

# Growth will hurt Coast tourism

Peter Gardiner | 9th April 2010



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 Council senior planner Paul Summers, who is now a local private consultant, said the Sunshine Coast was in a position to reap an incredible 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 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, laidback outdoor experience.

Mr Summers 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.

He 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 anyway.”

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

“But I keep hearing whispers that Noosa’s control plans may not be so set in stone.”

Mr Summers said at least the Federal Government had come on board and was treating population growth as a federal issue, appointing Tony Burke the country’s first population minister.