

Mission Beach
Surviving & Thriving post TC Yasi

What Mission Beach needs more than anything right now is commitment from government to the glaringly obvious lack of Marine infrastructure

OVERVIEW

1. Prior to last weeks TC Yasi, Mission Beach was fast becoming an alternative Tropical holiday destination being to the more well known townships of Port Douglas, Palm Cove and the City of Cairns. Mission Beach has all the natural attributes to make it a thriving beachside destination;
 - Closest mainland point on the East coast to the Great Barrier Reef
 - 14 Km of stunning uninterrupted beaches
 - World Heritage Rainforest that surrounds the town and in places travelers to the waters edge
 - Exquisite uninhabited rainforest Islands that all have stunning beaches, as well as Dunk Island and Bedarra Island, just off the coast
 - Tully gorge – Best White water Rafting in Australia
 - Hull River – inland river surrounded by heritage listed rainforest – ecological masterpiece
 - Home of the famous flightless Cassowary, Australia’s largest bird.
 - Australia’s most popular skydiving drop zone in Australia
 - Magnificent fishing
 - Wreck diving – “Lady Baron”, and more.

In Short Mission Beach has all the attributes, short of Marine infrastructure to become an epicenter of Tourism South of Cairns. Inland there are many existing tour operators longing for a regional beach and Barrier Reef destination.

- Traditionally Mission Beach has suffered from several major obstacles in terms of attracting private capital being,
 - The Town has been split between two councils
 - No sewerage up until 2004
 - No proper modern supermarket
 - Businesses predominantly owned by “lifestyle” investors
 - No recognized tourism body

In recent years all of these issues have been addressed.

- Post the Queensland council amalgamations, Mission Beach now falls into the **Cassowary Coast Regional Council** and indeed has a Mission Beach resident as the Mayor.
- **The sewerage has now gone in, Woolworths has built the largest supermarket in North Queensland**
- **The three largest tourism businesses in the town are now owned by sophisticated investors who have all improved their respective assets and wish to continue to invest.**
- **Mission Beach Business and Tourism is now well organized and entrenched with now has a legitimized tourism organization that is well organized and focused on destination promotion.**
- **Castaways, Elandra and Dunk/Bedarra Islands have employed a full time representative in Europe promoting the destination and the individual hotels. Next year in European wholesale Brochures Mission Beach will figure prominently alongside Port Douglas and Cairns as a holiday destination for North Queensland for the first time.**

CURRENT MARINE INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES;

- Prior to TC YASI the marine infrastructure at Mission Beach was farcical. Recreational and Commercial businesses used outdated and in some cases condemned state owned assets to load and unload international and domestic tourists.
- The Jetty at Mission Beach is not protected from rough weather and it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured trying to load or unload passengers. This Jetty is now in a state of disrepair post TC Yasi
- The boat ramp that is protected by a small rock wall at Clump Point is too small, does not have adequate scale and is a bottle neck every weekend.
- **There is no safe access to the mainland from the islands during heavy weather, and more importantly, no safe refuge during inclement weather. This is a major issue for both recreational and commercial vessels.**
- The recreational users are in constant conflict with the commercial users due to the limited space on the small pontoon next to the ramp itself.

- There is no fuel, no shelter, no running fresh water, no retail convenience, no bathrooms for tourists or locals.
- **There is no place for any passing vessels to pull in at Mission Beach to enjoy the natural wonders of the area, opportunities such as dry boat chartering from the Whitsundays to the Tropical north are one of many tourism developments that could occur with appropriate Marine infrastructure.**

The Opportunity

The management plan will allow for a marina development that will satisfy the most critical elements of any modern boating facility built in 21st century Queensland. These include:

- Appropriate community amenity
 - Increased capacity for ramp usage and trailer parking
 - Wet Berths (main source of revenue, therefore there will be a critical number required to recoup capital)
 - Appropriate commercial wet berths
 - Additional wet berths areas for passing vessels and vessels seeking shelter
 - Ability to re fuel safely, and discharge sewage
 - An appropriate amount of mixed use commercial and retail areas for tourists and infrastructure administration.
 - We are not seeking industrial hardstand infrastructure and associated industry. This can be accommodated in either Port Hinchinbrook, or Innisfail.
- Clump Point has a reserve for local government boat harbor purposes (R1649 – lot 550 on NR 7351).
 - An appropriate marina/boat harbour facility at Mission Beach will attract significant additional investment in the current assets in town, but more importantly will attract new investors into the Mission Beach area. There are many tour operators waiting to see infrastructure developed before committing to the area.
 - There is a significant amount of private investment that is currently sitting on the sidelines waiting for the government to commit to a management plan. and in turn a Safe Boat Harbour at Mission Beach
 - The Community, **NOW MORE THAN EVER NEED LEADERSHIP**, and will be overwhelmingly supportive of an announcement committing to improved Marine Infrastructure.

- Mission Beach has the natural assets to attract the boating industry and become a similar tourism area to the Whitsundays, indeed there is demand from the Whitsundays to lease space in a facility in Mission Beach to develop the dry boat charter industry.

In addition to the economic stimulus that will result from an announcement on Marine infrastructure improvement, the following projects will proceed in the immediate Mission Beach vicinity;

- Castaways will proceed with its plans to build stage 2 and 3 of its master plan which will see approx \$40m invested in additional room stock in the immediate area.
- Hideaway Resorts Pty Ltd will proceed with their plan to re build both Dunk and Bedarra Islands post TC Yasi
- Elandra Resort at south Mission Beach will re-build post TC Yasi
- Calypso adventures will invest in a faster and larger vessel to take tourists to the Reef – they currently operate at 25% of their existing permitted passenger numbers due to the limited marine facilities.

Short of receiving Government support for Marine infrastructure the above projects will be shelved and indeed some of the operators above may choose not to re-build post TC Yasi, namely Dunk Island and Bedarra Island.

Tourism Queensland has identified the lack of marine infrastructure at Mission Beach as their number 1 priority tourist infrastructure requirement for their regional plan for 2010-11.

QTIC report to government post TC Larry highlighted;

“The greatest constraint for economic development of Mission Beach was indeed the lack of government infrastructure, namely Marine Infrastructure.”

Unlike post TC Larry, today the Mission Beach Business community is well organized and focused on the need for Government assistance. The lack of Marine infrastructure was highlighted in every post Larry report to government yet there has been NO progress.

The leaders of the Mission Beach community are committed to seeing the needs of our community met this time around.

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