

# The Courier-Mail

Newspaper of the Year

FIRST WITH THE NEWS

Thursday October 28, 2004

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## Showman of the Gabba

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Exclusive Akermanis book extract

## Final fling for Sex and the City

theGuide liftout

# Wake room for 1 million

## Urban blueprint to reshape the southeast

Craig Johnstone  
STATE EDITOR

HIGH-density suburbs, multi-storey apartment blocks and reduced water use will become a feature of southeast Queensland's lifestyle under a growth plan designed to manage one of the biggest population shifts in the nation's history.

The plan, which sets out an urban footprint for Australia's fastest growing region, is likely to force thousands of Queenslanders to turn their backs on the traditional big suburban block.

And the Government is steering itself to borrow funds to help pay the multibillion-dollar bill for the transport, water and electricity infrastructure needed to cater for an estimated southeast Queensland population of 3.7 million within 20 years.

Premier Peter Beattie and Treasurer Terry Mackenroth unveiled the draft South-East Queensland Regional Plan yesterday.

Mr Mackenroth said the state's strong financial position would enable it to embrace new infrastructure projects which would be outlined in a separate report in April.

The plan estimates more than half-a-million homes, many in medium and high-density apartment developments, will need to be built in southeast Queensland over the next two decades.

It warns that residents may have to reduce the pressure they put on existing infrastructure or face higher charges as a means of ensuring southeast Queensland copes with an expected million new residents.

Mr Beattie indicated there would be some losers from the plan, particularly local area farmers whose ability to sell their land to developers has been severely restricted.

He also backed a western bypass road for Brisbane, risking a public backlash from residents in western and northern suburbs.

"We understand the politics of this; this is not a popularity contest, this is about guaranteeing the future quality of life of southeast Queensland residents," Mr Beattie said.

The draft plan, open for

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public comment until February, seeks to ensure there is enough land for urban growth while protecting about 80 per cent of the region from development.

Residential densities will increase significantly and there will be smaller lots and more apartment blocks along major transport links.

While developers will intensify in some areas, others will be locked away for regional landscape, rural production and green space between Brisbane and the Gold and Sunshine Coasts.

The restrictions have left some canegrowers with few options now that their land is not attractive to developers.

New residential estates will have to have a density of up to 15 lots a hectare, compared with eight under existing regulations.

Mr Beattie said the higher densities would mean housing estates would need to have lot sizes about the same as those at Springfield, west of Brisbane, where blocks range from an average 640sq m, or 26 perches, to as small as 300sq m, or 12 perches.

The plan seeks high density residential in the form of apartment blocks in suburbs such as Coorparoo, Indooroopilly and Cleveland, a move likely to be hotly welcomed in the communities.

Lord Mayor Campbell Newman vowed to engage the community in debating the plan. "We will really talk to people about these conflicting forces that are upon us," he said.

Industry groups welcomed the plan as providing certainty although the property lobby said it had concerns about the allocation of funding for needed infrastructure.



### FUTURE SHOCK

- About 550,000 new dwellings will be needed, representing a 50 per cent increase on the number of existing homes.
- One million new residents expected over the next two decades.
- About half of all new residents will live in medium and high density developments. Height restrictions likely to be eased.
- Greenfield residential sites will increase to 15 lots per hectare from 8 to 11 lots per hectare currently.
- More than 80 per cent of southeast Queensland will be protected from urban development, including canelano on Sunshine and Gold coasts.
- Government will borrow to fund a likely multi-billion dollar bill for new infrastructure, including water and energy assets. Details to be revealed in a separate report in April.
- Residential water consumption to be slashed by 25 per cent.
- Development along so-called western corridor to be encouraged. Ipswich population to grow by 250,000.
- Western bypass road backed.

SPREADING out ... a bird's eye view of Brisbane, which faces the challenges presented by an extra 1 million south-east Queensland residents within 20 years. Picture: Mark Calleja

## Living the high life's the way of the future



Cameron Afield

FOR 19 years, Jim Venn lived the old Queensland dream in his big colonial-style home in the Gold Coast hinterland, complete with 10ha and a wraparound veranda.

That was until 18 months ago, when Mr Venn, 45, and fiancée Jill Drew, 38, made the move to the inner-city Admiralty Towers II apartment building.

The couple were obviously ahead of their time, with yesterday's release of the Queensland regional plan calling for more high-density living around major transport nodes.

Their 32nd-floor apartment

has views of the Brisbane River, the Story Bridge and the city's eastern suburbs, along with Frodo the peregrine falcon and his family.

Mr Venn said their Queensland dream had changed dramatically, with a shift in emphasis from big verandas and wide open spaces to low maintenance, convenience, lifestyle and security.

"We can walk down to the botanic gardens and feed the possums. There's always something going on and we won't live long enough to go to all the restaurants," he said.

But not all aspects of inner-

city life were convenient for Mr Venn, the state manager for Gold Coast-based concrete company Hymix.

"I still make the trip (to the Gold Coast) for work, but you just can't beat living in the city," he said. "It's perfect for where we're at life."

Ms Drew, who was raised on a farm in Oklahoma in the US, said she knew inner-city Brisbane was where she wanted to live when she arrived in Australia.

And she said the hi-tech security of modern apartment buildings made her feel safer.

"It's safe here, and if you live in a large city in the States, that's a

different story," she said. Apartment life was "easier" than life on acreage, Mr Venn said, with less effort needed to keep things in order.

"Everyone's working long hours and they don't want to then go home and do all the maintenance," he said. "We could spend a couple of hours every weekend working in the garden. Now, we can go for a drive and do what we like."

But Mr Venn was not sure if they would stay there indefinitely.

He still owns his hinterland property, and with plans for a family on the horizon, the call of a big house and yard could prove too much to ignore. "Every kid needs a yard."

## Dealer forced to wind back business

Steven Wardill

BRISBANE Holden dealer at the centre of an odometer tampering scandal has paid for the offence with the ultimate price — his job.

Craig Armstrong, the principal of Armstrong Holden at Woolloongabba in Brisbane's inner south, has been stripped of his dealer's licence for six months, forcing him to sell his share of the company.

The Courier-Mail revealed earlier this year Armstrong Holden was using a special diagnostic tool, supplied to

all General Motors Holden dealers, to wind back the odometers of new cars.

The case sparked widespread outrage and forced an Office of Fair Trading investigation into all Queensland Holden dealers.

Fair Trading Minister Margaret Keesh will today announce Armstrong Holden had accepted a range of forcible undertakings, including the six-month surrender of Mr Armstrong's licence.

"It is illegal to tamper with a vehicle's odometer for the purpose of misrepresenting the actual distance travelled

by the vehicle, regardless of whether the vehicle is used or new," Ms Keesh said. Armstrong Holden will also be forced to employ an independent contractor to conduct annual audits for three years, and donate \$3000 to a charity.

CMH has since stripped the special diagnostic tool of its ability to wind back odometers.

The tool allowed dealers to limitlessly rewind the odometers of new Holden vehicles that had done less than 100km.

Mr Armstrong, who was found responsible because he

held the company's dealer licence at the time, has sold the remaining share of the former family company to another director, Doug Barton.

Paul Parker, another Armstrong director, said yesterday the company accepted the undertakings and would fully comply.

"Winding back an odometer, even for only 40km, is wrong and should not have happened," he said.

"Since the matter was brought to our attention in July, new management has implemented policies and procedures."

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