

Widespread demand for units

By Colleen Coyne

MANY people who own a Gold Coast beachside apartment put it into a holiday letting pool from time to time, so the performance of the tourism market is a matter of widespread interest.

The past three years has shown steady increases in the number of apartments, including high-profile projects such as the Q1 (526 apartments) and Circle on Cavill (637 apartments) at Surfers Paradise and Wave (118 apartments) at Broadbeach.

The new Tweed Coast has been transformed with 774 new apartments, including Mantra on Salt Beach (formerly the Outrigger) and Peppers Salt Resort and Spa.

These additions to Tweed Shire tourist accommodation resulted in a 35 per cent increase from 2004 to 2006 in rooms available.

In contrast, room numbers increased by 4.3 per cent in the dominant Surfers Paradise market and by 3.4 per cent at Broadbeach.

Although the Tweed Coast represents only 7 per cent of tourist accommodation available in the Gold Coast-Tweed region, it is rapidly becoming a significant destination.

The master-planned Casuarina Beach and Salt communities, with their emphasis on village life, walking everywhere, beach house architecture, gourmet food and indulgence, have met with a positive response from visitors.

The Gold Coast's traditional tourism heartland maintains a firm grip on visitors' attention.

Despite increased supply, average occupancy rates were maintained at healthy levels last year - 73.5 per cent at Surfers Paradise and 71.6 per cent at Broadbeach.

Average tariffs have also risen since 2004, up by 21 per cent at Broadbeach and by 15 per cent at Surfers Paradise.

Major new attractions have opened over recent years, notably Q1's Observation Deck at Surfers Paradise and the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre (GCCEC) in Broadbeach.

The GCCEC has achieved such strong growth in delegate numbers that it is to have a 3000sqm extension, due to open in November next year.

The recent extension of the Gold Coast Airport runway offers the opportunity for the Gold Coast-Tweed region to attract even more international visitors, particularly direct flights from the Middle East and Asia.

Currently, international visitors account for 32 per cent of visitor nights spent in the Gold Coast region.

Improvements in tourism infrastructure should assist in the absorption of new supply. About 1700 new apartments currently being built at Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach.

Colleen Coyne is the director of Colleen Coyne Property Research



Major events at Salt have had a strong response from visitors

Confidence in the market

VARIETY and contrast make the Gold Coast a popular destination for Australian and international visitors, says Gold Coast Tourism chief executive officer Pavan Bhatia.

"This is Australia's most bio-diverse city with pristine coastline and world heritage-listed rainforest cradling one of the nation's fastest growing metropolitan areas," he said.

"Add to that the depth of attractions, safety, people and year-round exceptional climate and you have one of the world's best destinations.

Mr Bhatia said the city had benefited from the provision some significant tourism-related facilities in recent years.

"Consider the investment made in our hotel and apartment sector, the theme parks introducing new assets, our Gold Coast Exhibition and Convention Centre, major infrastructure development by Gold Coast City Council and even the expansion of the Gold Coast Airport," he said.

"These are all signs of confidence and expectation in our region by major Australian and international companies.

"The future for the Gold Coast is extremely positive." Mr Bhatia said the Gold Coast Tourism Five Year

Plan would have a major influence on the progress of the city over coming years.

"Currently there are 21 tourists for every one resident on the Gold Coast throughout the year," he said.

"This demonstrates the importance of the tourism industry to our city.

"With the support of Gold Coast City Council, State Government, businesses and key tourism stakeholders we will achieve an increase of around two million visitors and an extra \$2 billion in visitor spend for the Gold Coast over the next five years."

Mr Bhatia said the plan would be a key driver for investment in the region.

"The tourism plan has specific pillars including increasing business tourism, growing emerged international markets such as India, Middle East and China and reinvigorating established markets such as Australia, New Zealand and Japan," he said.

"Furthermore, the plan is being implemented in close association with Gold Coast City Council and major Gold Coast assets such as Gold Coast Airport to ensure the capacity of the city develops in line with the growth in tourism visitation for the benefit of Gold Coast businesses and residents."

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