

Our cap fits well, says town planner

By **PETER GARDNIER**

The more we gain the more we have to lose – that is the message from the man who tailored Noosa's population cap.

Former Noosa Shire Council senior planner Paul Summers, who is now a local private consultant, said the Sunshine Coast was in a position to reap an incredible international tourism dividend from the world.

But only if it could convince a gung-ho State Government to place the brakes on rampant

population growth.

"The Sunshine Coast is well placed in the future to benefit from international tourism," Mr Summers told the Noosa News in the aftermath of the State Government's growth management summit.

"The more the world messes up the more we stand to gain as a region from people wanting to come here to enjoy our natural, wide open spaces," he said.

"The Coast as a region is in a position now to follow on from Noosa's example (of strict

development controls).

"The situation is similar to the one Noosa found itself in during the 1990s but on a regional and even global scale."

Mr Summers said the Coast could not afford to throw away its competitive edge over rival destinations like the Gold Coast by allowing intensive development.

He said while that worked for the Gold Coast in attracting a certain type of tourist, the Coast needed to enhance its family friendly, more laidback outdoor experience.

His views would have received a mixed reception at Premier Anna Bligh's summit, which he was not the least bit interested in attending. Mr Summers said from listening to the reports of the growth management summit, the whole exercise was designed to justify the government's go for growth strategy.

He believed encouraging strategic growth corridors by providing proper infrastructure, such as the Ipswich expansion, was good future planning.

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Former Noosa Shire Council senior planner Paul Summers has spoken out against the State Government's push for population growth.

PHOTO: VICKI WOOD

Control needed

Brakes must be applied to population growth

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But he said the Coast's southern and hinterland regions were a poor strategic choice for ramped-up development if the region wanted to retain its attractiveness as a destination.

Mr Summers said the assertion that 240,000 people could be added to the Coast without changing its character was simply wrong.

"Adding that many people will inherently change a region's character - that does not mean the changes have to be all bad, but it changes the character nonetheless."

Mr Summers said on paper, with its development controls still in place, Noosa should be immune from any Coast



Town planner Paul Summers.

growing pains.

"But I keep hearing whispers that Noosa's control plans may not be so set in stone."

And Mr Summers said he was always concerned when southern Coast councillors start asking what's so special about Noosa - why should it be left alone?

Mr Summers said at least the Federal Government had

now come on board and was treating population growth as a federal issue by the appointment of Tony Burke as the country's first population minister.

This support was shared by Regional Development Australia (RDA) Sunshine Coast head and Sunshine Coast councillor Debbie Blumel.

Cr Blumel said the Sunshine Coast had experienced many years of high population growth without the appropriate services and infrastructure to keep up with demand.

"Our community has been crying out for respite from the projected trends should population growth continue unabated," Cr Blumel said.