

Report indicates an extra 34,700 people will be living here by 2021

Mackay ranks in top 10 fastest growing regions

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MACKAY'S emergence as an attractive lifestyle destination with strong employment opportunities has put it among Queensland's top 10 largest growing local government areas.

The region will be the ninth largest growing council area from June 2006 to 2021, according to a State Government population report released yesterday.

The report states that Mackay's population will grow to 156,117 people by

2021, an annual growth rate of 2.5%. By 2031, Mackay's population is expected to reach 187,367.

However, Mackay deputy Mayor Darryl Camilleri said yesterday that council was expecting the region's annual growth rate to be about 3% for the next 10 years as a number of new mines opened up in the Bowen Basin.

Cr Camilleri said council was already planning for the growth, including upgrades to Mackay's water and sewerage systems, which would otherwise be

stretched to service the predicted growth.

Mackay is among the regions expected to grow on the back of the resources sector and yesterday Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade Andrew Fraser said the "rise of the regions" would be apparent in the coming decades.

"Mining towns are expected to boom but Ipswich will have the fastest growth, while Gold Coast will have the most growth," he said.

South-east corner regions made up the top six largest

growing areas while Cairns and Townsville also outpaced Mackay.

Mr Fraser said the impact of continuing resource sector development and investment was particularly evident in Gladstone, Isaac and Central Highlands, all of which featured in the top 10 fastest growing local government areas in the next decade.

The Queensland Government Population Projections to 2031 report listed Isaac as the fourth fastest growing local government area in Queensland with an annual

growth rate of 3%.

A boom in resource activity will drive the rapid population growth in Isaac, which experienced little change in its population from 1996 to 2006.

While Queensland's population will age over the next decade, its projected that only 4.5% of Isaac's population will be aged 65 or over, while 30% will be aged under 20.

In Mackay, only 39% of its additional residents are expected to be aged 50 years and over, compared to 58% in Cairns.

An extra 34,700 people will be living in Mackay by 2021, and according to the report Mackay's growth can be put down its emergence as an attractive lifestyle destination with strong employment opportunities resulting from the expansion of the coal industry to the west and south.

Cr Camilleri said attracting developers to Mackay and keeping up with infrastructure would present big challenges to council over the next 20 years.

"But we are trying to keep up with it (growth)."