

Go bush bid fails

Homebuyer grants ignored

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FEWER than 100 people have applied for the State Government's \$4000 Regional First Home Owner grant, leaving a question mark over the scheme's future.

A 12-month trial was launched in June to entice first-home buyers to settle outside the congested southeast.

But just 97 people have taken up the scheme in its first four months. Of those, 44 people have received the grant, while 47 have had their applications approved and are awaiting payment.

First-home buyers who buy or build a new home outside the southeast this financial year are eligible for the grant.

State Government figures predict the southeast's population will reach 4.4 million by 2031, requiring hundreds of thousands of new dwellings.

But population growth experts say the Regional First Home Owner grant scheme alone will make little difference to growth in the regions.

Kate Charters, director of national think-tank Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia, said the grants were unlikely to succeed.

"It's great to have that little extra incentive for people and clearly people will take up on that," she said.

"But whether or not it's sufficient to drive a population movement out into Queensland... I think it has to be more than that for it to be successful.

"We need to have the jobs out there (and) we need to have liveability considerations out there as well so people put down their roots in these regions."

A survey by Master Builders in June found 46 per cent of respondents did not believe the grant would stimulate housing demand in regional Queensland, compared with 26 per cent who thought it would.

The State Government is watching the take-up rate before deciding whether to continue the scheme beyond the 12-month trial.

A conference in Townsville this month will examine whether the policy has taken pressure off Brisbane.