



Ron Blyth has been one of Maryborough's biggest developers in the past 22 years yet few had heard his name until recently.

Photo: LEANNE SAUER 08m1228f

**'I like to see things happen. I said to the council someone's got to start here doing something. I decided to start because no one else was going to do it'**

Ron Blyth is not sure what he is going to build on a multi-million-dollar block of land in the centre of Maryborough but he intends it to be his crowning achievement.

He is determined the development will transform the corner of Kent and March streets into a remarkable riverside dwelling and tourist drawcard.

The friendly NSW farmer can be found in overalls energetically darting around his development sites in Maryborough a couple of days a week.

He has been one of Maryborough's biggest developers in the last 22 years yet few had heard his name until he emerged as the long-awaited trigger for the revitalisation of the inner city.

Luxury riverside apartments and a bigger marina have been touted as integral to the urban renewal of the city.

A couple of years ago, 20 years after he started developing land around Maryborough with Tinana Greens, Ron became tired of everyone tinkering around the edges of the Mary River city reach.

Plans to build four luxury apartments on a block in the Wharf Street precinct had stalled, as had

# Someone had to start – so Ron did

plans for other prime blocks.

"I like to see things happen. I said to the council someone's got to start here doing something. I decided to start because no one else was going to do it."

He hadn't intended to build apartment blocks. After Tinana Greens he developed Comet Place ("that's doing well"), a gated unit complex in Ellena Street and the prestige Henderson Park estate, named for his mother's maiden name.

"After I sold Tinana Greens I kept buying more property." He snapped up the former Wide Bay Club in Sussex Street, the Ken Meyer property in Wharf Street and the former Shepherds site in Boys Avenue. That was on the EM

Register: The bill for cleaning it up has run to more than \$400,000.

Then with a "someone's got to start" bee in his bonnet he bought the site on the Wharf and March streets corner block and revamped the design into a complex of six luxury units ranging from \$799,000 to more than \$1 million. The prime penthouse will become his pied-a-terre when he is in Maryborough.

He's been working on the project for two-and-a-half years.

"I thought it would be easier than it is. It takes time. There's these council requirements."

He pondered for a couple of seconds before adding firmly: "But if it was easy you would end up with a lot of rubbish. You've got to get it right and the council has a

responsibility to the ratepayer."

Ron then cast his eye on the big block across the road, considered a pivotal site for prestige riverside units. The dilapidated old factory was used as a furniture warehouse. He bought that and the adjoining site, formerly occupied by Kingstons Rural and also earmarked for prestige apartment development.

The package cost about \$5 million. In three years Ron expects designs being drawn up in Brisbane to materialise into "something special" on the 14,000 square metres. The development will have open public space unfolding to the river, linking into the Bridge to the Brolga riverside trail.

A couple of hundred metres

upstream, Ron Blyth is also master of the marina. He has bought the existing land and pontoons jutting into the Mary behind Hyne's old timber yard and is redesigning it to hold 80 to 100 vessels. The berths will be roomy for safety and raised gangways "a bit like little Sydney Harbour bridges" will prevent debris and weed build-up.

Back over in Tinana, Henderson Park continues to grow and a new estate in Teddington Road, Cheyne Gardens, has been created.

"I've tried to spend all I make here," Ron says. "What I make in Maryborough I put back into Maryborough with tradesmen and suppliers. I think that's a responsibility. If you do well out of a community you make it good for as many as you can."

He describes Maryborough as a "very solid market". He would rather invest in the river city than its sister seaside city of Hervey Bay.

"I've never reduced a price here. Maryborough has nice people and sense of community."

He is more than happy with the interest shown in the first riverside apartments on the verge of going up in Wharf Street.

"Once it's half up I'll be very surprised if I don't have a few people wanting to come and live with me."

From there he will watch the emergence of the dream building he says will be his last big project. He's close to 60. He thinks it's time to relax and have a bit of fun.

He hesitates, saying if you have a life you should live it to the full 'till it's over.

"You think you're going to retire and have fun but it's not as good as you think. You need to have something to look forward to."

In three years, one suspects, Ron Blyth will have another dream.



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