



PORT DOUGLAS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

EMBRACE • ENHANCE • PRESERVE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2011 27 October, 2011

This report covers the activities of the Port Douglas Chamber of Commerce for the year 2010/2011.

The business climate in Port Douglas has continued to be well down on the levels experienced in 2004 although 2011 was slightly better than 2010 on some indicators. The exchange rate, interest rates and lower discretionary spending are the main factors which affect both domestic and international visitation. The figures below are based on the ABS accommodation statistics which remain the only source of accurate information at the Douglas level. There are no reliable statistics on tours, restaurants and retail, however, anecdotal evidence suggests that tours were up in 2011 and retail and restaurant takings down. It appears that while the visitor numbers were slightly up, spending per visitor was down with retail feeling the worst impact. Note also the drop in nightly rate for accommodation reflecting the competitiveness of this sector. Since 2004 there has been a steady decline in visitor nights, accommodation takings and the nightly rate for accommodation but it appears we have reached a turning point. The real estate sales and investment sectors mirror these difficulties with sale prices and volumes both down.

	2004	2010	2011
Visitor Nights	1,114,285	906,537	934,084
Accommodation Takings	\$85m	\$66.1m	\$67m
Accommodation Nightly Rate	\$174	\$159	\$155

Source ABS Accommodation Statistics

Apart from the factors above which adversely affected the tourism industry nationally, the floods and cyclone Yasi in the first quarter created even greater problems which for our area were largely in the perception of impacts rather than the actual impact.

All these issues cannot be addressed by actions of the Chamber, however, we must endeavour to create the best tourist town in Australia to maximize our market share. We do this by advocating the presentation aspects of the town, pushing for improved infrastructure, undertaking events such as Carnivale, improving service quality and improving security.

Principal Activities 2010/2011

New Year's Eve Fireworks. The 2010 fireworks cost \$12,000 and this was funded by Cairns Regional Council and local businesses. Subject to the support of local businesses we propose to undertake a similar event for 2011. Under the banner of the Celebration Fund we are

currently trying to raise additional funding from businesses and the Council to light up Macrossan Street and provide a more festive atmosphere for our visitors.

Carnivale 2011. Carnivale was a great success in 2011 and there is evidence of improved visitation during this period with the first weekend of Carnivale having most accommodation booked out. The marketing impact of Carnivale is the greatest value of the event and we received significant exposure around Australia and New Zealand. Given the depressed tourism market throughout Queensland this was a particularly great outcome. The total budget was around \$200,000 for the Chamber and an additional \$200,000 for independent events such as Food & Wine. Carnivale provides an economic benefit of around \$1.5M for Port Douglas and has the potential to create even greater economic benefit with the support of the business community. The Cairns Challenge was conducted following Carnivale with some Challenge events being held in Port Douglas. The exposure of the Challenge was huge for the region, and particularly Port Douglas, and the combination of Carnivale and the Challenge creates a great opportunity for increased visitation.

Carnivale 2012 is now being planned and a committee has been established to oversee the event. There are significant changes under consideration including the Port Douglas Food and Wine Festival which will be on the first weekend and encompass all the food events. Family and sporting events will be on the second weekend. Any ideas from business or community that will enhance Carnivale 2012 are welcome.

Functions. Again there were only a small number of functions held during the year with the main event a very successful lunch with Premier Anna Bligh who made a commitment to return any funds from the sale of leasehold land at the waterfront to undertake work on the waterfront redevelopment.

Training and Business Support. The Chamber conducted a workshop in September 2011 which enabled participants to get information directly from local, state and commonwealth experts on available funding and assistance programs to assist businesses. The Chamber will be conducting an increased training program in the next few months utilizing funding from government to provide a variety of training courses. Members are encouraged to let us know about their training needs to ensure the courses are relevant.

Cruise Ships. The Chamber recognizes the importance of the cruise ships visiting our port. Apart from the benefits of visitor spending on tours, retail and restaurants during their stay we need to ensure the visitor experience provides a positive image of the attractions which will drive future visitation. The Chamber has employed a person to meet and greet passengers and provide useful information. In conjunction with TPDD we are now creating a volunteer ambassador program to continue this important activity.

Infrastructure. The waterfront plan has now been approved and the Chamber has participated in this important plan which provides a blueprint for the future. Although much of the controversial part of the plan related to the lagoon, there are significantly more aspects relating to the way Port Douglas will develop into the future. Having this plan will enable the town to develop in a structured way.

The esplanade project has been on the Chamber's agenda since the Chamber was formed and we have now seen a significant step forward in upgrading this area with the completion of most aspects sought. A small amount of work still remains to be done and we will be pursuing this with Council. The replacement of handrails on the headlands walk adjacent to the esplanade has also been represented to Council and this project has recently been commenced.

The provision of an evacuation centre costing about \$6M will be the biggest capital project by government in Port Douglas for many years and the Chamber sees that there is an opportunity to do something that will create a huge economic benefit for the town by combining the evacuation centre with a conference and indoor sporting facility. The Chamber has written to the Premier requesting consideration of a project which is much more visionary than the current proposal.

There are many other capital and maintenance issues which the Chamber has and will continue to represent to government in order to make our town the best tourist town in Australia.

Business Awards. In conjunction with The Newspost the Chamber supports recognition of the best performing businesses in town. The annual business awards are an excellent way of achieving this and we will continue to encourage businesses to pursue excellence through awards and other mechanisms.

CCTV. The safety of our local people and visitors is an important aspect of our community. One of our assets in attracting visitors is that Port Douglas is a safe place and we want to keep it that way. We have raised the issue of CCTV with Council and although we have not been successful to date, we will continue to pursue this as a long term goal.

Commerce Queensland and other Chambers.

The Chamber is a member of Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland and we have attended regional meetings with CCIQ and other Chambers. In this forum we are able to feed our concerns into CCIQ for representation at state level and obtain relevant policy and statistical information which can be passed on to members.

Membership. Active membership is currently around 70 and we would like to see this increase to at least 100. Unfortunately we have not had the resources to put enough effort into increasing membership and we would hope to do better in the next year.

Office Premises. The Chamber thanks Meridien Marina for their support in providing office premises for the use of Carnivale and the Chamber.

There are many challenges ahead for the next 12 months with the continuation of the items mentioned above to completion as well as new items. An active Chamber is an important asset of the business community but it will only continue to function with the support of business through membership, the input of ideas and the willingness of some in the community to devote some time as a committee member. I would like to thank the Chamber 2010/2011 committee who has given significant time to make this a better place for business and the community.

Ken Dobbs
President