



Coping with growth

Professor warns new approaches are needed for development

By **PETER GARDINER**

The Noosa hinterland is going to be one of the battlegrounds in the fight to preserve a quality lifestyle, according to Sunshine Coast academic Professor Scott Prasser.

Professor Prasser is the convener of the Sunshine Coast State of the Region Summit to be held at the University of the Sunshine Coast this Friday.

And while he prefers to call Noosa's attempt to hold back urban floodgates a development cap rather than a population cap, he believes it will not be allowed to stay in place.

"The cap was workable in Noosa while you had Maroochy Shire to take all the families coming into the area – but when you are one region, as we are now, you can no longer do that."

Professor Prasser said the

state government would never allow the Sunshine Coast council to impose any similar regional cap on new development. He said it would be interesting to see how it handled infill population.

"While most of the population pressure will come in the southern areas of the Coast, Noosa's hinterland is an area that will be at risk," he said.

One of the keynote speakers at the summit will be Dr Alison Taylor, of the Queensland department of infrastructure and planning.

Prof Prasser said her data showed the Sunshine Coast was the equal fastest growing major population region in Australia outside the capital cities.

"The other issue is that the rest of south-east Queensland is also growing almost as fast and the Sunshine Coast is

really under such external pressure," he said.

He said southern Coast developments that are of such great concern to Coast mayor Bob Abbot did not have to spell the ruination of Pumicestone Passage.

"There are larger populations in similar locations around the world – you just have to start getting creative in the sort of developments you are doing."

Prof Prasser said the Coast could no longer afford to continue along traditional development methods.

He said eco-friendly higher density and growth along main transport corridors was a desirable outcome, as was the location and type of shopping.

"It may be okay now to have so many people aged 75 driving to supermarkets, but

what happens when they turn 85 and can no longer drive?"

"The Sunshine Coast has the potential to become a very ugly place to live...I always say look at the Gold Coast and see the Sunshine Coast in 20 years if you don't start doing things differently."

He said the Coast had more open space with its canelands and flood plains that had to be used more creatively.

Prof Prasser believed some caneland could be used for prestige housing that was leading edge eco-friendly.

"The region as a whole needs to think about how it is going to manage its projected growth over the next 25 years," he said.

The theme for this year's State of the Region Summit is Wealth of the Region: Building on Strengths.



Hastings Street in days gone by.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED



Hastings Street as it is today.

PHOTO: GEOFF POTTER