

City's double dose of good news

December 4th, 2009

THE Gold Coast is today celebrating two historic moments that will lead to a boost in jobs, help future-proof the city and at the same time provide reinforcement of the region's importance.

They are the go-ahead for the Coomera Town Centre and the calling of tenders for the rapid transit system.

For 14 years, the massive Coomera Town Centre project has been sitting on a shelf, wrapped up in red tape and indecision.

Now it will finally come to fruition, thanks to the intervention of the State Government through what can only be seen as an encouraging sign that those who rule in George Street are becoming as frustrated with the Gold Coast City Council as most Gold Coasters have been for years.

As the city claws its way out of the hole it was dropped in by the global financial crisis, projects such as the Coomera centre and the light rail system must be seen as life savers. The Coomera centre alone will not only lead to 20,000 permanent jobs when completed, there are the thousands of jobs before that during the construction phase.

The move to introduce the Sustainable Planning Act, allowing for the declaration of a masterplanned region, is exactly what the Coast has been desperately needing for many years -- and maybe now the council will see the writing on the wall and stop treating developers as second-rate citizens.

The calling of tenders for the light rail system is a major confidence boost for the city that will deliver 6000 jobs during the construction phase.

Stalling over its final planning stages made many civic leaders nervous that it was being derailed and it was less than comforting a month ago to find the state and federal governments arguing over equity in the \$1 billion project.

Canberra wants a stake -- and some profits -- which undermines the ability of the Bligh Government to lure a private partner to run the operation, a crucial step in the 13km line's economic modelling.

This newspaper announced in May that the Federal Government funding was contingent on 'the establishment of an appropriate equity vehicle'. We celebrated the announcement but emphasised the money wasn't in the bank.

It turns out, of course, that the Government may have overlooked that very detail, even though it came directly from Treasurer Wayne Swan's own Budget papers.

Nonetheless, it appears the two tiers of government have resolved their differences on the fine print and the light rail between Griffith University and Broadbeach will go ahead.

The Gold Coast is all aboard on these -- and they cannot happen fast enough.