

Outrigger to manage new international resort in Townsville, Australia

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Australian developer and construction giant Laing O'Rourke unveiled plans this week for a new AUD \$80 million multi-level resort condominium and residential building on Palmer Street in Townsville, Australia, to be managed by Outrigger Hotels & Resorts.

Construction on the project is slated to begin in mid-2008, with a projected completion in late 2009.

Townsville, located along Australia's north-eastern coast, is North Queensland's largest city with over 165,000 residents. The 2,600 square meter project site is located in the heart of Townsville's thriving Palmer Street dining and entertainment precinct, with spectacular views across Ross Creek out to Magnetic Island.

Plans for the site include 120 condominium apartments with a total letting pool of 160 keys to be managed by Outrigger, together with 24 private residence units over the upper three levels of the building that will include exclusive access and a private residents' club facility.

Resort facilities will include a lagoon-style pool and extensive landscaping, 24-hour reception and tour desk, fitness room, private boardroom and breakfast area, along with ground floor restaurant and retail outlets to complement the thriving alfresco dining precinct along Palmer Street.

Outrigger Hotels & Resorts' Vice President-Oceania, Cliff Olson, said the company was extremely positive about moving into Townsville's accommodation sector, based on the region's buoyant tourism industry underpinned by a strong economy and population growth.

"Unlike traditional tourism centres that can be affected by seasonal fluctuations from leisure sectors, Townsville enjoys a consistently strong customer base from the business travel sector," Mr Olson said. "We're looking forward to adding to Townsville's corporate accommodation offering while also helping to grow leisure travel through our global sales and marketing networks," Mr Olson added.

Laing O'Rourke's Development Manager, Pat Kenny said the company had held discussions with a number of prospective hotel groups who were keen to manage the resort and elected to proceed with Outrigger.

According to Mr. Olson, Outrigger Hotels & Resorts is one of the Pacific's oldest, family-owned hoteliers and has extensive experience in managing condominium resorts in Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand. "In fact, Outrigger was one of the first international hotel chains to specialize in condominium resort management when the company entered Australia in 1998," Mr. Olson said.

The proposed resort will deliver a much needed boost to Townsville's accommodation and dining sector, which, according to Townsville Enterprise, equates to three per cent of the region's GDP, compared to manufacturing, government, defence and mining sectors that are driving population and economic growth to the region.

"This is a great opportunity for Laing O'Rourke and Outrigger to leverage the growth of Townsville's blue-chip and government industries and deliver this much needed, high quality four star development for Townsville," Mr Kenny said.

A two-hour flight from Queensland's state capital, Brisbane, Townsville is becoming an emerging tourism destination, due to its location next to the diving mecca of the Great Barrier Reef and many nearby natural assets including rainforests, outback and islands.

The Townsville project marks the third of Outrigger's most current ventures in Australia. On November 1, 2007, Outrigger assumed management of the Outrigger Twin Towns Resort located at the twin towns of Coolangatta and Tweed Heads astride the boarder of Queensland and New South Wales. Outrigger also will manage the Outrigger Viridian Resort & Spa in the town of Noosa when it opens in 2009. Outrigger's growing Australia inventory is part of its overall Asia Pacific expansion strategy that includes the recent announcement of the company's first resort property in Phuket, Thailand, the West Sands Outrigger Resort, along with two projects currently underway in Bali, Indonesia, the Outrigger O-CE-N Resort and the Outrigger Viridian Resort & Spa.

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