

Land zoning needs an 'urgent review'

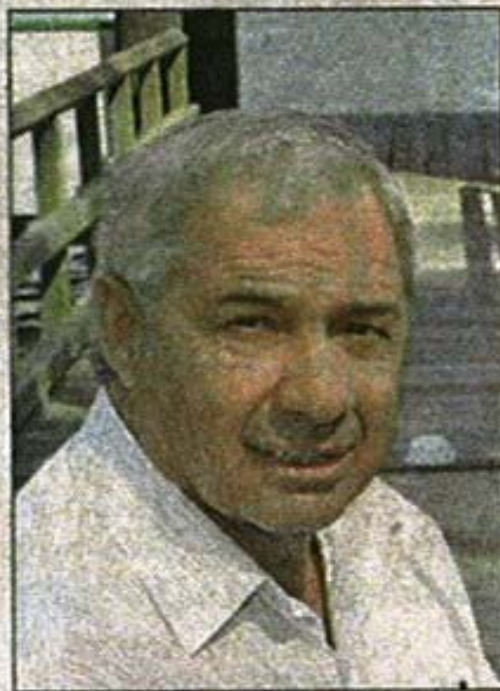
By ANDREW MACDONALD

A RADICAL rethink of the council's land zoning is needed to ensure Tweed Shire can create the jobs needed to prevent the region lagging further behind the rest of the nation.

That was the message from Tweed Economic Development Corporation CEO Tom Senti (*pictured*) at a public forum held by the Northern Rivers board of Regional Development Australia.

At the forum Mr Senti presented research commissioned by his organisation which suggested an additional 25,000 jobs were needed in the shire by 2031 to ensure a workplace participation rate (WPR) of 50 per cent.

This figure is above the current Tweed WPR of 42 per cent but still well below NSW (62 per cent)



and Australian (65 per cent) averages.

Mr Senti attributed the low WPR to a combination of above average unemployment and a high proportion of elderly residents living in the area.

He said to achieve the necessary jobs growth, the council need-

ed to move away from simply rezoning land as residential to accommodate the growing population - which was expected to double in size to 160,000 by 2031.

"There is a need to embrace planning approaches which encourage the broadening and diversification of local economies adopting a master-planned approach to encourage new investments across a broad base, including the accommodation of commercial office developments," he said.

By doing so, the region had the potential to encourage larger companies to set-up operations and bring jobs to the shire, he said.

Mr Senti's suggestion was one of many which will be passed to the NSW Minister for State and Regional Development, Ian McDonald, by the Regional Development Australia board during a meeting next month.