

# Use it or lose it – that's the warning on precinct

## CEC banned from trading

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His comments come as Deputy Premier Paul Lucas said the waterfront site of the project, near Cairns' wharves, had been settled and was not up for debate.

The city stands to lose \$120 million in state and federal funding if the project does not go ahead.

"How dumb would we be if we let that happen?" Mr Beer said.

"The money aspect can't be ignored. This money is on the table at a time when we need jobs and we need urban rejuvenation."

Cairns Chamber of Commerce president Jeremy Blockey said there was now a "dearth" of infrastructure activity in Cairns, with projects such as the airport, hospital and cruise liner redevelopments and the tennis and community health centres all completed or close to completion.

The chamber is planning to survey its members' views after ports users such as Norship Marine and Sea Swift attacked the site at a chamber luncheon this week, saying the precinct could threaten future wharf development.

Ports North chairman Ken Chapman said the land was not appropriate for port expansion, and if it was not used for the cultural precinct, it



**To build or...:** The cultural precinct saga drags on with the latest instalment a blunt warning that Cairns should not look a gift horse in the mouth.

would not be used at all. Mr Lucas also dismissed port users' criticisms of the site.

"I'll give this to you plain and straight – it is going where we said it would go," Mr Lucas said.

"Cairns is not like the Gladstone coal port, it is a small boutique port (that) doesn't have large movements in it.

"Surely, if Sydney can build a whole restaurant precinct with some of the most expensive restaurants in Australia next to a cruise shipping terminal, we can do the same with a cultural precinct next to our Cairns port."

But Leichhardt MP Warren Entsch and Cairns' CBD councillor Alan Blake, both LNP members, say a nearby Hartley St site – now occupied by Ports North offices – would be a better option for a smaller performing arts centre project.

More than half of the city's councillors have said they are open to alternative site ideas.

"We should be listening to the community on this one," Cr Blake said.

Cairns MP Desley Boyle has pleaded for community leaders – particularly councillors who have voiced opposition – to rally behind the project so it does not fall through.

The Federal Government has committed \$40 million for the performing arts centre component of the precinct, which is also planned to include a museum and public plaza and is estimated to cost \$240 million.

Mayor Val Schier called for co-operation on the project.

"Other cities have, in the past, attracted more money than Cairns because they speak with one voice and now it's time for us to do the same," she said.

"It frightens me that some people don't realise how badly we need this waterfront development."

►►Additional reporting Daniel Strudwick

CAIRNS construction giant CEC Group was suspended from trading yesterday for failing to lodge its annual accounts.

The Australian Security Exchange announced yesterday that CEC was one of a number of listed companies that failed to lodge its 2009-10 accounts in accordance with listing rules.

But CEC publicist Andrew Griffiths told *The Weekend Post* last night the company planned to resolve the issue next week and work on projects would not stop.

"It doesn't have any impact on the day-to-day operation on the company," he said.

"It's a very standard procedure ... it is nothing terribly dire."

According to a CEC statement, the company did not lodge their accounts on time because it was finalising its position on a "critical accounting issue".



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