



Talented and creative: That's us, says report

By Sue Mikkelsen

NOOSA and the Sunshine Coast are among Australia's leaders when it comes to attracting and retaining creative talent, according to the findings of a research report commissioned by the Noosa Creative Alliance.

The report, *Noosa in the Creative Age*, was written by urban studies intellectual Richard Florida's Creative Class Group, which has been commissioned in a \$1.2 million project to attract creative businesses to Noosa.

The report, released on Tuesday, is based on Florida's theory of economic success using the four Ts – Talent, Technology, Tolerance and Territorial Assets – and compared Noosa with similar communities, the Sunshine Coast region, Queensland and Australia.

It presents key measures of the shire's strengths as a creative economy and its current economic standing, and shows Noosa and the Sunshine Coast as among Australia's leaders in attracting and retaining talent, scoring 16 per cent and 21 per cent higher than the national average.

While 39 per cent of the Noosa workforce is already made up of "creative workers", this figure is

growing at an average rate of 6.4 per cent each year – almost double the Australian average of 3.6 per cent.

"Noosa has no glaring weaknesses, and its talent, tolerance and territorial assets are its current strengths," the report said.

Noosa Mayor Bob Abbot said the report provided a valuable benchmark. "It will assist us to develop strategies and pinpoint areas the region should celebrate, nurture and target," Mr Abbot said.

Noosa Council Business Committee chairman Lew Brennan said people all over the world were "screaming for the level of community engagement that we have in Noosa".

Stockwell managing director Mark Stockwell said the report would be invaluable to Noosa and the Sunshine Coast.

"It effectively provides us with a road map of what we need to do and where we need to go to broaden Noosa's economic base," he said.

The report would be used in the Creative Communities Leadership Program where the Noosa Creative Alliance has engaged 30 community catalysts to help put Noosa on the world stage as a community

dedicated to maintaining its natural beauty, while creating an international centre for great thinkers.

The catalysts will review the research finding and brainstorm directions and opportunities for economic growth in the region at a two-day seminar.

NOOSA SNAPSHOT

■ **MORE than 12,800 creative workers** comprise nearly 39 per cent of Noosa's workforce, outpacing the Sunshine Coast region (36 per cent).

■ **Noosa's Creative Class is growing** at an annual rate of 6.4 per cent, almost double the Australian average (3.6 per cent).

■ **About 17 per cent of Noosa's workforce** has at least a college degree, which is below the Australian average (19 per cent).

■ **Twenty per cent of Noosa's residents** are foreign born, ranking it ahead of the Sunshine Coast region but below the national average (22.2 per cent).

■ **Noosa has a large gay and lesbian presence** – 22 per cent larger than the Australian average.



GETTING CREATIVE: Noosa Mayor Bob Abbot, Mark Stockwell and Lew Brennan



Smart way to develop Noosa

WHERE else but Noosa would you find a successful property developer preaching the need for a sustainable local economy that does not rely on the building industry?

Of course, in the case of Mark Stockwell, his heavy involvement in trying to attract the creative classes to Noosa is part of a long-term business strategy to create more than 8000 jobs at his Noosa Civic business park.

Mr Stockwell and Noosa mayor Bob Abbot yesterday released the findings of the Noosa Creative Alliance research, which found the soon-to-be amalgamated shire was already in the box seat for a brighter business future.

The findings, by world-renowned community shaper Richard Florida, of the Creative Class Group, found that

39% of the Noosa workforce was already involved in creative industries, and 34% of local firms were engaged in innovation.

Noosa was able to retain its talent, outperforming the national average by 16%.

Mr Stockwell said it sounded strange coming from a property developer that Noosa's future lay in creating a smart and sustainable economy not based on property development.

He joked he had been involved with Noosa for so long that he had been "brainwashed" by Mr Abbot and council's business and corporate services chairman, Lew Brennan.

Mr Stockwell said the next step would be to use the research to assist the 30 community leaders, or "catalysts", to form business strategies.

— PETER GARDINER



STRATEGIES: Councillor Lew Brennan, developer Mark Stockwell and mayor Bob Abbot.