

# The Sydney Morning Herald

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HD **Resort boosts Airlie Beach**  
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The renaissance of Airlie Beach, on the Whitsundays Coast, Queensland, is under way with more than \$100 million of new developments in the coming year.

The latest is the \$70 million ONE Whitsundays Resort & Spa, which is the first resort development in the area since Airlie Beach was flattened by the global financial crisis. The first sod on the project was turned this week.

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While the bustling township is a backpacker and boatie paradise, the cash coming in from the surrounding area between Mackay and Proserpine is also attracting a more business-focused crowd.

As a result, more **property** developments are earmarked near the Port of Airlie, whose marina has already undergone an expensive facelift, and the town is now dotted with upmarket bars, restaurants and fashion stores.

Airlie Beach is also seen as the main gateway to the 74 islands that make up the Whitsundays, including the Hayman and Hamilton.

Daydream **Island**, which has an average yearly turnover of about \$27 million and whose replacement value in 2010 was estimated at more than \$157 million, is on the market.

Wayne Bunz, senior director of CBRE Hotels, and Dan White of Ray White, and White & Partners, have been appointed to sell the **island**, and said both domestic and international tourists, including the growing **Chinese** market, are likely to be attracted. The owner is selling due to ill health.

John Zappia is the chief executive of the ONE Whitsundays Resort and significant financier to the project. Together with Anthony Leenders, the ONE Whitsundays **group** general manager, they are in discussions with a major **hotel** operator to manage the resort, once completed.

It is pitched at investors who can **buy** one of the 75 strata-titled apartments of one, two, and three bedrooms or one of the two penthouses, with an asking price of about \$3.2 million.

The resort also includes a large-scale conference centre, seating 300 people.

Mr Zappia said he was drawn to the area as it is undergoing a resurgence and lacks facilities and apartments to cope with the expected boom time around the corner.

"Airlie Beach was hard-hit by the GFC and has been overshadowed by other towns along the coast," Mr Zappia said.

"But after extensive research, we feel the tide is turning and demand for these resort-style investments is gaining momentum."

Mr Leenders, who manages the Cafe del Mar bar brand in Australia, said the changing demographics of the Whitsundays meant the bar would be popular at the ONE Whitsundays Resort.

Whitsunday Regional Council Mayor Jenny Whitney added the Airlie Beach town is set to indirectly reap the benefits of major economic developments taking place in the area.

These include the country's biggest coalmine, Indian mining giant Adani's \$16.5 billion Carmichael Coal and Rail Project in the neighbouring Galilee Basin.

It has an estimated 60-year resource value of \$300 billion and has been given federal government approval.

It coincides with the \$6.4 billion coal project in the Galilee Basin, which includes a railway line running directly to the coal port of Abbot Point.

The author was a guest of ONE Whitsundays Resort.

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