

This address delivers plenty of history

Pātea
Jane Matthews

A piece of Taranaki history could be yours for less than the price of a modest house in most cities.

The 96-year-old Pātea Post and Telegraph Office building, which serviced the coastal South Taranaki town for decades, is on the market for a mere \$239,000.

For that you get a 590-square metre building with five bedrooms, three bathrooms and an extra toilet, and huge living spaces that were once filled with customers, standing on a 1200sqm piece of land.

By comparison, you'd be pushed to get a house for that price in nearby New Plymouth, where one of the cheapest properties on sale is a two-bedroom unit priced at \$259,000.

Meanwhile, in Auckland central an apartment less than a tenth of the size of the Pātea property, with one bedroom and one bathroom, is on sale for \$339,000.

The Pātea Post and Telegraph Office building, on State Highway 3 in the centre of town, has been used as a residence since it shut up shop in 1990 but could be turned into a business, too.

At its peak, the 1923 building had five switchboards running for 744 people, and saw hundreds of people through its doors for postal

services. Pātea-based First National Mills and Gibbon real estate agent Kelly Baldwin said despite no longer having all its original pieces, such as post boxes, the property remains an icon.

"It would be good to see it brought back to its glory," Baldwin said.

"It's a lovely building in the middle of town."

Today, the town, which sits halfway between Whanganui and Hāwera, has a population of around 1200 and is ideal for those who like the "quieter life", Baldwin said.

"Pātea is a great place to live. We're right by the sea, with a vibrant population. It's a musical, art vibe sort of town."

But, despite that, Pātea may not be for everyone, Baldwin admitted. "You're either going to love it or you're not."

House prices have risen in Pātea in recent years, the real estate agent said.

Some three-bedroom homes were priced as low as \$70,000 five years ago.

Now they're around the \$150,000 to \$200,000 mark.

The old post office had been used as a private residence and a



The Pātea Post Office and Telegraph Office building is for sale for less than most homes... and there is plenty of space inside (inset).



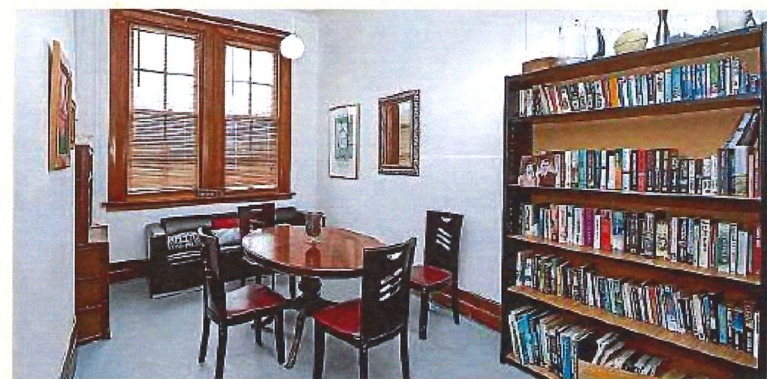
bed and breakfast for the last three years or so, with both the top and bottom floors on separate power and water supplies.

Baldwin said in future the building would need "some form of strengthening" as it's nearly 100 years old, two-storeys and built out of brick.

"You've got to have a love for old historic buildings.

"It's a beautiful piece of the town."

Baldwin said there were three or four messages a day about the old building, but no one has decided to buy it just yet.



The building has been used as a private residence and a bed and breakfast for the last three years or so.