



When the going gets tough, quality firms stay put



Matthew Ogg

THEY built iconic Queensland buildings such as the Breakfast Creek Hotel and the Longreach Stockman's Hall of Fame, and in an industry facing tough times Woollam Constructions are on the hunt for more projects, with a number already started.

Executive officer Scott Wedgwood says "Woollams" has a long proud history of building schools, as well as health, aged care and community facilities, and with the Federal Government's stimulus package he expects to secure a good flow of project tenders.

"From our four offices we are working on police stations in Yeppoon and Airlie Beach, the Mackay Convention Centre, an aged care facility in Carina, and a number

of educational projects in Rockhampton — the list goes on," Mr Wedgwood says.

"We want to ensure stability for our people, and we'll be hiring new workers — it's a bit countercyclical but we've been employing a higher number of people over the past three to six months, in a time when others are cutting numbers," he says.

"We are proud of the fact that our average employee stays with us for 13 years, and we do everything in our power to do well by them, as loyalty goes both ways.

"When people work with us they know we'll do the right thing.

"We see a lot of clients who are commenting on difficulties in obtaining funding and are experiencing a far greater level of scrutiny from their financiers — this

is certainly a big issue for us."

Managing director George Bogiatzis says English migrant Thomas Woollam started the business in Brisbane in 1884 as the partnership Woollam and Norman, and through the generations Woollams expanded to Rockhampton, Mackay and more recently to Ballina.

Mr Bogiatzis says the private company is involved in projects worth more than \$100 million this year, and is forecasting a turnover of \$120 million for 2008/2009.

He says there are currently 170 employees on the books and in its history Woollams has hired more than 1000 apprentices, trainees and building cadets.



TRUSTED ... Craig Percival, Scott Wedgwood and George Bogiatzis from Woollam Constructions in East Brisbane.

Picture: Megan Cullen