

MANTRA Group chief executive Bob East is a bit of a rarity in the Gold Coast tourism industry.

He is an optimist.

East, who features in this month's cover story, makes it clear that he isn't fond of the negativity surrounding the local tourism sector.

He says there's no reason for it, and he has the figures to prove it.

Mantra Group is the Gold Coast largest accommodation provider with 18 properties in its stable across the tourism strip.

The group has seen a steady, if not unspectacular, increase in its business locally for the past three years.

The only blip, says East, came in the immediate aftermath of the GFC.

East says Australians still love a beach holiday and it's this staying power that assures the Gold Coast has a future in tourism even during the occasional rigours of a strong Australian dollar.

Certainly it is the construction sector that has more reason to moan, but even that might be changing.

Last month, *Gold Coast Business News* revealed a host of new high rise developments either planned or poised for construction on the

Gold Coast. Many of these developments are put forward by foreign investors who are showing they are distinctly more fearless than their local counterparts.

The news comes on the back of new research by Colliers International which shows new apartment stock across the Gold Coast has fallen to a 10-year low of 930.

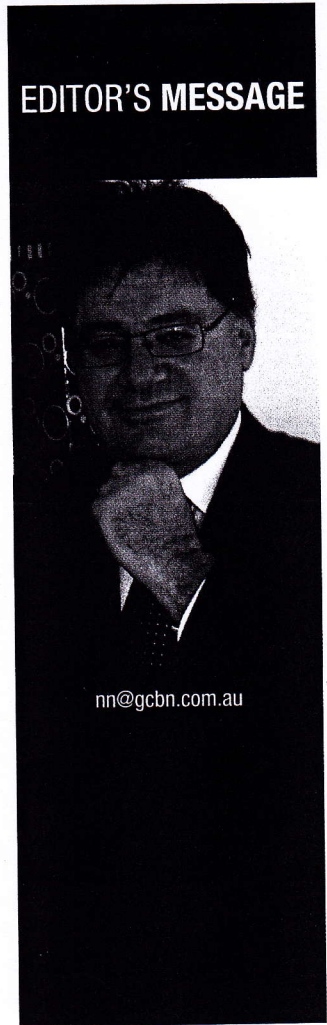
While demand also remains at record lows, one of the industry's independent voices, property researcher Colleen Coyne, is confident demand is on an upward cycle.

Coyne says the pace of growth will be driven by dwindling supply, Chinese demand and Commonwealth Games infrastructure spending.

But she also warns against the sort of exuberance that plunged the Gold Coast property sector into its most recent pickle – one that many industry players are still wiping from their chins.

If there is anything we can glean from these points of view is that, despite the ongoing risks we face, there is more reason than ever for the business community to be adopt some of the optimism displayed by the Mantra Group CEO.

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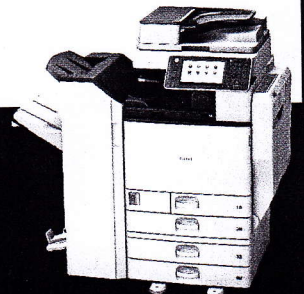
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