

Far North Queensland isn't as far off the beaten track as it used to be, and Meridien are creating both aquatic and terrestrial developments which are transforming the gateway to the Barrier Reef, Airlie Beach. The Port of Airlie development is the jewel in Meridien's portfolio and is the result of twenty years of planning. Port of Airlie on completion will incorporate a luxury resort, the Boathouse residential apartments, oceanfront homes, public boardwalk, park and man-made beach, retail and commercial centre, ferry and cruise terminal and a 289 berth marina.

Founded in 1997, Meridien is a privately owned property development company that delivers projects to the market that are unique, innovative, and in many cases, like Port of Airlie, quite extraordinary. Meridien's areas of expertise include Property Development, Retirement Living, Marinas and Student Accommodation. With a multitude of awards under its belt, Meridien is committed to leading the industry and driving innovation, vision and passion in every project and business it owns.

The company's Port of Airlie project is the first tourism enterprise to be approved under Australia's Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) 1999, and has undergone unprecedented environmental scrutiny. All coastal engineering for the project has accounted for climate change, with building levels designed for global warming predictions over the next 100 years. Sea walls have been made significantly higher and stronger, with Boathaven Beach having been

designed as a wider public amenity but also providing active protection to the development by diffusing wave force impacts.

The unparalleled engineering design of Port of Airlie is that it is totally man made. The whole development was formed on reclaimed land from below the high water mark. Meridien had to import 1.9km of marine grade sheet piles from Belgium to help isolate the site from the ocean and allow excavation of mud and solid material. This process resulted in the turnover of 1 million cubic metres of material and therefore allowed Meridien to excavate 21 metres below sea level, storing surplus mud below the flooded marina harbour. This incredible engineering feat enabled Meridien to build on good quality residual material above the high water mark.

The Boathouse Apartments comprise of 56 residential apartments and over 1,600m2 of retail area and have been constructed for Meridien by award-winning Queensland contractors, Hutchinson Builders. Gary Hunt of Hunt Design, the architect for all elements ensured Port of Airlie echoed traditional Queensland architecture. The Boathouse Apartments were built with North Queensland tropical amenities in mind, from wide openings, louvers, shutters and screens to light and unique hardwood timber floors made of light coloured maple flooring with dark walnut timber strips in between the boards to look like the laid deck of a luxury yacht. Stainless steel detailing completes the finish of the apartments.

"The Boathouse Apartments have an energy efficient design. There is airflow through from front to back so the breeze gives natural ventilation, minimizing the need for air conditioning. There are also

extensive overhangs, blinds and shutters. Where we can use recycled materials, we have. Lighting and air conditioning are both energy efficient, and there is an 180,000L rainwater tank built in adjacent to the tennis court, with the water used for pool top up and irrigation", says Development Director John Warlow.

"This project will be one of the most significant on any tropical coast anywhere in Australia. The classic colonial design will make this complex work with the natural local environment making the destination somewhere special – not just in Airlie Beach, not just in Queensland, not just in Australia, but anywhere in the world," said John Warlow.

"Port of Airlie has passed approval processes in all three tiers of government and has the overwhelming support of the Airlie Beach community. We've had an independent environmental auditing process in place during construction, which was part of the approval conditions, and we were given a compliance scorecard of 95 per cent plus. That's exceptional considering we're working within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and adjacent to a National Park."

"This has been a very exciting and challenging project. This entire Port of Airlie development will be something we can be justifiably proud of."

Hutchinson Builders had the challenging task of turning the architect's vision into reality. Their team commenced on site in May 2009 and have now completed The Boathouse Apartments. The structure combines

tropical pavilion style architecture and traditional Queenslander designs, and is comprised of reinforced concrete clad with weatherboards. The lower levels of retail area also feature sandstone cladding.

All the concrete for the construction was poured in situ, with the staggered design of the apartments for private balconies and the segmented design of the building used to "hug" the curve of the boardwalk and marina creating a complex scaffolding and formwork task. To complicate this further, access to the units is through a large scale walkway structure on the western side with six stair wells, which steps off the building by three metres. This intervening space is filled with a planting which maximizes privacy now, but during construction the suspended walkway and the non-linear geometry of the apartments' design posed a tricky access issue.

"I've been involved in some complex buildings, but the architecture of this one made it extremely complex," said Hutchinson's Project Manager Chris Stevenson.

"The articulation and fenestration of the building is very non-standard, none of it worked with modular scaffolding. Also, the building has a cantilevered concrete boardwalk system which overlooks the marina, so there we used a cantilevered formwork system supervised by a coxswain and survey boat and large dumb barge for the construction which was conducted with the ebb and flow of the tides!"



