

New beds for booming Port Hedland community



Port Hedland has experienced considerable growth due to new and expanding resources projects.



Auzcorp's Beachfront development has turned the Port Hedland Detention Centre into an asset for the resources industry.

A new housing development in the Pilbara town of Port Hedland is expected to go some way to easing the critical accommodation shortage that is affecting the key mining centre, while simultaneously removing a blight on its landscape.

The Port Hedland Detention Centre was established in the 1990s to house asylum seekers arriving on Australia's west coast by boat. It closed in 2004 following a drop in the numbers of refugees received and a history of protest activity over Australia's detention policy.

The Federal Government put the lease for the facility out to tender last year following strong lobbying by the Town of Port Hedland. Developer Auzcorp opened the culmination of that process on May 5 this year – a A\$7 million accommodation facility named Beachfront.

The project is expected to make a significant impact on the shortage of short and long-term housing in Port Hedland, which is the major port for the Western Australian resources industry and home to many workers, both permanent and temporary, servicing the Pilbara's booming mining and petroleum sectors.

Beachfront has provided an immediate 400 extra rooms in the town and will benefit the resources industry and the tourism industry that competes with it for beds.

The timing of the project is particularly fortunate in light of the massive influx of temporary and permanent residents that are expected in Port Hedland during the next 18 months. The Utah Point Berth port expansion and construction of the new Port Hedland Hospital will add further stress to that which has already been created by the resources industry.

Auzcorp undertook a long consultation process with major resources companies to ensure the dining and accommodation facilities at Beachfront met the needs of their staff and contractors. The company also worked with the Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship on the delivery of the project.

Auzcorp project manager Dan Caddy said the creation of Beachfront was not easy.

"One cannot emphasise enough the unique challenges presented by the fact that we were attempting to convert a decommissioned detention facility into somewhere people might like to call home," Mr Caddy said.

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Auzcorp also opened the Mia Mia Hotel in the iron ore mining centre of Newman in November last year.

Western Australian Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region, Vince Catania, said it was pleasing to see a local company tackling such an unconventional project, which would provide a net benefit for the region and the resources industry.

The Town of Port Hedland is also currently looking at creating a new village that would be capable of accommodating more than 1200 transient workers. A meeting in Port Hedland in April was attended by 21 prospective tenderers for the project.

Town of Port Hedland Mayor Stan Martin said the town was working closely with the State Government to release more residential land in Port Hedland and its satellite suburb, South Hedland.

"It is expected that in three years there will be around 1700 new houses throughout town," Mr Martin said. ■