

City growing pains

Population outstripping housing

by Jenny Rogers

THE Gold Coast needs more than 100 new houses a week to cope with its huge population growth.

The city's population increased by 17,374 people in 2006.

Between now and 2011, when the city is expected to hit 643,000, about 55,000 people – roughly equivalent to the population of Mackay – will have been added to the Coast.

To deal with the massive population boom, the Gold Coast needs 133 new homes a week, according to a new report by real estate agency chain PRDnationwide's corporate office.

"An average of 2.5 people live in each household, so the Gold Coast needs 133 new dwellings per week to cope with demand, 36 more than the year before," said PRDnationwide spokeswoman Lynda Campbell.

"That number is expected to be sustained each year, in line with the Coast's forecast population boom. However, land supply in the Coasts's seaside villages is rapidly drying up.

"The future lies in finding land in the Coast's outer reaches, or through the creation of medium and high-density buildings on the coastal strip."

Ms Campbell said migration and family creation had pushed the Coast's growth rate to 3.5 per cent a year.

In comparison, Queensland's growth rate is 2.4 per cent and Australia's is 1.3 per cent.

Ms Campbell said that, with its natural attractions, entertainment venues and ideal climate, the Gold Coast was the top choice for people seeking to relocate.

"The Coast lifestyle is attractive to people of all ages, from retirees to young adults who might come to the Coast initially for Schoolies (Festival), fall in love with the place and want to move here at a later date."

Ms Campbell said housing developments to cater for the population boom were occurring outside the Coast's coastal strip.

"The areas that will benefit in the future will be those that have suitable pockets of land available for development," she said.

"Those areas are in the northern corridor of the Gold Coast, such as Coomera, where we are already seeing a population boom, and in northern NSW."

However, while the extra population demands an unprecedented number of new homes, building approvals and sales are not keeping pace.



Jane Smith and sons Cameron and Riley at their Molendinar home

● Picture: Glenn Hampson

Price boom a bonus for Molendinar family

by Bridie Jabour

THE canny Smith family are counting a paper profit after buying into one of the Gold Coast's boom suburbs, Molendinar.

The family moved to the suburb last year after buying a block of land and building their home on it.

Average property values in Molendinar are up 129.2 per cent in five years.

In 2003, there were 3973 housing approvals on the Gold Coast, but this had dropped to 3441 by 2006.

Similarly with units; there were 4358 given approval in 2003 but only 3125 by 2006.

The diminishing supply of homes has also driven up prices. The city's median house price is now \$436,050, up from \$310,000 in 2003.

"Land prices have also risen dramatically, from a median of \$155,000 in June, 2003, to \$215,000 in June, 2007," said Ms Campbell.

"It's just perfect," said Jane Smith.

"My husband works in Southport and my children go to the Guardian Angels school so it is a very convenient location."

Mrs Smith said the family knew the value of the house would rise over time and put it down to the location of the suburb.

"It's 10 minutes from

Harbour Town, 10 minutes from the beach, everything is just so close," she said.

"We looked at houses in Ashmore and Parkwood when we were buying a house and they were all 30 years old. There's still room to build in Molendinar so we did that.

"Now we have a brand new house."

Other appeals of the

suburb included a safe neighbourhood for their children to grow up.

Mrs Smith said she felt safer being 'tucked away from traffic' and not having to worry about her kids.

"They can play out the front and I know nothing is going to happen," she said.

"There are lots of families in the street and they are all lovely people."

The Housing Industry Association of Queensland said all levels of government had failed to keep pace with the massive population boom and were not releasing housing approvals fast enough, nor providing infrastructure to cater for the growth.

"On the Gold Coast, it now takes at least eight weeks to obtain a housing approval and in Tweed Heads it is far worse. There, it can take up to six months," said Col Buttenshaw, the executive director of the HIA Gold Coast and Northern Rivers branch.

"There are planning zones where new houses could be built in Coomera and Yatala but there is a very slow release of land because the council is so slow in its approval process.

"Most big developers have land coming on line for new housing projects, but they are still waiting for approvals and it could take at least two years before the housing is built."

Mr Buttenshaw also said a continuing skills shortage in the construction industry was adding thousands to the cost of a new home.