

Critical facilities expand

New developments will greatly enhance the capacity of the Gold Coast's vital human services, according to Colleen Coyne Property Research

WITH a current population estimated at 535,000 residents, the Gold Coast region, stretching from Pimpama to the Tweed Coast, has matured significantly over the past decade.

But a growing population needs to be matched by expanding services in sectors such as health and education.

Colleen Coyne gives a summary of development activity in these areas:

Education

The Gold Coast region is currently served by four universities: the Gold Coast campus of Griffith University at Southport, the Central Queensland University Gold Coast International campus at Southport, the private Bond University at Robina and the Tweed campus of Southern Cross University.

Together they account for more than 17,000 students and more than 1000 staff.

Expansion activity and Griffith University includes the School of Medicine and Oral Health, located in a 12,000sqm building adjoining Gold Coast Hospital, which opened in 2005.

It is linked to the Parklands campus by a fibre-optic cable that facilitates broadband telemedicine.

The steel-cable pedestrian bridge linking the 28.5ha Parklands campus with the 43ha southern precinct, south of the Smith Street Motorway, opened in February.



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A new student accommodation village is being developed in the southern precinct in three stages, with a total of 517 fully furnished rooms progressively developed during 2007 for completion this month.

Griffith University's Glycomics 1 building is under construction in the northern precinct, expanding the Institute for Glycomics, which was established in 2000 to research the roles carbohydrates play in disease and ageing and to develop carbohydrate-based medicines.

The Queensland Academy for Health Sciences, a high-school college for students interested in health-related careers, is under construction in the southern precinct and is set for completion this year. Bond University opened a new Law Faculty building in June last year, featuring the latest technology used in Australian courts and its Urban Development and Sustainability building is under construction for completion mid-year.

It will house the new Mirvac School of Sustainable Development, which accepted its first students in January last year.

Southern Cross University's master plan for a new Gold Coast campus, spanning the New South Wales-Queensland border in the Gold Coast Airport site, envisages access from

the Gold Coast Highway and from the Tugun bypass.

The campus is proposed to accommodate 750 equivalent full-time students in 2008, increasing to 2000 students by 2011.

In line with the need to ensure availability of technically trained workers, the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE is also proposed for expansion.

One of the five campuses, at Ridgeway Avenue, Southport, is to have a new 600-room facility and construction is scheduled for March.

The upgrade is being funded by a South Korean consortium, reflecting the importance of international students.

Gold Coast TAFE also has a new Marine Industry Training Centre at Coomera, due to open in February.

Health

The Gold Coast is currently served by three public hospitals: the Gold Coast Hospital at Southport, the Tweed Heads Hospital and the Robina Hospital.

The new 750-bed Gold Coast University Hospital, adjoining Griffith University campus at Parklands, is scheduled to open in 2012.

Last year it was announced that the preferred site would no longer be south of the Smith Street Motorway, but on the eastern side of Griffith University.

The existing 426 beds at Gold Coast Hospital, 3km to the east of the Parklands site, are to be absorbed into the new facility.

It is anticipated that health services will continue to be provided post 2012 on the 4ha Southport site, with various options currently being explored by Queensland Health.

Development activity is also occurring at the Robina and Tweed hospitals.

Robina Hospital has opened its new emergency, intensive care and renal units, with an additional 450 employees, bringing the total to 1000 employees.

Stage two of the proposed expansion will see the 185-bed hospital increase to 364 beds by 2010.

A new clinical research building is proposed for Tweed Hospital, incorporating an 80-seat auditorium and laboratory for the use of Bond and Griffith University students, as well as a breast-screening facility and a 30-bed medical ward.

The other notable expansion of health infrastructure begun in the Gold Coast region is the construction of a nine-level specialist medical centre of 5780sq m on the corner of High and Queen streets at Southport.

Due for completion in May, it is anchored by the cancer treatment specialist, Wesley Radiology and Oncology.

The Gold Coast region has a number of private hospitals and day surgery facilities.

The three largest private hospitals are the John Flynn Private Hospital at Tugun, Allentonia Private Hospital at Southport and Pindara-Gold Coast Private Hospital at Benowa.

There are also two leading day surgeries, Pacific Private Hospital at Scutthorpe and Tweed Day Surgery at Tweed Heads.

Over the past decade the length of hospital stays has generally fallen, due to day surgeries and high-tech equipment.

However, the Gold Coast, with a rapidly growing and ageing population, needs the capital infrastructure that is planned.

There are plans for new private medical facilities at Southport and Hope Island, but it is understood that these are most likely to be day surgeries or medical suites.

Future development of a major public hospital at Coomera, possibly specialising in paediatrics, being considered by Queensland Health, will be needed for the Gold Coast region to more adequately address its future health needs.

Additional private sector beds would also assist.



Above: Bond University is expanding with new buildings under construction
Inset: Students are interested in health-related careers