

Foreigners boost Coast numbers

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THE Mexicans are snubbing our fair state, but the 'pineapple express' is chugging full-steam ahead, according to new property figures.

New research from property information leader RP Data show fewer southerners are crossing the border to settle here but the loss has not affected Queensland's rising population figures.

Instead our numbers are being boosted by international migrants and our locally born babies.

In the December quarter, interstate migration dropped to less than 6000 people while overseas migration continued to rise to more than 10,000 people and rising fertility rates chimed in for a natural increase of around 9000 people.

"The number of New South Welshman migrating here has dropped since it peaked in the early '90s but the decline is being compensated for by more overseas migrants and the biggest number of babies since the early 1980s," said RP Data national research director Tim Lawless.

At the Urban Development Institute of Australia State conference last week, Mr Lawless said southeast Queensland was the undisputed epicentre of Australia and commanded 20 per cent of the nation's total growth.

Delegates at the Jupiters Casino conference centre were told the Gold Coast was the fastest-growing regional centre and was expected to hold pole position in projected population growth.

RP Data figures showed the Gold Coast was expected to grow by 16,772 people on average each year for the next five years.

Brisbane was expected to set the capital-city growth with 18,037 people, Maroochy with 5037, Pine Rivers with 4711 and Caboolture with 4482.

Urban-growth specialist Will Owen, from Conics consultancy, told delegates Queensland-born leaders including Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, to be Australian Governor-General Quentin Bryce and Queensland Premier Anna Bligh were influencing people's decision to follow the sun to Queensland.

"With the 'pineapple mafia' showing the way, the pineapple express is just charging ahead," he said.

But Mr Lawless warned northern coastal towns were also picking up speed with locations including Townsville, Thuringowa and Mackay expected to add more than 2000 people each year to their populations for the next five years.

"All the key coastal regions continue to perform well and are becoming arguably Australia's most diversified regional economies," he said.

Western towns and regions also were gaining popularity but would never overtake coastal growth, Mr Lawless added.

"People are heading west to secure affordable land but the majority of people still always favour the coastline.

"For instance the corridor between the Gold Coast and Brisbane and even western towns like Beaudesert and Ipswich are definitely growing but they still have some way to go."

Mr Lawless said immigrants from New Zealand, the United Kingdom, South Africa and South-East Asia formed the bulk of the more than 176,000 people that moved to Australia in 2007.

Queensland lured 96,900 new residents and maintained a wide margin from its nearest rival, Victoria, which netted 86,430 new residents. The mining boom in Western Australia and the job spree in Northern Territory have prised some population numbers but Queensland still places third behind the two in percentages.

The NT and Western Australian have grown 2.4 per cent a year with Queensland close behind with 2.3 per cent.