

## Keith Williams buys hideaway

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GOLD Coast tourism industry veteran Keith Williams has expanded his holdings in north Queensland with the purchase of the Hinchinbrook Island Resort, about eight years after rejecting overtures to buy the property.

The flamboyant businessman, who has devoted the past 15 years to developing the \$150 million Port Hinchinbrook residential resort on the mainland near Cardwell, is expected to take over the eco-tourism hideaway in June.

Neither the sale price nor the vendor has been disclosed, but Mr Williams yesterday said he had been looking to buy the resort for the past 12 months.

He said it was presented to him by Gold Coast real estate identity Max Christmas about eight years ago, 'but I wasn't ready for it at the time'.

"I wanted to get Port Hinchinbrook under way," he said.

The purchase includes the Hinchinbrook Ferries business which has been operating out of Port Hinchinbrook for the past eight years and provides daily services to the island.

The Hinchinbrook Island Resort, which was developed in 1970, is located on the island's northern tip and houses about 30 eco-cabins, many of them treetop-style holiday retreats.

Mr Williams, who has bought the property through his company Williams Corporation, is expected to take control of the resort from June 1 following Queensland Government approval for the transfer of the lease.

He said his plans for the island resort were very low key.

"We're not going to try to double the size; it's just a case of tidying up the property," he said.

"It is my intention to see that the resort retains its identity and that the pristine environment of Hinchinbrook Island and Hinchinbrook Passage is preserved.

"Our policy is 'look but don't touch'.

"The famous treetop apartments, which are in great demand from Australian and international tourists, will remain unchanged."

Mr Williams, who developed the Hamilton Island resort and Sea World theme park at The Spit, said he saw significant synergies between the island resort and his Port Hinchinbrook project.

Mr Williams said Port Hinchinbrook had become the main departure point for island visitors over the past eight years.

Mr Williams, who had come close to selling the waterfront residential resort twice over the past four years, to Gold Coast developer Craig Gore and Russell McCart's property group Meridien, said plans were in place for a second stage at Port Hinchinbrook.

This is expected to comprise a 33ha, man-made lake and an 18-hole golf course as well as 350 waterfront lots.

Mr Williams said he was also planning a 220-room resort and spa for the 240ha development which was still awaiting council approvals.

Mr Williams, the man who also helped steer construction of the Southport Seaway, said he had just this week completed construction of the breakwaters for the port.

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