BOATHOUSE APARTMENTS

CONSTRUCTION COMPANY : Hutchinson Builders
CLIENT : Meridien
COMPLETION : November 2010
ENGINEER : Morgan Consulting Engineers
ARCHITECTS : Gary Hunt & Partners
PROJECT END VALUE : \$90 Million

AT HOME IN PARADISE



“Part of the challenge was educating the (subcontractor) resources locally to achieve the design vision. There are a lot of turrets, central roofs, twin pyramid roofs with extensive detailed timber battening, it is one of the few jobs we’ve done with such extensive carpentry. The shelters we designed ourselves; with extensive exposed stained timber carpentry works and concealed connections - something we were very proud of! We had to be very discerning with the materials in such a corrosive environment 10 metres from the sea. Marine Grade stainless steel is the only option for all the bolts, joins and other components.

“In Airlie Beach, the logistics of deliveries are a real challenge. There are no regular freight deliveries, so pre-planning is very important, as is flexible planning. We had a local transport company driving back and forth from Brisbane, but it is still a two day journey. With design development, as tolerance issues and design rectification issues emerged, there had to be scheduling flexibility.

“Everything is cyclone rated, all the battering, fixings and shutters are braced to the maximum.”

Chris has 14 archive boxes of drawings in his site office, a tribute to the effort his team made to achieve the architect’s vision and make it a buildable right down to achieving the homely soft interior finishes. Incredible attention to detail was required in this project, with weatherboards needing to line up precisely, a task which required setting up multiple datum levels and enormous amounts of scaffolding.

The elements themselves played a part in making works complex, with constant waterproofing required due to an unseasonal year of rain. Further, tie-downs of all loose materials and equipment were ongoing,

the value of this was proven with an actual cyclone visiting the site in Autumn 2010.

In the final stages, Hutchinson’s workforce on site peaked at thirty, including up to six foremen. There were 45 separate subcontractors, many of them local to the Far North Queensland region and half of the overall workforce of 160 at the peak of works were locals. Despite all the challenges and complexities, the project was completed LTI free.

Development Director, John Warlow believes when complete, Port of Airlie will boost the local tourism and employment economy. “This will be a sizeable and dynamic destination. Meridien has invested in this community for the long-term and we will continue to have input into Port of Airlie. This will ensure the original vision and goals we set are maintained into the future.”

“This has been a very exciting and challenging project, starting from below sea level. The entire Port of Airlie development will be something we can be justifiably proud of.”

Be a part of Port of Airlie’s exciting future as it continues to evolve into becoming a world-class, fully integrated residential resort marina destination. Apartments are now selling. Display Apartment now open, for more information regarding Port of Airlie or to visit the display apartment please call +61 7 4948 0643 or email info@portofairlie.com.au.

Other projects Hutchinson Builders are working on in the region include Bowen PCYC, Proserpine School, Hayman Island, a five Green Star commercial building in Mackay and portable accommodation refurbishments of 1,500 units for mines at Moranbah and Dysart. The company recently opened an office in Mackay and another in Townsville to anchor their activities in the region.

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AIRLIE ACTION SCAFFOLDING IN DEMAND

Airlie Action brought local knowledge and trades know how to the Boathouse Apartments site as the subcontractors responsible for scaffolding and rigging on the luxury waterfront residential development. The local knowledge is a real safety plus for scaffolding on a site where cyclones can be expected, and did arrive in early winter this year.

With development on the rise in the Whitsundays area and surrounding islands, Airlie Action’s services will be in high demand for many years to come, as further construction gets underway at the Port of Airlie site, including two hotels and fifteen luxury homes.

The company’s capabilities cover all aspects of scaffolding, scaffold hire, mining and related services: labour including qualified scaffolding and rigging, transport, mobiles, handrails, grandstands, rubbish chutes and viewing platforms. Airlie Action also operate and hire lifters and shifters, including telehandler with 13m reach, man cage and bucket; 10 tonne crane truck with 8.5m tilt tray; and 7.2 tonne 6.780 tare crane truck with 6.8m tray. When it comes to construction in the Whitsundays region, Airlie Action can get a project moving both onwards and upwards.



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PRECISION STEEL FIXING'S TROPICAL VENTURE PAYS OFF

Precision Steel Fixing (PSF) have followed the sun, with their highly skilled workforce now engaged on some of Far North Queensland’s most prestigious major projects, including The Boathouse Apartments at Meridien’s Port Of Airlie project.

PSF had a crew of up to 14 fixing all the steel for The Boathouse project’s foundations, slabs, stairs and walls over a nine month works program for the in-situ concreting. Following their efficient, LTI-free effort on this stage of Port of Airlie, PSF will be working on subsequent stages.

The relocation of headquarters to Townsville last year has seen great demand for their talents. Other major projects include Douglas Arterial Duplication for AbiGroup and Seymour White; Townsville Wastewater

Upgrade for Baulderstone; Holborn Apartments for RCQ and Townsville’s Northshore Shopping Centre, also for Baulderstone. PSF continues to operate in Sydney, with a crew at work on a twelve storey residential development in Marrickville for Waterside Constructions.

“We have a large workforce capable of undertaking steel fixing for multiple major projects in both Queensland and New South Wales,” said PSF Director, Luis Freitas.

“Our workers have regular training in OH&S and safe working at heights, we prepare work method statements for every job and all workers are supplied with the appropriate PPE, including harnesses, and trained in its use.”

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