

Gold Coast looks to million people by 2027

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THE GOLD Coast's population should hit one million by 2027 -- at least five years ahead of even the most bullish State Government forecast, according to new figures.

Research by property analyst Bill Morris shows that the Gold Coast's population will exceed 943,000 in 2026 -- 110,000 (or 13 per cent) ahead of the Government's boldest prediction of more than 833,000 people.

The discrepancy came as no surprise to Mr Morris, the author of Queensland's Midwood Report, who said the Government had developed a remarkable talent for getting it wrong.

In a 20-year forecast made earlier this decade, the Government's Planning Information and Forecasting Unit (PIFU) said the Gold Coast's population would be less than 400,000 by 2011 -- it reached the 500,000 mark in February, 2005.

And in August, 2004, the PIFU said the Gold Coast would have between 563,400 and 584,900 (low and high estimates) by 2011 -- the Gold Coast already has 550,000 residents.

Mr Morris said Gold Coast residents and infrastructure were becoming the victims of 'Brisbanism' by the state's bureaucrats, who have predicted that the growth rate on the Gold Coast would start to decline over the next 18 years.

"That has never happened in the history of the Gold Coast," he said.

"The State Government has always taken the view that the Coast's dynamic growth (which is faster than Brisbane) is unsustainable, but it's continuing.

"The existence of the surf is a major economic driver -- people want to live not just near water but near the surf."

But a senior PIFU planner reportedly told Mr Morris that the PIFU had downgraded its projections in the belief that 'the attractiveness of the Gold Coast is declining, mainly due to traffic congestion'.

"The Brisbane view is that the Gold Coast is still a seaside village where you don't go to do business, but just for a holiday," said Mr Morris.

"They have downgraded their forecasts before but the Gold Coast has always outperformed the estimates. It's all got to do with a Brisbane view of the world."

PIFU had left the Coast off its list of Queensland 'growth spots', tipping that more people would go to live in the growth belts of Ipswich, Laidley and the Ripley Valley, Mr Morris said.

PIFU had based its population projections on an average annual growth rate of 12,280 people, but Mr Morris said the Gold Coast grew by an average of 15,901 people between 2001 and 2006 and leapt by 17,228 in 2007, of which interstate migration was still the lion's share.

The Government's more conservative forecasts is bad news for new infrastructure for the Coast, including water supply, roads, sewage, storm water managements, parks and gardens, he said.

"I mean this is heaven on earth, and they're slowly stuffing it up," said Mr Morris.

PIFU demographer Ross Barker did not return calls from The Bulletin.