



## \$450M RESORT REVIVAL

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Cyclone battered Port Hinchinbrook will be transformed into a world-class tourism destination under bold plans to build a new resort, caravan park, water park and fishing village. Details of the revamp are revealed in a masterplan for the \$450 million development, rebranded Hinchinbrook Harbour, which has been unveiled to residents. New owners The Passage Holdings plan to start construction next year, with the redevelopment to be completed over the next 10 years. The fishing village will be geared towards the international market, the resort and water park will cater to families while there will be a 300-site motorhome park, campground, backpacker accommodation and new marina.

Real estate agent for The Passage Holdings, Bruce Goddard of Place Projects, said the new owners had financing behind them while some parts of the redevelopment would be sold to private operators. "There are well-heeled people involved in this project," Mr Goddard said. "The caravan site will be sold ... and the fishing village site will be purchased by a fishing operator to develop that and run in their own right. We already have a verbal agreement for the fishing village." The project is expected to create more than 3000 jobs with \$4 million already spent on restoring the resort, which was severely damaged by cyclone Yasi in 2011, and creating the masterplan. The first stage will include accommodation facilities including a 4.5-star resort and 12 marina-front villas. The water-front restaurant will be open by Christmas and trade as a BYO establishment until a liquor licence is finalised.

Mr Goddard said the restaurant would be able to seat more than 200 people and serve a diverse menu including seafood. "All the physical works are complete but we are still working through the liquor licencing process which should be finalised by March, allowing the bar to reopen" he said. Bulldozers have been brought in to prepare the settlement ponds to dredge the clogged marina and grand canal. Dredging is expected to start in February and take 18 months, resulting in high tide access being restored. Earlier this week stakeholders, including The Passage Holdings chief executive David Haubert, met residents during three days of community consultation. Hinchinbrook MP Andrew Cripps said he had been reassured by the developers that access to the public boat ramp would be maintained, the sewage plant was operational and dredging would occur.

"The people of the Cardwell district are all hoping this is the start of a revival for development but there has been a lot of promises made in the past and starts and stops. There is a lot of scepticism in the community," Mr Cripps said. "One of the things I'm very confident about is that we can develop the tourism products to make Hinchinbrook Harbour a great destination and Cardwell a great destination because we have some of the best natural assets in the region." The Port Hinchinbrook re-sort began to decline during the global financial crisis before cyclone Yasi caused extensive damage, sending then owners Williams Corporation into liquidation.

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