

Housing grants delayed

THOUSANDS of first-home buyers are still waiting for their \$14,000 grants.

More than a month after the Federal Government announced the grant, not one has been approved in Victoria.

Buyers and builders are becoming increasingly frustrated by an apparent bungle, which has left their plans up in the air.

It is believed thousands of people have lodged applications for the grant, which was introduced to help the troubled building industry on March 9.

Housing Industry Association spokesman Shane McCarthy said the State Revenue Office had been unable to approve funding because it had not figured out a process.

"They were caught on the hop because the Prime Minister's announcement was a surprise to them," he said.

"All they are able to do at the moment is take inquiries and keep them on the database."

Master Builders Australia national executive director John Murray said builders wanted the problems ironed out urgently.

"The whole point of the rescue package was to do just that,

By MICHELLE ROSE

to assist the industry," he said.

"Members are pulling their hair out in frustration."

Mr Murray said it was unclear how many people had lodged applications for the \$14,000 grant, but numbers could run into thousands.

"The anecdotal evidence seems to suggest they are quite significant and we want to see them processed," he said.

But Mr Murray said he would be surprised if the State Revenue Office had not been told of the plans before they were announced. "They certainly provided details to our organisation," he said.

Developer Delfin reported a 100 per cent increase in land sale inquiries Australia-wide since the announcement.

Managing director Chris Banks said Victorian figures had nearly tripled, with 797 people registering interest in March, compared with 278 in February.

"Demand has been so high that prospective buyers have been camping out overnight in Melbourne to secure land in new releases," he said. The State Revenue Office could not be contacted yesterday.