

Tourism keen to cash in on Australian PGA boom

By **BILL HOFFMAN**

TOURISM chiefs plan to cash in on the benefits the Australian PGA brings to the Sunshine Coast despite the threat of visitors missing out on playing one of the best courses now available—Twin Waters.

Horton Park Golf Club officials remain optimistic members will eventually agree to a plan to buy Twin Waters for \$28 million, a move they have said would lock out holidaying golfers from the popular resort course.

They met council officers yesterday seeking to up the ante on the \$39 million and 20% of profits from redevelopment council has offered for

Horton Park. However, Mayor Bob Abbot said from Sydney that while the offer would stay on the table, it was firm.

Regardless of what happens Sunshine Coast Destinations manager Michael Denton said plans were under way to cash in on the unique opportunity the Australian PGA offered tourism on the Sunshine Coast.

As part of its contract to support the event council has an exclusive marketing agreement to access 600 PGA-controlled golf pro shops around Australia.

The plan is to market golf holidays year round to the

home of the PGA, offering packages to suit all price entry points at courses across the Coast.

Mr Denton plans to sit down with operators of other international-standard courses across the region to maxi-

about the ability to reach out to club golfers across Australia to offer them a Sunshine Coast experience at whatever entry level price they can afford.

"I'm not sure the Sunshine Coast really understands that it has one of the three major tournaments played in Australia," Mr Denton said.

"The bigger issue (than the potential loss of Twin Waters to tourism) is to get the tourist industry to understand what it really has."

Meanwhile, Federal MP and Horton Park member

Alex Somlyay has called for the club to involve all members in planning its future and considering its options.

He said the deal put to members by the board didn't add up and didn't make sense.

Mr Somlyay, who said he was just an ordinary member with the same single vote as everyone else, said two courses could have been bought for the \$39 million the board said it would cost to relocate to Twin Waters.

He said the club's 53-hectare golf course should be the most valuable piece of property on the Sunshine Coast.

"The deal is just not good enough for the value of the land," he said.

Coolum PGA on course for \$11m stimulus

THE Australian PGA Championship at the Hyatt Regency Coolum next week is expected to drive an \$11 million economic boost for the region.

Council's economic development and entrepreneurship portfolio holder councillor Lew Brennan said more than 50,000 spectators were expected at the tournament which starts on Thursday.

"More than half of those people will come from outside the region, which means a timely pre-Christmas boost for business," Cr Brennan said.

Sunshine Coast Destination Limited CEO Michael Denton said the event would also mark the first public appearance of the Coast's new brand, Naturally Refreshing, which will be viewed by spectators here and around the world.

"It is a 'money can't buy' opportunity, to promote our brand and destination to a national and international audience," he said.

"We couldn't afford to pay for such significant exposure. We even had John Daly last year tweeting the Coast's praises.

"When you think of the appeal such an event has, particularly with such a strong contingent of players from all parts of the globe, including emerging destinations such as China, it has the ability to open doors and expand partnerships."

Mr Denton said the high-profile event brought a "high end, established fan base whose passion for golf also extended to local restaurants, retail therapy and nearby attractions", translating into more Coast visitor nights.

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— Michael Denton

mise the opportunity presented through the PGA's exposure of the Coast to the Asian market.

But he is equally excited

Charity golf day stunning success

ORGANISERS have hailed yesterday's third instalment of the annual Celebrity Charity Golf Day a stunning success.

Held at Crowne Plaza Pelican Waters Golf Resort and Spa, the Bank of Queensland event attracted some 150 participants and was expected to raise a record amount of up to \$45,000.

The big name line-up included TV personality Ray Martin, Melbourne Storm coach Craig Bellamy, AFL legend Leigh Matthews and Queensland Origin coach Mal Meninga.

Maroochydore-based children's charity SunnyKids is the beneficiary of funds raised at the event.

SunnyKids partnerships and communications manager Renae Carolan, who had been involved in organising the golf day since May, said everything "ran like clockwork".

"The support from the celebrities is phenomenal. They're having such a good time," she said.

Other high-profile names who teed off yesterday included former Wallabies coach Rod Macqueen, AFL great Robert DiPierdomenico and Olympic Games rowing gold medallist James Tomkins.

In its first two years, the event raised about \$60,000.



ON THE BALL: Robert DiPierdomenico and James Tomkins helped organisers raise funds for SunnyKids at the annual Celebrity Charity Golf Day Clash of the Codes corporate sports lunch.

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