



SUBMISSION TO GOLD COAST CITY COUNCIL RE THE FUTURE OF TIPLERS RESORT

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BACKGROUND:

Tiplers Resort on South Stradbroke Island was recently purchased by Gold Coast City Council for a sum reported to have exceeded \$7 million. The resort and its adjacent beach has for many years been a favourite destination of Gold Coast and visiting boating families. It is readily and safely accessed by even the smallest of craft and the previous owners warmly welcomed visiting boaties.

Since the Council purchased Tiplers Resort, the property's overall condition has been allowed to deteriorate and the boating public has been actively and forcefully advised by security guards that their presence at the resort, including its beach, is unwelcome.

As an industry, we are at a loss to understand why, after providing pleasure and enjoyment to Gold Coast residents and visiting tourists for so many years, access to this valuable recreational boating destination is now being denied to the boating public; especially the beachfront which one would assume is publicly owned land with similar public access rights to any of the Gold Coast's surfing beaches.

Council is to consider the future of the resort when it meets to discuss the matter in mid-October. This submission has been prepared on behalf of members of the Gold Coast Marine Industry at the request of Cr Grant Pforr.

INPUT SOUGHT FROM THE MARINE INDUSTRY:

An e-mail was forwarded to Marine Queensland's Gold Coast members on Friday, 4th September, 2009 highlighting council's decision to purchase the resort and seeking the opinions of members as to their recommendations for its future use. For an industry that is usually fairly complacent, the e-mail solicited many heated responses which indicated the depth of feeling surrounding the purchase and subsequent closure of the Tiplers Resort.

RESPONSES RECEIVED:

In many cases, responses covered similar issues and concerns, although nearly every response had something additional to add to the overall list of grievances. Listed below is a summary of the responses received from members:

The Destination

There are two key aspects to boating: The enjoyment of being underway and the enjoyment of the destination. Tiplers is a key destination; more so for the average family in a smaller boat because it provides a shoreside facility for smaller boats. Larger boats are more self-contained.

It is important to remember that the majority of small boats (predominantly those under 5 metres in length) do not have any on-board food stowage, refrigeration, preparation areas or toilet facilities. Tipplers Resort has always been happy for small boat owners to purchase food and drinks from the Resort shop and to use the Resort's toilet facilities. Without access to facilities such as these, thousands of boaties will be forced to resort to more basic and far less desirable waste disposal methods.

South Stradbroke Island is an extremely important part of recreational boating on the Gold Coast's Broadwater. By and large, most boat owners agree that boating destinations like Tipplers Resort should continue to be available to the current population, as well as being maintained for the benefit of future generations.

USAGE BY BOATING FAMILIES

As at August 31, 2009 there were 26,475 vessels registered to Gold Coast owners. Of these, 23,770 vessels were under 8.0 metres in length, with a further 2,371 vessels being between 8.0 metres and 15 metres in length.

In addition, the Gold Coast's waterways attract boat owners from surrounding local government areas.

Logan City has 10,595 boats registered - 10,192 of which are under 8.0 metres in length.

Redlands has 10,552 boats registered – 10,004 of which are under 8.0 metres in length.

Ipswich has 5,036 boats registered – 4,933 of which are under 8.0 metres in length.

Brisbane South has 13,826 boats registered, most of which would be used on Gold Coast waterways.

In total, this catchment area contains 66,484 boats, the vast majority of which enjoy the protected waterways of the Broadwater and waterways between Southport and Jacobs Well, including the delightful beaches of South Stradbroke Island.

These figures are further boosted by a substantial number of boats from the Tweed area who use the Gold Coast's waterways, as well as the many interstate holiday makers who tow their boats here to enjoy the Gold Coast's waterways.

Until its recent closure, upwards of 50 boats a day would visit Tipplers Resort, anchor off in the protected waters, or simply pull up on the sandy beach. Holidays and long weekends would often see many more.

