

It's boom and gloom

Jobs, infrastructure and housing keys to Coast's growing pains

by Jenny Rogers

SOME Gold Coast suburbs are doing a lot better than others when it comes to jobs, infrastructure and housing affordability.

However, the city still has a long way to go to catch up to national standards when it comes to employment and economic growth, according to new research by property analyst and Rescue Patrol infrastructure member Colleen Coyne.

Ms Coyne studied the 10 economic sub-regions on the Gold Coast to find out which were best positioned to cope with the influx of new residents, tipped to be about 350,000 people between now and 2031.

She said the southern Gold Coast and Tweed region were lagging far

behind the rest of the region when it came to jobs.

"There are more people living on the southern Gold Coast than there are jobs to go around so there is a huge flow of people across the border looking farther north for work," she said.

"The southern region has 40 per cent of the population but only 33 per cent of the jobs."

There had also been a marked loss of workers from the Surfers Paradise, Broadbeach and Burleigh regions in the five years to 2006 because most were part-time workers who could not afford the high rents and accommodation costs.

In the Surfers postcode, the median rent for a two-bedroom unit soared by 34.7 per cent to \$330

a week in the five years to 2006.

"We are seeing particularly casual and part-time workers shifting to the outer suburbs because of lower housing costs and the desire to work near home," she said.

"The sub-regions along the Coast are getting much slower employment growth and even negative employment growth in some cases."

Ms Coyne said when it came to national ratings, Yatala rated in terms of manufacturing and utilities, Coomera scored in manufacturing because of the marine industry and was seven times the national average in arts and recreation with the theme parks and film industry, Oxenford and Helensvale rated for their real estate, rental market and arts and entertainment with theme parks,

Surfers and Broadbeach scored for real estate, accommodation and food with their tourist strips, Robina and Varsity rated in information media and telecommunications, Burleigh for wholesale trade with its industrial area, and Coolangatta for accommodation and food for its tourist strip and real estate sector.

Nerang, Southport and Tweed were not considered nationally significant.

Ms Coyne said job creation, infrastructure funding and affordable central housing were the three biggest challenges facing the Gold Coast, as the city copes with continuing high levels of population growth.

She said forward thinking was needed now to meet an expected 66 per cent population increase over

the next 25 years and said that while the Gold Coast and Tweed's 'linear' urban form had been a benefit in the past, it would create challenges going forward.

"The region's continued population growth and the city's expansion north and south is putting increasing pressure on our existing infrastructure," she said. "While the global financial crisis will play a factor, the city's ageing workforce will also be an ongoing issue."

Ms Coyne said current market conditions were providing opportunities for young people to buy smaller apartments in prime areas but in the long term families would be pushed toward the M1 corridor.

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