

# Forward thinking is the key

Bull 7/09

**J**OB creation, infrastructure funding and affordable central housing are the challenges facing the Gold Coast, as the city copes with continuing population growth, says an independent property analyst.

Researcher Colleen Coyne said forward thinking was needed to meet an expected 66 per cent population increase over the next 25 years.

Ms Coyne studied 10 economic subregions on the Gold Coast to determine how the city was positioned to cope with the influx of new residents, tipped to be about 350,000 people between now and 2031.

She said maintaining job creation at the same rate experienced over the past decade (4 per cent to 4.5 per cent per annum) was expected to be difficult.

"While the global financial crisis will play a factor, the city's ageing workforce will be an ongoing issue," she said.

"A national slowdown in manufacturing and construction is also impacting the Gold Coast, as is a slowing in productivity growth, which will have a long-

term impact on the city's ability to continue creating new jobs.

"There has been a marked loss of workers from the Surfers Paradise, Broadbeach and Burleigh Heads regions over the five years to 2006, a sign of the ongoing issue of retaining hospitality, sales and service workers in central regions."

Ms Coyne said workers, in particular casual and part-time employees, were shifting to the outer suburbs because of lower housing costs and the desire to work near home.

"The ageing of the population along the coastal strip is also a factor in loss of resident employees, as older workers retire," she said.

"The Gold Coast City Council is meeting the challenge of job creation by fostering innovation, including supporting emerging industries on the Coast such as sport, with the new rugby league and AFL teams and the environment, marine and knowledge sectors."

Ms Coyne said while the Gold Coast and Tweed's 'linear' urban form had been a benefit in the past, it would create challenges

over the next two decades.

"The region's continued population growth and the city's expansion north and south is putting increased pressure on our existing infrastructure," she said.

"The number of older people on the Gold Coast and Tweed is also poised to double over the next 25 years, which will put significant pressure on services, particularly health and aged care.

"Key projects to relieve some of these pressures include the Gold Coast University Hospital in Southport, due for completion in 2012, and the Rapid Transit System (RTS), the first stage of which is proposed for completion in 2013."

Ms Coyne said the RTS would not only facilitate greater use of public transport, but also encouraged higher densities around mixed-use transit oriented precincts.

"If the RTS does not eventuate because of funding issues, the higher densities envisaged for some of these precincts will not be viable," she said.

"This has implications for the



The number of older people on the Gold Coast and Tweed is set to double over the next 25 years. Inset: Researcher Colleen Coyne

region to sustain the projected population numbers and the whole basis for the regional planning framework.

"It is uncertain how governments can successfully address the rising cost of housing in areas with high amenity and multiple uses, such as Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach, as

coastal areas in particular remain expensive."

Ms Coyne said current market conditions were also providing opportunities for young people to buy smaller apartments in prime areas at lower prices.