

Rocketing growth will force move

It's westward ho! to cope with the plan for a Gold Coast population of 1.2 million, says national affairs reporter **Geoff Chambers**

THE boom suburbs of yesteryear are built out. The city's growing pains have been revealed in two new growth reports that highlight Federal Government plans to squeeze one million people into the Gold Coast.

After years of interstate migration, suburbs including Parkwood, Arundel, Molendinar, Mermaid Waters and Clear Island Waters have now grown beyond their means.

According to Gold Coast City Council documents, the pressure on infrastructure on available land space will drive people west into emerging suburbs.

Over the next 21 years, Molendinar will grow by a minuscule 98 new dwellings, with only 10ha available for new homes.

The number of residents in Parkwood and Arundel will rise marginally from 19,108 to 20,541.

In comparison, Helensvale, Pimpama, Coomera and Varsity Lakes will take over as the region's new growth suburbs.

Almost 700ha will be developed in the Pimpama-Coomera residential precinct, increasing the present number of dwellings from 2736 to 27,781 by 2031.

Across the city, the number of dwellings will jump from 212,174 to almost 360,000.

Despite local residents claiming traffic and parking are already at peak capacity, both Surfers Paradise and Southport have been positioned by the council and state and federal governments to house thousands more residents.

The number of single and multi-dwellings in Surfers Paradise will increase to 35,594 to house a projected population of 38,705.

The population of Southport will double to 51,115 residents, with high-rise developments expected to be built along the rapid transit route.

To accommodate the population boost, more than 12,000 new homes and units will need to be built on the Gold Coast by 2031.

In November, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd revealed his audacious plans to increase the population of the Gold Coast region to 1.2 million by 2050, up from the present population of 630,000.

Mr Rudd has backed a 'big Australia' approach.

Through the southeast Queensland regional plan, the State Government has also backed dramatic population growth in suburbs that are positioned on the heavy rail line, including Varsity Lakes and Coomera.

At a local level, Mayor Ron Clarke has rejected calls to dramatically increase the population of the Gold Coast.

Cr Clarke has said the lifestyle of Gold Coast residents should be preserved at all costs.

City finance boss Cr Eddy Sarroff has pledged to include a raft of major 'social infrastructure' projects, including public pools, libraries and community centres, to service projected population growth across the city.