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CITY BEAT



GLEN NORRIS

LOST IN TRANSLATION

คนไทย
to English



STEPHEN St Baker, the son of billionaire Trevor St Baker, has co-founded a new startup aimed at reducing the county's immigration bottleneck.

St Baker, an experienced executive in the energy sector who also owns the popular Thai Jumbo restaurant in Brisbane's CBD, founded AcudocX in 2019 with veteran Thai translator Dylan Hartmann (both illustrated) to simplify the translation of documents needed before visas could be approved. As labour shortages afflict restaurants and other businesses around the country, the long delay in approving work visas has emerged as a major impediment to bringing in workers. There is still a backlog of about 740,000 visas, including 140,000 skilled worker applications, to be processed despite the government treating it as a high priority.

Hartmann, who grew up in northern Thailand as the son of international school educators, says it can take weeks for translators, most of whom work part-time, to complete translations.

AcudocX has developed a platform that allows documentation to be uploaded and translated in a simplified process that does away with the need for applicants to hire their own translator.

"We can do this in under an hour, and on average for self-service translations, have certified translations in as little as 15 minutes," Hartmann says.

"We've designed the system to have minimal touchpoints which reduces time burden and improves data security."

St Baker says translation services are a US\$50bn industry and the company was keen to talk to potential partners about expansion both in Australia and globally.

"In Australia, we are wanting to address almost a million international immigrant applications," says St Baker. "It can also service the millions of temporary visa applications submitted annually."

Hartmann says he came up with the idea when he returned to Australia to

work on translations for a billion-dollar gold mine lawsuit between Australian company Kingsgate and the government of Thailand.

"I was translating over two million words a year for this case, as well as continuing my regular translation work," Hartmann says.

"Then I started getting calls from the general public to assist in translating their personal documents. It was mayhem at the time, and I was the only Thai-English translator in Brisbane. The work was burgeoning, and my price could only go up, and that didn't seem fair to customers." Hartmann says he saw the opportunity to use technology to cut wait times.

"Before Covid-19, the volume of immigration requests was very high," he says. "I was receiving so many basic personal document jobs, such as translating birth and marriage certificates, that only required basic information to be translated like dates of birth, place of birth, parents' names and so on, and I thought how can I make it easier for the customer and guide them to input this information directly into a template?"

AcudocX provides translation work in 28 languages, with more expected to be added. "There really has been an upswing in work since borders reopened," he says. Hartmann says the platform has been designed for ease and flexibility and adopts a simple three-step process.

Firstly, the customer uploads documents and inputs their data to the relevant template. Then, a certified translator verifies the data, with the customer informed of progress, and finally, the files are made available for safe and secure download. Hartmann said, in the past, customers have been forgotten in the translation journey. They would first need to find a translator on a directory and hope that the translator might respond or even be available to take the job, and then scan and send their documents, make payment, and finally, wait for the translation delivery.

Shopping centres cool havens in the tropics

SENTINEL Property Group boss Warren "The Property Whisperer" Ebert (pictured) has made a \$280m bet on people preferring to go shopping in the north rather than swim with crocodiles.

Following the record-breaking purchase of Darwin's main retail centre Casuarina Square, Ebert has now acquired the Caneland Central Shopping Centre in Mackay.

Sentinel paid \$280m for Caneland Central to the Lendlease-managed Australian Prime Property Fund (APPF) Retail just over eight months since settling on Casuarina Square with GPT Group for \$418m, in the syndicator's biggest deal since it was established in 2010.

While the retail sector took a hammering during the Covid-19 pandemic, Ebert says regional shopping centres particularly in the tropical north remain community focal points.

"I used to travel a lot through Asia and I'd think why are they always in these shopping centres," he says.

"Then when you start doing your due diligence in Northern Australia, when it's 36 degrees and 90 per cent humidity, I can tell you, you don't go swimming because you've got the crocodiles and the sharks, and it is just too hot, so people go

into the shopping centres. In 2022, Brisbane-based Sentinel has spent more than \$800m on new assets, while staff numbers have soared to more than 100 to accommodate the growth. With 65,964sq m of gross floor area and 202 tenants, Caneland Central is the largest shopping centre in the region, servicing a catchment of more than 175,000 people. Anchor tenants include Big W, Coles, Target and Woolworths, while it is the only retail centre with a Myer within 320km.

"Caneland Central is the first property to be owned by the Sentinel Caneland Mackay Investment Trust and it is the premier shopping and lifestyle destination in the Mackay region," Ebert tells City Beat. "Like Casuarina Square, Caneland Central completely dominates its market. Every man, woman and child in Mackay comes to Caneland four times a month.

"You could never duplicate this centre and you also cannot find another 14ha site like this in the city, let alone even close to the city." Caneland Central first opened in 1979.



Builders win nationals

SEVEN Queensland builders picked up gongs at the Master Builders' national excellence awards last week.

Hampton Homes won the renovations/extensions award of over \$2 million for its Welsby New Farm in Brisbane. Toowoomba's Gordon Bourke Constructions won the contract home under \$350,000 for Bianca; and George Built Constructions' Mackenzie won the Master Builders insurance brokers contract home \$350,000 to \$500,000 award. Besal Constructions won the contract home \$500,000 to \$750,000 award for Dicky Beach House, while Honed + Polished Concrete won specialist contractor of the year in the residential sector for Sky Garden House in Noosa.

In construction, Multiplex Constructions bagged the Cbus high rise apartment building award for The One Residences in Brisbane, while Hutchinson Builders picked up the fit-out award over \$10 million for the West Village Retail Precinct (pictured).