Boat owners are now stating that Council's security staff are ensuring that they neither land on the beach, or tie up at the resort's jetty. They claim that since Council purchased the resort it has been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that it is no longer an attractive place to visit. (Perhaps this is what Council intended all along).

ALTERNATIVE BOATING DESTINATIONS

Considering the vastly increased number of boats now using the Broadwater between the Southport Bridge and the Jumpin Pin area and combining this with the appalling rate of siltation and the vast areas of sandbanks that have developed over the past 6 – 8 years, the Broadwater is indeed shrinking. The city is growing at a rapid pace. One in 6 people who has moved to the Gold Coast has registered a boat. It is imperative that we maintain and if possible, increase the number of safe and appealing boating destinations.

Wavebreak Island – Virtually the only ‘natural’ destination with safe anchorages and sandy beaches now available to small boat owners. More often than not it is so heavily used that there is insufficient room for the number of boaties trying to anchor or enjoy its beaches. There are no toilet facilities and no facilities to buy food or drinks.

The Marine Stadium – On the northern end of The Spit, the Marine Stadium is also heavily used by owners of both small and large boats, especially on weekends and public holidays. This sheltered area is particularly important as a safe anchorage in which to take shelter in inclement weather.

Couran Cove – Actively discourages boat owners of all sizes from entering its sheltered waters and beaches. Boat owners know that they are unwelcome there unless they are going there to stay in the resort. This is quite beyond the reach of small boat owners and large boat owners have 5-star accommodation on board, so why would they stay?

Calypso Bay – ‘Harrigans Tavern’ provides a limited number of berths for casual visitors. The venue enjoys strong support from the boating community but generally, if the boat is not docked by 12 noon, anchoring off and rowing ashore is the only option.

There are other quiet anchorages within the Gold Coast’s waterways system suitable for overnighting on board a boat, but these are generally considered to be unsuitable for going ashore due to the mangrove systems and lack of general amenities.

GENERAL FEEDBACK & COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS

Not one person who has responded, either by e-mail or by phone, has been in favour of Council’s decision to use ratepayer funds to purchase Tipplers Resort. Furthermore, the majority of respondents have been aghast that having purchased the resort, council had no prior strategy for its redevelopment or future usage. There is a widespread belief that there is a hidden agenda to return the resort to a wilderness area and that this option is not in the best interests of existing or future generations of Gold Coasters and visiting tourists.

Listed below is a cross section of comments received from industry participants:

- For what ever reason, this purchase should not be within the Council’s charter to purchase public land on islands, or anywhere else, other than to create new parks where they are necessary. There is already a large dedicated park area on South Stradbroke Island.
- Council funds (Ratepayers funds) should not be used to purchase a resort that has enjoyed the patronage of so many people for so long. To a large degree the people using Tipplers Resort have been the lesser well off. They too could enjoy the beautiful scenery and water views very largely denied to them.
- There should be a referendum on the future of Tipplers Resort from the citizens of the city of Gold Coast. The decision to re-open, re-furbish or re-sell it is theirs – It’s their money.
- I have not found anyone whatsoever who actually agrees with the purchase and closure of Tipplers resort. In fact everybody (and I specifically ask as many people as I can) have been completely against the two closures on South Stradbroke Island to date. A senior council officer told me in confidence that all boat club leases will not be renewed and the master plan really is to turn the whole area into wasteland, as was done with the Hargraves lease , between GCBC and Couran Cove approximately 10 years ago.

