



MEDIA RELEASE

Issued Friday, 27 February 2009

Tourism industry seeks heart transplant

Tourists have been bypassing the Townsville city centre for too long. That's the message from North Queensland's tourism industry ahead of the Queensland Government election.

Townsville Enterprise, tourism operators and representatives of the Queensland Tourism industry have banded together to call on the State Government to back the redevelopment of Flinders Street.

Townsville Enterprise Chief Executive Officer Glenys Schuntner said retailers in Townsville's CBD receive half the spending from tourists of their Cairns counterparts.

"Research shows that visitors to Townsville spend seven dollars per day on retail products in the CBD, whereas visitors to Cairns spend an average of thirteen dollars a day."

"Revitalising the Flinders Street area is vital for tourism development in the region – the city needs a beating heart."

Townsville Brewery Managing Director Peter Summers said the mall upgrade is absolutely vital for tourism operators in the CBD.

"I'm currently in New Zealand walking around their tourism precincts, everything is pristine, in order, manicured and stunning. We walk through our mall and it's a disgrace. You can't even walk without tripping."

"Without any form of rejuvenation in the city heart shopkeepers will not be interested in spending money on their buildings. We made a huge decision to refurbish our building. That was a major decision because we've got such an eyesore outside."

"We're talking about how important a new shipping terminal is. But what's the point of having a shipping terminal if we don't have somewhere nice for them to

go when they get off the boats? This is our city heart. This is what they see when they get off the boat. It's the key to our city."

Visitors to the Brewery regularly comment on the dilapidated state of the Flinders Street precinct.

"Our customers talk about the state of the mall, about how it appears unsafe, how it looks dirty and degraded. Our city centre is dead. These visitors feel it's not in keeping with the great infrastructure we have at the Strand and Palmer Street. We've got these great spots for visitors – but the city centre is totally the opposite. It's not a welcoming place," Mr Summers said.

"If the Government is going to spend money on a cruise terminal to bring more visitors into the CBD area what sort of welcome are they getting from a run down city centre?"

The need for a revitalisation of the city's tourist gateway has won the backing of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC). QTIC Chief Executive Daniel Gschwind has backed the proposal for government funding for the Flinders Street project.

"We strongly believe that this initiative will revitalise this important precinct and provide a gateway for tourists to the Townsville region," Mr Gschwind said.

Mr Gschwind cited the growth of the cruise market and the proposed Townsville Ocean Terminal as major driving factors for the redevelopment.

"The redevelopment of Flinders Street will offer cruise visitors an attractive precinct close to Townsville's new Ocean Terminal while, at the same time, enabling retailers to maximise the benefits of this market."

ENDS

For more information contact Nathan Campbell on (07) 4726 2753 or 0434 182 765