



Queensland on track to lure World Superyachts

Queensland's azure blue cruising waters are about to become even more attractive to the lucrative international superyacht market.

Restrictive regulations regarding permits, visas and a range of other government and logistical hurdles are finally being overcome to make Queensland more superyacht friendly.

Meridien Marinas General Manager Adam Fernance said local businesses in the Mackay Whitsunday area are working with the Queensland Government to tackle issues that have made entering Great Barrier Reef waters difficult for superyachts.

"A new visa has already been introduced to allow foreign crews into our waters. Crews aren't classed as tourists and weren't covered in any of the visa categories so that's an important breakthrough for skippers and their crews," Mr Fernance said.

The Queensland Government Superyacht Strategy, launched in May, is helping local businesses in the area work together through the Mackay Whitsunday Super Yacht Cluster (MWSYC) to provide a supply chain for superyachts visiting the Mackay Whitsunday region.

Meridien Marinas Abel Point Manager Richard Barrett said more and more businesses are realising the potential of the superyacht market and are joining the MWSYC to help meet the needs of the market.

"Changes already in place are paying dividends with a noticeable increase in the number of superyachts coming into the area. Abel Point has played host to around eight superyachts in the past two months and we estimate each vessel and its crew contribute between \$4,000 and \$7,000 a day to the local economy," Mr Barrett said.

The Mackay Whitsunday area had been dogged by previous reports of superyachts snubbing the Whitsundays because of difficult regulations. International fashion designer Giorgio Armani exited the Whitsundays in protest last year over the slow process of obtaining a permit to anchor in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

"We need to look at what other desirable destinations around the world have and match it. Places like the Caribbean, Monaco and the Greek Islands have become havens for superyachts. We need to make sure we can provide the same seamless regulatory environment and on shore facilities the superyachts need," Mr Barrett said.

The State Government Super Yacht Strategy identifies four main superyacht regions in Queensland: Far North Queensland, The Whitsundays, Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Meridien Marinas covers these areas and includes in its marina portfolio Port Douglas, Horizon Shores on the Gold Coast, Abel Point Marina at Airlie Beach and the \$500 million Port of Airlie integrated marina community project currently under construction.

Both the Queensland Government Super Yacht Strategy and the Mackay Whitsunday Super Yacht Cluster are assessing superyacht needs in the area to advise the region and help develop marketing plans.

Mr Barrett said Meridien Marinas is well poised to capitalise on what is a huge growth opportunity in the super and megayacht sectors.

"We have facilities for 155 Superyachts at Abel Point, and we'll be aiming for at least another 80 at Port of Airlie," he said.