

# Tech students build outside the square

TONY RAGGATT | January 25th, 2013



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**TOWNSVILLE** technical college Tec-NQ is building its own homes. The trades-based college identified the opportunity as an innovative way of providing training and placement for its apprentices at a time when construction activity has slowed.

"We aren't getting into the house-building business but as the construction market declined so too have the opportunities for apprentices," the college's business development manager Joe Hoolahan said.

"We decided to think outside the brick and block, so to speak, and develop real training solutions to meet the region's current and future employment and skills needs."

The college gained the status of a group training organisation in 2011, giving it the ability to employ students as apprentices.

With the help of private companies, including the Del Mondo Property Group and 9point9 Architects, Tec-NQ designed four townhouses which are being built on blocks it purchased in The Village, a State Government Urban Land Development Authority residential development at Oonoonba.

Mr Hoolahan hoped the project would take pressure off the construction industry providing apprenticeship places, as well as provide stimulus for work.

Companies including Smedley Plumbing, Mark Graham Electrical, Jeff Terry Constructions and Total Fab have been involved in the project.

"We are confident this could be the game changer that industry has been looking for," Mr Hoolahan said.

"We'll be training our apprentices using the newest materials and techniques for a truly sustainable building industry."

The project will employ 24 students.

Work on the townhouses began last year, with the first two townhouses due to be finished around Easter.

"The townhouses will be sold and hopefully the profits will go into the next project," he said.

The college has about 220 students enrolled so far this year.



PROVIDING TRAINING: Joe Hoolahan (second from right) with Tec-NQ students Kale Keller, Mark Lofts and Gavin Nielsen, who have been building townhouses at Oonoonba | Photo: TONY RAGGATT

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