



# First-home buyers show confidence in market

**Antony Lawes**

SYDNEY'S first-home buyers, it seems, are becoming the stayers of the real estate market, taking out more home loans than expected in January.

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that the number of loans to first-home buyers dropped slightly in January compared with December but not as much as predicted – especially considering the high number of buyers looking to claim stamp duty concessions on existing properties before they ended on December 31.

“First-home buyers stood up in the marketplace in January despite the fact they lost their concession,” said Andrew Wilson, an economist at Australian Property Monitors, who adds that this figure was almost 70 per cent higher than for the same period last year.

Angie Zigomanis, the senior manager of residential property at

forecaster BIS Shrapnel, was surprised at the number of loans in January but said one reason could be that some first-home buyers bought before the end of December but only managed to get their loan approved in the new year.

Other experts, including Dr Wilson, believe the momentum of last year has carried over, with many of these first-timers looking to escape paying high rents and the strong competition for rental properties, while taking advantage of stagnant prices and low interest rates. There were also those who had bought new dwellings, which still attracted stamp duty concessions, he said.

“There’s been a surge of interest generated in first-home buyers feeling this is the time to buy?” Dr Wilson said.

Agent Monique March, from LJ Hooker Bondi Beach, has seen fewer first-timers out looking

this year compared with November and December, but said there was still a healthy number who seemed to have held off to avoid last year’s buying frenzy.

David Newman, 32, was one first-home buyer who bought in December to take advantage of the stamp duty concessions on older properties. The technical services manager paid \$545,000 for a two-bedroom apartment in Redfern through BresicWhitney and said it was something he should have done years ago.



**David Newman ... bought last year in Redfern.** Photo: Ben Rushton