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Athletes get FNQ business buzzing

CAIRNS businesses are already feeling the boost from arriving Ironman athletes, with the massive sporting event set to yield dividends well into the coming week.

Grill'd assistant restaurant manager Tommy Carr said the Esplanade eatery had been getting up to a 50 per cent increase on usual traffic since Thursday.

"The normal capacity for us is about 450, we're hoping to get around 800," he said.

"It's a busy weekend for us. We're ready for the turnout ... we'll be well staffed and supplied for the day.

"From 11am (Thursday) we noticed a big jump in athletes and events staff coming in for a feed, so it's helping everybody."

At another popular Esplanade venue, the Courtyard, manager Ben Power said the aim was 1000 people in and out on the day of the event.

"Last year was pretty good but the fact they had it in September was pretty hard due to how hot it was," he said.

"Ironman's one of the busiest weekends of the year for us.

"This year's shaping up to be pretty good.

"The construction on the Esplanade is a lot further on so there's more space for our clientele."

Tourism Queensland

Tropical North chief executive

Mark Olsen said events like Ironman injected millions of dollars into the region during the shoulder season.

"The athletes come early to train before they compete and then they hang around to relax and enjoy our spectacular World Heritage areas," he said.

"Ironman is a great spectator event so the athletes bring their families and friends into our region before the school holidays when the destination's businesses need a boost.

"It feels like we may have just enjoyed one of our busiest Mays on record on the back of Ironman and Port Douglas Carnivale, which was a great success."

Ironman Oceania group regional director Rob Stalling said with more than 3000 athletes taking part and most bringing family and friends with them, local businesses could expect a tremendous impact following the race.

"This close to an event athletes are taking the training easy, meaning that they have more time to relax and get out and enjoy themselves," he said.

"We've had athletes head out to the Reef, up to the Daintree and everywhere in between. That will happen again post race into next week."

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