



TOURISM QUEENSLAND

## Plans for a cruise-ship terminal on the Broadwater on Queensland's Gold Coast have divided residents, environmentalists and developers

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GOLD Coast residents are divided over the state government's multi-billion-dollar plans for a cruise-ship terminal, casino, marinas and apartments.

In one corner sit old-school local developers who believe the long-mooted project will never proceed because cruise ships cannot be brought inside the shallow Broadwater.

In another corner, environmentalists claim developers just want to get their hands on Wave Break Island and parts of The Spit to develop apartments, a casino and marinas. The cruise terminal would be an afterthought.

Three consortiums — two Chinese and one Australian — are due to lodge their bids with the Queensland government for the massive tourism infrastructure project in the coming weeks.

Are they wasting their time

and money? Long-term anti-cruise-ship-terminal campaigner and Save Our Spit president Steve Gratton reckons not.

"What will happen is they will be leased, given or sold Wave Break Island and other parklands on The Spit," he said. "They will probably build a casino, marinas and apartments, and then they will build a cheap cruise-ship terminal as an add-on that will rarely be used because of the amount of dredging required."

Dr Gratton said tens of thousands of Gold Coast residents were against the development because the navigation, engineering, environment and economic reports revealed that rarely would it be safe for cruise ships to enter the shallow Broadwater.

"The Broadwater is a river estuary that fills up consistently with alluvial sand and the entrance is directly on to the Pacific Ocean. That's a good indicator of how economically unviable it would be," Dr Gratton said.

One prominent Gold Coast developer is even more negative. Speaking on condition of anonymity, he said the project would not proceed because of the Broadwater. "There's too many physical constraints, there are far better proposals further south."

The industry, including Carnival Australia chief executive Ann Sherry, is backing the development, publicly stating that her cruise line would use the Gold Coast facility for transit calls.

All up, three consortiums remain in the running to develop the multi-billion-dollar Broadwater Marine Project after the withdrawal of the Azure Consortium involving Brookfield Multiplex and New Zealand casino company Skycity Entertainment in August amid claims it would not "stack up".

The remaining bidders have until late this month to lodge their proposals, with the Queensland Deputy Premier's Department led by the Nationals' Jeff Seeney

not expected to announce the winner until early next year.

About 700 Gold Coast residents oppose the cruise-ship terminal, against about half a million who support it, according to the Gold Coast City Council, which also says the development will create 36,000 jobs a year and bulk up the local economy by about \$750 million a year in income from cruise passengers.

The bidders can select from four sites proposed by the state government, including The Spit and Wave Break Island.

One of the consortiums, ASF China Property Fund, in conjunction with various Chinese partners including Guangzhou Dredging and China State Construction Engineering Corporation — the world's third-largest construction company — has been shortlisted by the Queensland government and the Gold Coast City Council for the development of the cruise-ship terminal, casino, hotel, marina and

retail at Broadwater. ASF's parent bills itself as an investment and trading house, concentrating on the resources sector.

The second bidder is the Chinese-backed Ridong (Gold Coast) Development, believed to be offering a master plan for the whole Broadwater.

Ridong has strong links with the Gold Coast and is building the three-tower \$1 billion Jewel apartment complex in the heart of Surfers Paradise.

Australian Cruise Ports International consortium will also lodge a detailed proposal. It is headed by former Queensland Nationals party executive director Mike Evans.

Meanwhile, Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate, a strong advocate for the Gold Coast cruise terminal, is in the United Arab Emirates on a self-funded trade mission.

Mr Tate is unable to comment because of strict probity conditions imposed by the Queensland government.