

Population 501,179 by 2031:

WHY BOB CAN'T STOP IT

*Sunshine
Coast
Daily*

THE Sunshine Coast is still hurtling towards massive expansion, despite a push to slow down growth. Mayor Bob Abbot was elected in 2007 with a mandate to slow growth. But figures released this week indicate the battle is being lost. The Coast became home to almost 10,000 new residents in the 12 months to June 2009, a 3% increase - the same as June 2007. And a new report says that by 2031, the Coast will have a population of more than half a million.

STORIES ON PAGES 4 AND 5



PEOPLE ON THE MOVE: Major infrastructure problems could emerge as the Sunshine Coast population surges toward half a million by 2031.

By **OWEN JACQUES**
owen.jacques@scnews.com.au

IN five years, the Sunshine Coast could begin to lose its beloved identity as it stretches to cater for 380,000 people.

That comment from Mayor Bob Abbot followed the release of State Government figures showing the Coast was still hurtling towards massive expansion, reaching half-a-million by 2031.

This is despite the mayor being elected in 2007 with a mandate to slow down the region's growth numbers.

The Coast became home to almost 10,000 new residents in the 2008-2009 financial year, still representing a 3% increase in people – identical to the rate at June, 2007.

The release also landed on the deadline handed to council by Planning Minister Stirling Hinchliffe for the Palmview Plan, which

would allow development of 600 to 800 homes.

Mr Abbot told the Daily that having a population of between 350,000 and 380,000 was "the most sustainable" without having to build giant amounts of infrastructure.

"I think the Sunshine Coast will start to lose its identity once we pass that point," Mr Abbot said.

"But there is population growth right across South-East Queensland.

Relentless growth a threat to identity

"It has nothing to do with what we are doing."

Treasury projections estimate our population will reach 339,000 by June next

Treasury projections estimate our population will reach 339,000 by June next year.

year and this point-of-no-return could be eclipsed before 2016.

Mr Abbot said he felt the

slowdown in the economy gave the Coast "breathing time" to plan for and hopefully avoid the brutality of a city of 500,000 residents.

"It gives us the time to give us an advantage with planning. But the problem is that we have to do well be-

fore we get to these figures."

Master Builders regional manager Steve Robinson said the slowing building industry was a result of the world downturn, rather than a population slowdown, but that 3% was a healthy number.

Sunshine Coast Environment Council executive officer Wiebe ter Bals said the group had "always been concerned" about a 3% growth rate, because that rate demanded a strong

planning regime.

"I think we could move to 380,000 and beyond but it's about how we plan development, not just having everyone fitted in 1km from the coastline," Mr ter Bals said.

Minister Hinchliffe said the high growth rates faced by the Coast were the reason State Government was determined to ensure swift planning of major developments, including Palmview and the massive Caloundra South structure plan.