

Rental crisis forces more to share load

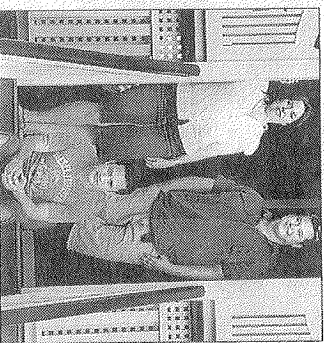
Melanie Christiansen

THERE has been a surge in the number of southeast Queenslanders looking for share accommodation, as rising rents and mortgages push other housing options out of reach.

Website realestate.com said Australia's share-housing market had taken off in the past year, with the number of advertisements jumping by about 250 per cent.

And it said Queensland is leading the trend, accounting for nearly half the website's share accommodation ads.

"It really comes back to things like house affordability, low rental vacancy rates and not enough new rental properties coming on to the market," website general manager Shaun Di Gregorio said. "And the



FLATMATES . . . Mary Hancock, Peter Hillman, and Lee Anderson.

end result is more people sharing accommodation for longer."

Mr Di Gregorio said an online survey of 742 people seeking share housing found nearly a third

would prefer to live on their own but could not afford it. It also revealed a change in the type of people using share housing.

"It's no longer just uni students," Mr Di Gregorio said. "We're now seeing an increasing number of young professionals who can't get in to the housing market and are finding that the best option is to rent and share."

At one East Brisbane share house, engineer Lee Anderson has three flatmates — a Telstra employee, a spray painter and a teacher who is now studying full-time and needs a cheaper housing option than renting alone.

Mr Anderson said a recent advertisement for a new house-made attracted plenty of calls.

"There must be a big market out there," he said.

Real Estate Institute of Queensland chairman Peter McGrath predicted the demand for share housing would continue to rise, while rental vacancy rates remained at record lows.

New Queensland Government figures show a vacancy rate of just 1.8 per cent for inner Brisbane in the December quarter. With limited vacancies, landlords again put up rents, with a three-bedroom house costing an average \$300 a week in Brisbane in the quarter.

Queensland Shelter CEO Adrian Pisanski said the problem would get worse with university students arriving in Brisbane over the next few weeks, looking for cheap accommodation.

"For student accommodation, we'll have shared bedrooms, rather than shared houses," he said.