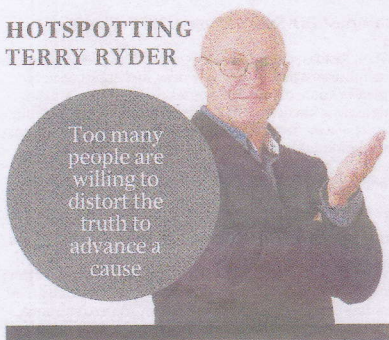


**HOTSPOTTING  
TERRY RYDER**



Too many people are willing to distort the truth to advance a cause

**Farmers throw crisis to the wind**

READING about real estate lately has put me in mind of the 1973 movie *The Day of the Jackal* and a great album produced two years later by British rock band Supertramp.

A line from the movie provided the title to the album: *What? What Crisis?*

I'm asking that every day. So should we all. If we are to believe the reports, we are beset by crises.

We have a housing affordability crisis. We have a housing shortage crisis. There's a mortgage debt crisis. Even the regional centres with pumping economies and strong property markets have their own calamities. They have an "Oh my god rents are soaring" crisis.

Amid the panic, the meaning of the word has changed. The Macquarie dictionary defines it as "a decisive or vitally important stage" or "a turning point". But people have given the word a meaning that's akin to catastrophe.

That's why we need to ask the "Crisis? What crisis?" question.

The only one I can see is an ethical crisis. Too many people are willing to distort the truth to advance a cause.

Sadly, those who think they can further their aims by concocting a crisis end up shooting themselves in the foot.

The lobbyists who have saturated media with negative views about the state of their industry have achieved one thing only: they have scared away consumers.

Those who think they can help first-home buyers by telling everyone the dream is dead have achieved the same negative outcome. They keep telling us home ownership is unaffordable, so why bother?

It's a big step, buying real estate. It takes a considerable leap of faith. It demands confidence.

Consumers have had the confidence drummed out of them by hordes of people crying "crisis".

They may consider a more refreshing approach, such as the one described by the Chinese proverb that suggests "a crisis is an opportunity".

In South Australia, a bunch of Yorke Peninsula farmers chose to see opportunity. Their proactive efforts have generated a \$1.3 billion project in their region, one that will bring considerable economic activity and many jobs.

They have put the small seaside town of Ardrossan on the map and created a real estate hot spot.

Thirty farmers are likely to earn an average of \$90,000 a year to host wind turbines on their land. A total of 180 turbines are planned, enough to provide one-quarter of the energy needs of South Australia, which is the national leader in wind energy.

The farmers instigated the project by talking to local politicians, then state government departments and finally to wind farm developer Suzlon.

The wind farm is one of two mega projects set to turn Ardrossan, population 1100, into a larger town. The other is a copper and gold mine by Rex Minerals, also likely to be a billion-dollar enterprise.

Traditionally the town's economy has been based on the salt works a little north of the town, the nearby BHP Billiton dolomite operation, the grain silos and good fishing resources. The town has two jetties: one for the export of grain, salt and dolomite, and the other for local anglers. It is also a popular holiday destination, with good swimming and fishing.

The Real Estate Institute of South Australia says the wind farm will have a positive effect on the local real estate market because it will create demand for housing in the region. But not before someone tries to stop it by dreaming up a turbine-generated health crisis.

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**Gateway to the good life**

Gated communities are luxurious, secure and becoming more affordable

JO STUDDERT

FANCY living in a five-star resort with all its amenities at your disposal, a golf buggy to zip about in and security guards to keep everything safe and orderly?

This is the world of the gated community, a lifestyle imported from the US in the 1980s and flourishing on Queensland's Gold Coast, but not so common elsewhere in Australia.

"It's a way of life you just can't replicate," says Ken Ellis, facilities manager and a resident at Hope Island on the Gold Coast.

"We just love it, love going everywhere in golf buggies, not having to take the car to the shops or restaurants or the marina. We know everyone and we know the security guards are there, keeping an eye on things and always willing to lend a hand when needed.

"If there's a medical emergency, they can administer primary care before the ambulance arrives. So you always feel safe. We buy for the lifestyle, the feeling of amenity, belonging and security. Leaving here would be an emotional challenge," Ellis says.

Colleen Coyne, a Gold Coast-based property analyst, explains there are three main kinds of gated communities.

"The first are premium communities with water and golf-course frontage, properties that are also 'integrated tourism resorts' under the provisions of Australia's Foreign Investment Review Board. These include Sanctuary Cove, Hope Island Resort, Royal Pines Resort, all at the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast's Hyatt Regency Resort Coolum, and Port Douglas's Mirage.

FIRB provisions allow these properties to be sold to people who do not have citizenship or permanent residency, which makes them attractive to off-shore investors, she says.

"Second are residential resorts around water or golf courses that are more residential and may offer a mix of gated and non-gated precincts: Ephraim Island, Sovereign Islands, Oyster Cove, Monterey Keys, Coomera Waters and Mirvac's Gainsborough Greens at Pimpama."

The third kind, Coyne says, are "lower-priced gated communities in markets such as Nerang, Tugun and



Pacific Pines, again, all on the Gold Coast. Sunland has Gardene at Pacific Pines, near a shopping centre and tavern, with 97 townhouses at about \$400,000 for a three-bedroom dwelling."

The purest of all gated communities in Australia is also the oldest, Sanctuary Cove, which was launched by developer Mike Gore in 1988 with a \$16 million, five-day extravaganza starring Frank Sinatra and Whitney Houston.

It forged the image of prestige living of a calibre only the rich could afford.

Its offerings still set it apart: two championship golf courses, 80 specialty shops and restaurants, a 297-berth mar-

ina, landscaped grounds with pathways for cycles, buggies and pedestrians, and the Hyatt Regency Hotel, all of whose facilities are available to the 3000 gated residents. These include a 0.4ha salt-water beach lagoon pool, a country club with fitness equipment, beauty treatment and massage rooms, five tennis courts, a 25m heated pool, a creche and kids club, cafe and card room.

But even Sanctuary Cove has begun offering cheaper packages.

Alison Quinn, executive general manager of Sanctuary Cove owner, says "we no longer offer 2000sq m blocks, nor can the market sustain [them]. We have smaller, 700sq m [blocks] that bring house-and-land packages down under \$1m, which has brought diversity, young couples and families and single-parent families."

"But they are still aspirational," says Peter Icklow, chief executive of Monarch Investments Group, which developed what became the gated Sydney community of Macquarie Links.

"We were accused of being elitist, but residents pay for all the facilities in the purchase price and their body corporate fees. Why should they make [the facilities] open to all?"

But two events have made gated communities more affordable: sagging property values and cheaper gated offerings. Andrew Bell, Ray White Surfers

Ephraim Island residential resort on Queensland's Gold Coast  
DAVID CLARK