- In real terms, what the council has done and what I believe is being proposed, does not have the backing of ratepayers, boaties, tourists and commercial operators. It appears to have been carried out in haste, without any forethought and really should be just reversed before any more costs are incurred. It really is something I believe the boating industry as a whole should take on board and see if we can make a difference
- As a very interested and adversely affected party and someone who has had the opportunity to discuss the closure with a diverse range of ratepayers, boat owners, visitors, residents and commercial operators, I can categorically state that I have not found one individual who has agreed with the closure and in fact all without exception have been vehemently opposed to it.
- I would suggest that the decision to close the resort has alienated the council with all stakeholders it has affected. I am sure the council and its councillors will be called to account once the huge cost to ratepayers is properly realized. It would appear that the closure decision was made without full investigation, without any foresight and certainly without the best interests in mind of the general public who use and enjoy the island.
- Rumours have been very strong that the closure was at the bequest of the State Government. This has been strongly denied by the local MP, however with the difficulties being experienced by leaseholders in the Tiplers Passage region to have confirmation of renewals of their leases, and the obvious abandonment of the other lease taken over by the council (no doubt it is being left derelict so that demolition will not cause an outcry) and the return of the Hargraves lease to wasteland a decade ago, it would certainly appear the same future, (i.e. returning the whole area to a wasteland) awaits Tiplers.
- It is felt that the only viable and acceptable action that should be taken is to have private enterprise reopen the resort and have it run in a similar vein to previously. 99% of the time it was a wonderful family destination. It was not pretentious but was safe, affordable, accessible and enjoyable; certainly much better than a lot of other Gold Coast tourist areas. Currently there is no suitable destination anywhere on the island for tourists and boat owners, with the other resorts really only catering for their own guests and putting up with any other visitors only under sufferance. Rest assured, I have recently visited all other options there. Not one offers anything acceptable or comparable to what was available at Tiplers Resort. It should also be noted that the so called shop occasionally being run at the site is a sham and is something the council should be embarrassed about.
- Should you require any further feedback from all those people that the council ignored when the closure decision was made please do not hesitate to contact me, we all hope common sense will eventually prevail.
- Interestingly the senior council employee I spoke to a few months ago, and they are in a position where they would know these things, stated that this had all been done at the bequest of the State Government. I asked Peta Kaye Croft, the local MP whether there was any truth to it and she very unconvincingly stated 'definitely not'.
- Tiplers has long been a favoured anchoring point for boaties, including ourselves. It is important that the facilities remain, as many small boats do not have toilet facilities and Tiplers is an important toilet stop. Many boaties also need to access a kiosk.

- Recreational boating is an important part of the Gold Coast economy and life style, closing Tiplers will only put adverse pressure on other areas.
- As a manufacturer of recreational boats and avid boaties we urge the Gold Coast City Council to consider all the facts before making a decision on the future of Tiplers Resort. We believe that sound environmental management can include provision for recreational pursuits.
- The majority of boat owners and indeed most of their friends are absolutely gob smacked at what appears to be a knee jerk reaction by some overpaid bureaucrat. There are precious few safe areas where we can enjoy the Gold Coast's silted waterways and Tiplers was an iconic destination.
- I would like to see Private enterprise be given the chance to tender to the GCCC for the rights to build and or partner an acceptable resort on the site, including marine facilities as well as accommodation adapted to the local environment for all boaties, tourists and locals to respect and enjoy ...
- I personally would love to see Tiplers or a similar facility re-open ASAP. It is great to "have somewhere to go" in your boat. I feel it was not Council's finest decision.
- The Gold Coast is crying out for recreational boating destinations and Tiplers Resort has over the years provided a valuable and prime destination for boating enthusiasts.
- I fully support Jeff Leigh-Smith's philosophy that we need to create more destinations similar to Tiplers to help spread the rapidly increasing vessel traffic on our limited and congested weekend waterways. Wavebreak Island is a classic example. The Gold Coast Seaway was opened in 1986 and Wavebreak Island was constructed as a breakwater for heavy cyclonic easterly wind and sea conditions. Here we are 23 years later with a destination that provides a large number of anchorage positions on any given weekend and is always maximized to the hilt!
- Our Company is the largest luxury motor yacht brokerage of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. We are also proud Gold Coasters and have been since 1982....I personally have been boating in the Broadwater and Tiplers passage as a tourist from Sydney since the mid 1970's. I personally think it was a disgrace for the Council to buy this property with ratepayers' money, then to just close it down without thought of at least replacing it with the same style of tourist asset for the Gold Coast region and this Tiplers Passage sheltered waterway in particular.
- The majority of us originally came to the Gold Coast as tourists...we loved the beaches and waterways. We either stayed and started new lives and businesses here, or went back to where we came from and told someone else about it. Then they came here on holidays as well ????. I would like to ask each councillor 'How, when and why they came to live on the Coast' and also ask if any of them has ever visited the Tiplers Resort on a boat as a tourist ????? Interesting !
- The Broadwater , in it's clogged sandbar state, is definitely in need of dredging.. I feel so strongly that the money used by the council to buy the Tiplers Resort could have been much better spent over an acceptable period of time with the GCCC joining forces with the Federal Govt. In implementing and carrying out a suitable dredging program to keep the existing Southport Seaway , marked channels, council approved marinas and Government gazetted marine precincts open for navigation on all tides... After all, The Government and Council would not permit a large shopping centre development to be approved and built in our City if there were no highway or suitable road system to the proposed area..... Would they ???

