

“THE GOLD COAST CITY MARINA AND INDUSTRY GIANTS, LED BY AUSTRALIA’S MOST SUCCESSFUL LUXURY BOAT BUILDER RIVIERA MARINE, HAVE ESTABLISHED WORLD-CLASS FACILITIES ON 50 OF THE 250 HECTARES THAT WILL EVENTUALLY BE AVAILABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT”



# GOLD COAST MARINE PRECINCT

A BOAT-BUILDING PARADISE BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP

**With nine times more waterways than Venice and 60 square kilometers of sheltered waterways, 71 Marinas and 37 boat-ramps, Gold Coast City has always been a boating paradise.**

Now an innovative initiative – a unique partnership between government and industry to establish the Gold Coast Marine Precinct – has transformed the City into a boat-building paradise – the Mecca for marine manufacturing in Australia.

“The location is absolutely ideal,” says Gold Coast Deputy Mayor, Cr David Power as he espouses the virtues that make the City the perfect marine manufacturing location – access to the boating playgrounds of the Great Barrier Reef, Coral Sea and South Pacific Ocean, sub-tropical climate, safe navigation, reliable transport and a lifestyle to be envied.

While the location and lifestyle were ideally conducive to marine manufacturing, the specific location chosen for the Gold Coast Marine Precinct, on the Coomera River, was far from ideal in the state it was in – before the Gold Coast City Council, in partnership with the State Government, stepped in to establish the firm foundations of a successful precinct, literally.

“It was a swampy, flood-prone piece of disused farmland that really wasn’t much good for anything,” Cr Power recalls.

“The flooding issue was a big one, as we couldn’t afford to increase flooding in other areas of the catchment, by allowing the various land-owners to simply fill in their sites.”

“Instead we had to negotiate with all the land-owners, and the State Government, to come up with a co-operative solution, which allowed all landowners to partially fill their sites, in order to maximise development potential, while minimising flood risk.”

The next complex step was to widen and dredge the river and gain special approval to build so close to its banks.

Even with these major hurdles solved, the precinct would not have got off the newly-raised ground without almost \$5 million in Council investment to build the initial roads, water and sewerage infrastructure – most of this money is being repaid by industry, which has invested much more, \$136 million in fact.

The Gold Coast City Marina and industry giants, led by Australia’s most successful luxury boat builder Riviera Marine, have established world-class facilities on 50 of the 250 hectares that will eventually be available for development.

Other large players include Quintrex, Australia’s largest manufacturer of aluminium boats and custom yacht builders Azzura Yachts, which have recently moved to new, state-of-the-art facilities in the precinct.

The precinct now employs more than 2,500 people – Riviera alone boasts more than 1,000 staff and is responsible for a large chunk of the earnings of an industry worth \$390 million a year to the Gold Coast economy.

Even Gold Coast Marine Industry Association President Charles Dickson is staggered by the success achieved in such a short space of time.

“The industry, apprehensive at first, has really realized the benefits of clustering and the synergy created by having a supply chain of 70 companies supporting the major manufacturers,” Mr Dickson says.

“It would have to be one of the most successful clustering operations of any industry in Australia.”

It is a sentiment echoed by Jeff Leigh-Smith, who has done much to foster the growth, through his Gold Coast City Marina, one of the precinct’s founding businesses and Australia’s largest working marina.

The Marina recently celebrated completion, after six years of staged development and a total investment of \$A55 million. It features Superyacht berths and 8 Superyacht refit & construction factories, along with a 150-tonne ship lift.

“It has worked a lot better than we ever thought,” Mr Leigh-Smith says.

“Competition breeds quality and boat buyers and owners like coming to the one location where they can get all their needs serviced and shop around for the best deal, while individual operators can share the business and enjoy flow-on work from each other.”

“It is really like a football team, where you pass the ball between yourselves for the whole team’s benefit,” is his positive analogy.

Council and industry leaders are now working to keep the momentum going, with the only limiting factor being a shortage of skilled staff in what is a labour intensive industry.

Again, an innovative approach has been called for, with the precinct’s marine manufacturers looking to the motor industry, which has already proved a major source of labour.

“While staff numbers in other manufacturing industries are contracting through the uptake of technology, the complex nature of the marine industry means that even with innovations in technology and advances in production processes, a large workforce will continue to be needed for the foreseeable future,” Mr Dickson says.

“The growth and success of the Gold Coast Marine Precinct can only continue.”

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