

A tired Airlie Beach Hotel reborn as hot property



CLIENT

The Airlie Beach Hotel is owned by the O'Neil Group and is located on the doorstep of the Whitsunday Islands and Great Barrier Reef in North Queensland.

OBJECTIVES

The O'Neil Group contracted Wiley to redevelop the tired and traditional beachfront property into a three-and-a-half to four star venue in a financially viable way and in time for a high season opening. The refurbished hotel was to feature a resort-style atmosphere, swimming pool, lifts, secure parking, reception facilities, guest laundry, café bar and restaurant, retail shops, and quality accommodation in apartment and hotel suite styles to fill a void in mainland accommodation options.

CHALLENGES

- Devising a viable redevelopment solution for the client who had been unsuccessful in previous attempts to redevelop the hotel
- Accommodating environmental requirements for sympathetic use of the unique foreshore site, maintenance of the town's village atmosphere, and height restrictions on the building
- Designing rooms of sufficient quality to achieve the client's target for room tariffs
- Constructing the project with a limited workforce and on a tight budget
- Working to a short project schedule timed for a high season opening
- Collaborating with the client, local authorities and local residents
- Applying strict project management to minimise the effect of days lost to inclement weather
- Revising the design to allay community objections to the proposed height of the building.

SOLUTIONS

Advice

- The first viable and cost-effective redevelopment solution the client had received in many years
- Recommendations for solutions to the environmental requirements
- Master planning, and cost planning and control.

Design

- Design strategies to satisfy the environmental requirements, the client's target for room tariffs, and the restricted budget
- Inclusion of innovative construction techniques and low maintenance/high quality materials, including:
 - Post-tensioned floor slabs to reduce the floor to floor height of the building and the amount of structure supports and to deliver a high degree of waterproofing;
 - Limited use of beams for maximum ceiling heights;
 - Lightweight fire-rated walls in the hotel rooms to facilitate possible future conversion of the rooms into apartments;
 - A mixture of masonry block and rendered lightweight walls for the external building faces
- All design and documentation for the project.

Construction

- Construction management to meet the project deadline
- Effective management of a limited construction workforce and commissioning of subcontractors
- Intense project management, particularly of trades during fit out, to minimise the effect of 30 days lost to wet weather and to remain on schedule for the opening date.

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RESULTS

The transformation of a tired 'pub' into an attractive 8,819m² accommodation venue, with 80 hotel-and motel-style rooms and self-contained suites that allow 22,000 more tourists to stay on the mainland each year and that benefit local and regional economies.

The refurbishment was completed on a time for a high season opening and under budget, with three per cent of the total project cost saved.

The project was awarded a Queensland Hoteliers' Association Excellence Award for Best Redevelopment Accommodation and Australian Institute of Building Professional Excellence Award.