- I have spoken to many Gold Coast boaters since the closure of the Tiplers Resort and the possibilities of losing the Tiplers Passage altogether. I have only heard stories and opinions of disappointment and amazement in the council buying and taking this area back.
- We need the Tiplers Passage area to stay open for increased safety reasons...This City is growing !!!!! Maybe the GCCC Councillors need to see for themselves just how busy the Broadwater can be on any given sunny weekend.... They would get one hell of a shock !! In fact, I would like to make my own boat available to take the Councillors out one fine Sunday to prove the point.
- I, along with literally thousands of waterway users strongly object to Tiplers closure. To see the vandalism that is now taking place makes me very sad indeed.
- Tiplers Resort, a boaties destination has been purchased by the Gold Coast City Council at a cost of \$7M +. At this stage the resort has been locked up and abandoned. The council is now calling for suggestions as to what they should do with it (just a bit late). However the feeling from all is that the plan has always been to knock it down and return the area to wasteland.
- Since Council purchased it, Tiplers Resort has been allowed to run down into an overgrown dump. I visited the resort in my boat on Fathers' Day. On a beautiful Sunday afternoon, there were no other boats there. In previous years there would have been 20 – 30 boats anchored in Tiplers Passage and pulled up on the beach. There were 2 or 3 police or security guards present and they just wanted us to get lost. There were signs saying the maximum time anyone could tie up to the wharf was 20 minutes – hardly enough time to walk to the shop and back. The place is overgrown and the pool has been allowed to turn green. What a shame! The 7.5 million dollars spent buying Tiplers would have been far better spent on dredging the sandbars from the Broadwater. Council really has lost the plot on this one.
- We used to go to Tiplers every Sunday and take our friends and our grandchildren. We'd have a meal and a couple of drinks then go back on our boat. Our grandchildren loved feeding the wallabies and getting the toys out of the machine they had over there.
- It was a great place to take overseas clients to. Over in China there is nothing like Tiplers, a holiday resort that everybody could go to.
- In all the years we have been going to Tiplers we have not witnessed any bad behaviour from any patron visiting or staying there. It is a real shame that Tiplers was closed and there are a lot of angry boaties out there, including us.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Given the depth of feelings expressed by all of the respondents, on behalf of the Gold Coast's marine industry we make the following recommendations:

- 1. That Council take action to immediately re-open Tiplers Resort on South Stradbroke Island.**
- 2. As the new owner of Tiplers Resort, that Council take immediate action to clean up and repair the existing facilities and surrounding areas.**

3. That Council immediately abandons its present policy of denying small boat owners the right to beach their boats on the beachfront at Tiplers Resort .
4. That Council calls for expressions of interest from private operators to refurbish and run the resort for the benefit of the Gold Coast residents and tourists alike.

The Gold Coast's Boaties, their families and friends NEED this area kept open !!! It Is an iconic Gold Coast boating and tourist destination...! With such a high percentage of boating enthusiasts, one that is growing so quickly each year, we cant afford to lose even one boating destination.