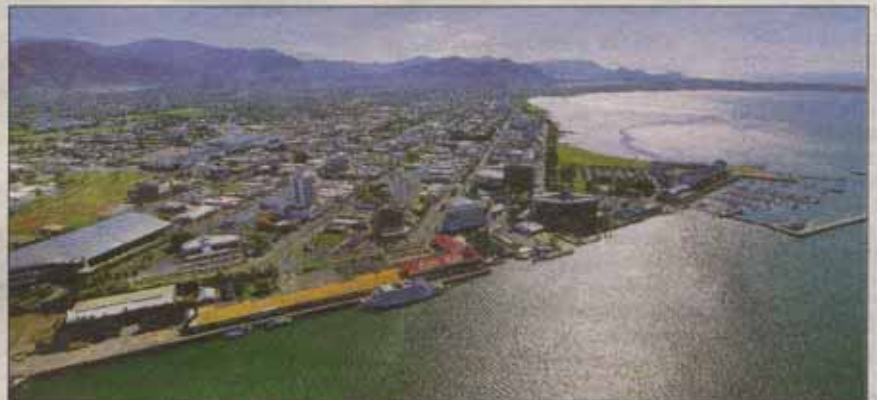


We've passed this dump... ...now we're aiming to top Cairns



Mackay's population will continue to outgrow Rockhampton over the next 20 years, with projections estimating that city's population will almost stagnate. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED



With the increased population set to accompany Boom Two, Mackay could become the second-largest regional centre in Queensland, eventually overtaking Cairns. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

By OWEN JACQUES

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MACKAY'S Boom Two is poised to push our population growth into overdrive.

Within decades Mackay is expected to become the second-largest regional centre, after Townsville, having caught up with and overtaken Cairns.

Mackay became larger than Rockhampton in the early 1980s.

Compared to Rockhampton we are clearly powering ahead, while that city's population numbers continue to stagnate.

In 1995, Mackay and

Rocky were comparable, with Mackay only slightly bigger (about 10,000 people) but by 2006, we had almost 30,000 more.

Urban Development Institute of Australia's Mackay branch president Mark McGrath said he saw no reason why our population would not outstrip Cairns within 20 years.

"What kind of industry does Cairns have compared to Mackay?" Mr McGrath said. "I don't know about Cairns's tourism industry with current fuel prices. Townsville, Mackay and Gladstone will be the powerhouses of Queensland."

Mackay needed to mature and develop other steady industries, such as government departments, he added.

"We've got the potential

on the cards.

"I would say that's how it's shaping up at the moment," Mr Futer said.

"There has been tremendous growth in Mack-

Mackay will be catching up with Townsville and Cairns very quickly.

— HIA North Queensland executive manager John Futer

there to grow and it's very exciting."

Housing Industry Association North Queensland executive director John Futer, in Townsville, agreed Mackay placing second could definitely be

ay and Townsville and Cairns is bigger than Mackay at the moment.

"I would say that Mackay would be catching up with Townsville and Cairns very quickly."

As an insight into Mack-

ay's already accelerating growth, our population in 2006 was growing by 4.2%, while Rockhampton was languishing at 1.5%, according to figures from the Department of Infrastructure and Planning.

The department's most optimistic estimates showed Rockhampton's population growing by 3000 by 2026, while Mackay would grow by up to 40,000.

Department of Population and Infrastructure figures disputed that Mackay would overtake Cairns but the figures were currently being updated.