

Chamber of Commerce president supports vision for Esplanade

Leaders push for dining precinct

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THE battle for the Esplanade is just ramping up as Crystalbrook Collection flexes its muscles to propel Cairns Regional Council into action.

The company behind the burgeoning hotel empire has teamed up with Cairns Chamber of Commerce president Nick Loukas to call for the CBD strip's conversion to an outdoor dining precinct to be urgently brought forward.

"I'd like to see the council do a little bit more to say how can we do it, and not get bogged down with things like we've heard about taxis not getting in, businesses in the street behind," Mr Loukas said.

"They're just poor excuses. There's just no need for cars in this area, the noise, the fumes for people sitting in restaurants."

Mr Loukas backed calls for the road to be a shared traffic area by day and blocked off for vehicles at night.

"Some suggestions have been just on Friday and Saturday night," he said.

"I think there's the ability to close it every night.

"Once you set up the shared access, you've got some flexibility on how you use the space."

Standing outside the Flynn hotel construction site on the Esplanade, Crystalbrook group director of hotels Geoff York

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



TWO-WAY
CHRIS CALCINO

Crystalbrook: The work should happen before new hotel Flynn opens late next year or it could have a construction site on its doorstep.

Cairns Regional Council: Major works should not be rushed – particularly on the CBD's most important tourism asset.

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said the company had not heard back from council since publicising concept art showing how the dining precinct could be achieved.

"We really would like to have that discussion and look at something happening next year," he said.

"We have an opportunity to create a very safe and fun dining and entertaining precinct.

"But to do that you need to have controlled vehicle access."

Flynn is due to open in late-2019, with fears there could be a construction site on its doorstep unless work gets underway immediately.



PROJECT PUSH: Cairns Chamber of Commerce president Nick Loukas, Crystalbrook Collection group director Geoff York and area general manager Joel Gordon on the Esplanade. Picture: STEWART McLEAN