



Designs vie for awards

Former servo under hammer



Tranquility: Blue Lagoon Hotel is in line for an architectural design award.



Also competitive: The redesigning of Shangri-La Hotel

THE former Mobil Service Station at the corner of Sheridan and Florence streets will be auctioned on June 21.

Danny Betros, from CB Richard Ellis Cairns, said the site was one of the most highly exposed corners in Cairns and was certain to attract plenty of interest.

"The former Mobil service station has an area of 973sq/m with a 60m corner frontage and is ripe for commercial or retail redevelopment," Mr Betros said. "The existing building could be renovated if someone wanted to keep it and use the property for car hire, car wash or some sort of service centre."

The site is essentially the juncture of the Bruce and Cook highways, Mr Betros said, and, as such, was a great opportunity to create a landmark commercial building.

Mr Betros said the site had been vacant about two years and the petrol tanks had long since been removed.

A HIGH standard of entries has been reported for the Far Northern section of the 2007 Royal Australian Institute of Architects Awards.

This year, entries are dominated by substantial commercial and civic projects.

Some of the projects in line for honours are Watermark Architecture & Interiors' remaking of the Shangri-La Hotel, DBI Design's landmark Sea Temple resort at Palm Cove

and Woodhead's slick redevelopment of the Cairns International Air Terminal.

Smaller corporate projects include two MMP Architects projects: the elegant MGF Office building and beautiful multi-purpose hall for St Augustine's College, as well as Peddle Thorp Architects' design for the Atherton Ambulance Station.

RAIA Far North Regional committee chair Peter Pierce said inno-

vative tropical housing remained a strong component of the awards but the number of commercial entries was a sign of the times.

"Cairns is a growing region and we're seeing now the infrastructure coming on line to meet that growth," Mr Pierce said.

"People are used to thinking of architects as designing quality homes and apartments but they're not as familiar with the important

role we play in the planning and design of commercial and civic infrastructure."

Mr Pierce said the quality of the entries underlined the value of architects to a growing city.

Judging for the 2007 awards takes place on June 7-8, with the winners announced at the RAIA Awards evening at the Cairns Yacht Club on Friday.

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Good value for money in units

CAIRNS units represent excellent value for money when compared with their counterparts in Brisbane and the Gold Coast, according to the latest property data.

Bill Morris, author of the *Midwood Report*, said the average value for units in Cairns was about \$4000 a square metre, compared with about \$7500 for Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

"Cairns is really showing very good value, that is why the numbers of sales are very strong," Mr Morris said.

Development restrictions also had restricted the supply of units in the southeast corner, which had increased values, he said.

According to the *Midwood Report* on first quarter figures in 2007, square metre values for new apartment sales ranged from \$9058 for a high-rise unit at Harbour Lights to \$2122 at Clifton Breezes, Clifton Beach.

Real Estate Institute of Queensland Far Northern Zone chairman Chris Gay said that while Cairns clearly represented good value, a lack of available land could change the situation.

"The land situation in Cairns is never great and it is likely to tighten," he said.

"However, units are still showing quite good investment returns," Mr Gay said.

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