

# Marinas should be just the start

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The proposed \$800 million Ocean Reef marina should act as a catalyst for a new generation of hotel developments along the Perth northern coast line, where hotel rooms are scant, according to a local property agent.

Peter Peard, chief executive of Peard Real Estate Group, which concentrates on the coastal market from Trigg to Quinns Rock, said Perth now had the opportunity to develop a niche tourism industry around the Hillarys, Ocean Reef and Mindarie marinas.

"Thousands of new employment opportunities could be created in the northern coastal strip by developing the local tourism in the area," he said.

"Even though the northern coastal line contains some of the most stunning beaches in the world, there are less than 200 hotel bedrooms north of Hillarys marina."

He said hotel developments with a low environmental impact should be encouraged.

"Throughout the world, marina developments have been the catalyst for the tourism industry and the construction of new hotels and associated infrastructure," Mr Peard said.

This trend would be highlighted by the opening later this year of the Marina Bay Sands development in Singapore, which would be a key plank in Singapore's strategy of attracting 17 million tourists a year by 2015.

The City of Joondalup, which approved the Ocean Reef marina proposal last week, is sending the concept plan to all residents next week as part of its community consultation process.

The plan is to create a world-class commercial and recreational marina on 91ha over land and water at the Ocean Reef boat harbour.

The transformation would result in new commercial and retail space, including three five to nine-storey buildings, 125 short-stay apartments, a four to five-star hotel or resort, 585 residential dwellings, markets, 850 boat pens, an artificial reef, Bondi-style ocean pool, two internal beaches and a children's water playground.

Mr Peard said it had been estimated by Access Economics that during 2006-07, the tourism industry in WA sustained about 80,000 jobs and contributed more than \$6 billion to the State economy.

With unemployment predicted to be above 8 per cent because of the slowdown in the resources sector, now was the time to develop further the tourism industry along the northern beach line.

"The State Government, combined with the local government and private sector, needs to develop a co-ordinated plan to develop tourism infrastructure in the areas such as new construction of new hotels which will benefit the local community," Mr Peard said.

"A similar strategy was recently developed by the WA Tourism Commission and Property Council to encourage the construction of new hotels in the Perth CBD area and thereby support the local economy."

The Ocean Reef marina plan has been backed by the State Government, tourism industry leaders and thousands of local residents.

The council expects a big part of the marina could be built in five to 10 years.

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Coastal living: The Ocean Reef project will include 585 residential dwellings and 850 boat pens.