

# Business Review

**P18** Cultural centre delays defended

**P23** Regulation blues

## 20 new stores Squared away

**Camden Smith**

Work has begun on an estimated \$25m redevelopment of Casuarina Shopping Square designed to make the centre safer and improve customer experience.

As the centre prepares for the expected mid-year arrival of a major international store, construction crews at the Bradshaw Terrace end of the complex are reconfiguring the taxi rank and planners and valuers are sweeping the building finalising the changes.

In November, this masthead exclusively revealed centre owner Sentinel Property Group's plans to upgrade The Quarter, build a new three-storey carpark, relocate the travelator and stairway from the carpark and to pioneer a new model for selling takeaway alcohol.

Significant changes are also planned for Woolworths, which wants to open the NT's first direct-to-boot collection service at the centre.

This week Sentinel chief executive Warren Ebert put some meat on the bones of the plan, which has the support of the NT government and police.

He said customers would notice store vacancies during the upgrades as room is made for new additions. Over the next two years up to 20 new retailers could be introduced to the centre, along with the evolution of a new dining precinct.

The centre has already added US clothing line Ariat to its stable and has more big names on the way.

"We need to create the vacancies, as we have a large 400 square metre international store that we've signed the lease with and they'll be moving in during the next couple of



**Warren Ebert and Michael Sherlock of the Sentinel Property Group at Casuarina Square; (inset) a render of the new development. Picture: Pema Tamang Pakhrin**



months," Mr Ebert said.

"When you're dealing with these tenants, you need to create the vacancies to put them in, you also have to have other vacancies in the centre to relocate those existing tenants.

"We're relocating the taxi rank from around the back near The Quarter out to Bradshaw Street, that will make it a lot more convenient for people.

"In The Quarter, we're enclosing it, airconditioning it and putting in more retailers.

We're tiling the surface that will make it much lighter, much more enjoyable and then the current taxi rank will be the drop off and pick-up areas for the Ubers.

"With better quality food and wider offerings, we expect people will be coming and going more with the Ubers.

"In the downstairs food court, we've recently had McDonald's vacate and we have agreed terms with another international food tenant,

which we expect to be going in in the next few months."

Mr Ebert identified "the three Bs" contributing to anti-social behaviour at the centre - "banks, the bus and the booze".

The centre will eventually plan to implement an entirely new grog sales system but anticipated upgrade at Woolworths could see the BWS bottleshop relocated, potentially along with the banks.

"We're changing the travelators that currently come up

to the banking precinct that will be relocated outside the new Woolworths to stop some of the trouble that we have now coming directly from the bus interchange up there into the centre," he said.

There are at least 18 entrances into the centre, many of which will have magnetic locks installed to reduce unauthorised access.

"We'll be closing the doors that come in from the bus underneath the centre. People

will have to go further down Bradshaw Terrace to get in and that will help disperse people and stop that trouble pinch-point area in that section."

Sentinel introduced carpark dog patrols in late 2022, recruited a security manager from Palmerston's Gateway centre and last year opened the police community centre. Banning students from a number of northern suburbs schools last year also appeared to have an impact.

"We're happy to report we had no issue with schoolchildren, we got onto that early, so we have the feeling it's improved enormously. We had 14 days in a row where there was no theft from any of the shops, and I don't think that's ever happened before.

"In order for Darwin and the Northern Territory to grow, Casuarina Square must be a safe and enjoyable place to go."

Sentinel has a long-term masterplan to develop an accommodation precinct around the centre.

"We're looking at building high-rise on Trower Road, student accommodation and other short and medium-term accommodation," he said.

"We've got plans for three towers in the foreseeable future and then we plan another couple of others after that."



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