

City tipped to grow by 20,000 people in 20 years

Gladstone the key for state's future

By GRACE DUCKHAM

GLADSTONE has secured its future as a vital cog in the success of Queensland, according to one of Australia's leading demographers.

Bernard Salt (pictured) is a leading commentator on population and cultural trends in Australia and has long tipped Gladstone as a city to watch.

He recently pegged Gladstone as one of the top sea-change destinations in the country and will be in the city tomorrow to tell us all why he has such a high regard for the area at a lunch hosted by Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Ltd.

"It's quite clear that Gladstone has a natural role to play in the rise of the Queensland economy," he said.

"The (Rio Tinto) expansion certainly confirms the trends and issues I have been talking about for years. Queensland has been Australia's fastest growing state for the last 50

years, but requires an industrial heartland to keep that growth growing."

And according to Mr Salt, Gladstone fills that role.

"The majority of Queensland's growth is based on the tertiary sector, such as tourism, but lacks the growth in manufacturing and industry that other states have," he said. "Gladstone's future is assured. There is no other town in Queensland like it.

"The town looks set to boom, with over 1000 people a year currently moving to the Gladstone region, generating over \$9 million in retail expenses and about 300 to 400 houses being built every year.

"In 20 years you can expect Gladstone to have grown by at least 20,000 people," Mr Salt said. "It's time to pitch Gladstone as a very strong, industrial place for businesses to invest in, a linchpin for Queensland.



“ Gladstone has a natural role to play in the rise of the Queensland economy ”

“ There is no other town in Queensland like it ”

'Rise and rise' of city a certainty

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"Gladstone can rise with Queensland for decades to come," Mr Salt said.

"I can't really see any other regional city in the state that will be able to compete with it."

"You can't guarantee the future of any place, but the industrial output Gladstone can deliver will always be needed. It has no natural competitor."

Gladstone is seen as such a desirable place to live due to the opportunities it presents to build both a life and a career.

"The Gladstone region is flanked by a large number of lifestyle areas, such as the Capricorn Coast to the north and Agnes Water to the south, while at the same time you're assured of building a successful career thanks to the industrial opportunities it offers," Bernard said.

Although Gladstone offers tremendous potential Mr Salt believes there is still room for improvement.

"I've found that the issues Gladstone is confronted with are the same everywhere, par-

Gladstone's Future

- The Gladstone region can expect to have a further 20,000 people in 20 years
- Gladstone is the industrial giant of Queensland
- Air links, television and production and access to lifestyle places must be addressed to ensure the city's continued development

ticularly with our youth. Australian youth, aged between 18 and 24, tend to leave their hometowns and then come back when they realise the value of it, and to some extent they should be embraced as ambassadors for Gladstone," he said.

"Most people generally leave for education, which means they'll be able to make positive contributions to the community when they do come back. It's generally between the 25 to 30 mark that they start to return," Mr Salt said.

The key, he believes, to keeping them here is making sure

that there is every opportunity for people to achieve the 'affordable brick veneer dream'.

"Ultimately, everyone would like to have a great career and the affordable brick veneer dream - a three bedroom house for \$300,000. People are starting to realise they won't be able to achieve that in places such as Brisbane. But they know it might just be possible in a town like Gladstone."

"People are realising the investment potential," he said.

How do we maintain the growth?

The key is tertiary institutions, with Mr Salt saying every effort should be made to fulfil Gladstone's tertiary potential.

The possibility of a research centre, such as a branch of the CSIRO, should be seriously considered in Gladstone's future.

"Men in white coats add to the intellectual activity of any town. If a research centre were to be opened in Gladstone the town's diversity would broaden. Gladstone already has its farmers, industry and blue collar workers, now it needs its researchers."