed, concrete panel building features a total of 1000sq m of clear span warehouse which boasts 3-phase power, natural light throughout and ventilation. Within the warehouse is approximately 62sq m of office, currently split into two offices and a reception area. For more information contact Cameron Weller from Colliers International Townsville.

FOR SALE

● 12 Forge Court Bohle settled this week. The property comprised a 1.54 hectare site zoned core industry. Improvements include various office and warehouse buildings producing \$178,000 per annum. Sale price was \$2.05m. Graham Russell, Ray White Commercial Townsville.

