

Expert predicts virtual future for Queenslanders

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THIS is now ... Brisbane's bustling skyline is dominated by skyscrapers. Source: The Courier-Mail

QUEENSLANDERS in 2083 will be moving in virtual worlds, living up to 100 years of age and may have done away with the state government.

That is the opinion of leading Queensland futurist Sohail Inayatullah, who says the state's future hinges on our decisions over the next few years.

"Where we are headed can be broken down to the challenges facing the world and Queensland, and the trends that have already begun," he said.

While he maintains the future is always uncertain, Mr Inayatullah agreed with most scientists that Queensland's future would be shaped by climate change.

"Will the Gold Coast be Australia's Venice? This is a possibility," he said.

"We know the water level is going to rise so people with inland houses may own beachfront property by then."

In a scenario Mr Inayatullah terms a "green, healthy Queensland", the state's resources boom eventually will transform into an energy boom.

"There will be a transition from coal to solar and wind energy which some experts believe will be the cheapest, assuming a global carbon emission regime is in place," he said.

On the political stage, our state government could disappear if Australia eventually joins an Asia/Australian Pacific union.

"There will be very little need for one as our ties become stronger with China and India, which have already begun to become Asian powers," Mr Inayatullah said.

"There will be a strong local community and if trends continue we might see the phasing out of local representatives altogether."

"E-government" is a distinct possibility with every citizen able to take part in day-to-day law making.

"There is every indication that a new form of direct democracy comes in where everyone would all get an SMS asking them to vote yes or no for a law. Everyone votes and the law is made."

What about the day-to-day lives of every Queenslanders?

Mr Inayatullah said the ideal scenario would see a redesign of cities and other environments into ones that were "healthier, greener, and more spiritual".

"The trend is heading away from the nuclear family so we'll see a lot more single, denser-living arrangements with greener rooftops and lots of robotics," he said.

"But by then we won't mind because we'll be able to step into virtual worlds."

Mr Inayatullah said Artificial Intelligence would penetrate every aspect of our lives by 2083.

By that year, we will not be able to tell the difference between the physical world and the world in cyber space.

"This is 75 years we're talking about," he said. "We'll be able to transport from our dingy unit to a sunlit beach in the blink of an eye.

"We will physically live inside those virtual worlds."

But these are just the positive scenarios.

Mr Inayatullah also warned the state could crumble into oblivion if we failed to adapt to the world around us.

"If we begin to build highrises and highways wherever we want, then Brisbane will just become another Los Angeles," he said.

"Crime will go up, social equality will go down and all the things that make Queensland special will disappear.

"At the moment we are seeing trends that mean we will most likely live to be 100 years of age. So let's continue it."

And the question on everyone's lips: Will The Courier-Mail celebrate its 150th birthday?

"In one form or another."