

Cairns Post

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HD **MP spills on Aquis licence**

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CAIRNS MP Gavin King has revealed that the State Government wrote to the developers of the \$8.15 billion Aquis mega-resort to “persuade” them to formally apply for a casino licence.

He said as soon as Aquis chairman Tony Fung announced that he was pulling out of the integrated resort development application process to negotiate using the Reef **Hotel** Casino licence to cover the Yorkeys Knob **site**, Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney wrote a letter to ask them to continue with the formal resort submission.

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The Fung family has made a \$269 million bid to **buy** the Reef **Hotel** Casino with Premier Campbell Newman indicating that there is an option to split the licence to cover the Northern Beaches **site**.

Mr King told yesterday’s Cairns Chamber of Commerce meeting that the government was concerned that the Fungs had dropped out of the integrated resort process which proposed two new regional gaming licences.

He said Mr Seeney had written “a polite letter” asking them to “please come back into the formal process”.

Mr King said splitting a licence was seen as not being “fair to other proponents”. He said it would have sent a signal to other casino operators that they also could split their licences to cover other sites.

“It would have made the IRD process redundant,” Mr King said. “It is important that all proponents are on the same level playing field. “Their Brisbane lawyers wrote back immediately confirming that they were back in the process and that sent us a strong message to their commitment.” Mr King said an important aspect of integrated resorts – which included two on the Gold Coast, two in the Airlie Beach area and one on Great Keppel **Island** – was the proximity of overseas flights.

He said both Aquis and the Gold Coast were close to international airports, while the others were not.

“Aquis is very well placed,” Mr King said.

He said the probity stage was now under way with Attorney-General officials travelling to **Hong Kong** to investigate Aquis and other proponents.

Mr King said he was “very, very confident” that in a couple of months the situation about the regional resort applications would become clear.

He said with the expressions of interest closing on March 31 it would be known soon “who was serious and who would drop out”.

An Aquis spokesman told The Cairns Post the **company** had written to Mr Seeney confirming that the **company** would continue with the integrated resort application.

“We don’t have a preferred option to obtain a licence for Yorkeys Knob,” he said. “We are happy either way.”

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