



A Seaside Village

in Harmony with Nature

All dreams begin with a vision

JUST SIX YEARS AGO RAY GROUP FOUNDER BRIAN RAY STOOD on the land that is now Salt Village, imagining a residential and tourist seaside village that would exist in harmony with the natural beauty surrounding it.

Today that vision is a reality and, as the Ray Group's chief executive officer Tom Ray explains, that success is largely due to the environmental and development strategies employed when construction began...

Humble beginnings

Rewind to 2003, when Ray Group's founder, the late Brian Ray, stood overlooking the 73 hectares of land and 1.2km of beachfront that he envisaged would become Salt Village, the heart of the emerging New Tweed Coast.

Much of the land was contaminated, the result of sand mining throughout the 1960s and 1970s. To top it off, a noxious weed called bitou bush had invaded 70 per cent of the site, endangering native flora and fauna and heavily impacting on the habitats of animals that lived there.

The task - to remain as eco-friendly as possible while delivering a genuinely world-class residential and tourism development - was going to be no easy feat. Today though, Salt Village is proof of what can be achieved when a developer's vision is integrated with a strong desire to conserve the environment.

Salt Village environmental strategy

When development began in 2003, some members of the community feared a 'gold-coast-ification' of their region - that the focus of the New Tweed Coast might be more on buildings

than preserving nature.

"That was never our intention," says Ray Group chief executive Tom Ray.

"High on our list of concerns, and there were many, was the surrounding 26 hectares of Crown public land and the already established neighbouring townships in the area.

"We wanted to create a sophisticated, yet relaxed beachside community that blends harmoniously with the natural environment and I truly believe we have achieved that."

The Ray Group enlisted the support of world-leading town planners, design masterplanners, landscape architects, traffic planners and civil, structural and environmental engineers and other consultants.

"Everyone received the same brief and that was to create a development that was as ecologically sustainable as possible," Mr Ray says.

"A broad range of strategies were implemented to lessen noise impacts on the surrounding community and to minimise any risks to the environment."

To reduce noise pollution that would otherwise be caused from trucks transporting materials to and from the site, an eight-kilometre hydraulic sand pumping pipeline was assembled.

Ray Group also integrated a range of water saving schemes into the community.

"Extensive groundwater monitoring and modeling took place so the sand pumping would have no detrimental effects on the freshwater underground," Mr Ray says.

"To assist in sewerage management during the early stage of the development, artesian bores were drawn from the local aquifer, rather than the town's water source.

"An aquifer is an underground geological formation of materials such as sand and gravel which allows the storage and transmission

of significant volumes of water.

"In Australia, water is our most precious resource so a range of sustainable strategies were implemented into the design of the resorts and the village itself."

Measures included:

- Incorporation of a stormwater system which recharges the local aquifer;
- Design of a dual purpose swale/cycleway system allowing all stormwater to drain into a central location and removing run-off of pollutants prior to discharge into Cudgen Creek.
- Introduction of inter-allotment roof-water pits which reduce stormwater and also are used to recharge the fresh water aquifer beneath Salt Village's surface.
- Establishment of "Atlantis Cells" for the Mantra and Peppers Resorts. These cells operate similar to the inter-allotment pits for the residential allotments, collecting the roof-water run-off from the resorts and recharging the fresh water aquifer beneath Salt's surface.
- Use of artesian bores, drawn from the local aquifer (rather than the town's water source), during the early stages of the development to assist in sewerage management.

Ray Group also ensured conservation of the natural environment became a guiding principle of the development. So far more than 70,000 plants, tens of thousands of person hours and \$2.5 million have been spent in eradicating the abundance of bitou bush weed and restoring the dunes to their former glory.

"Native plant species have been incorporated because they are suited to the coastal environment and have minimal water requirements," he says.

"An artificial nesting pole was also erected on Cudgen Creek to encourage threatened osprey to return to their natural habitat."

Salt Village today

Salt Village is a sophisticated, yet laidback beachside village. The developers and its proud residents have not forgotten the original vision and continue to strive to ensure Salt Village exists in harmony with its surroundings.

At a cost of \$150,000 a year, Ray Group's ongoing funding for biodiversity programs has ensured the care and preservation of the dunes.

"Native flora and fauna are continuing to repopulate the area and efforts to eliminate bitou bush have seen the return of many animals which are native to the area including the Common Blossom Bat and the Loggerhead and Green Turtle," Mr Ray says.

"The artificial nesting pole is now home to two local ospreys, and we are seeing increasing numbers of many other native birds such as the Bush Stone Curlews and Pied Oystercatchers."

The master planned village is also effectively catching any rainfall in the area. Salt Central Park, the village's amphitheatre, also acts as a water retention basin with the capacity to withstand a one-in-100-year storm. The design was put to the test overnight on June 2005, when it received 500ml of rainfall.

Awards and accolades

Salt Village has set benchmarks for future tourist precinct developments, with many accolades and achievements to its name.

Peppers Balé Salt, Peppers Salt Resort & Spa and Mantra on Salt Beach resorts have been awarded AAA tourism Green Star Accreditation, an accreditation that rewards their commitment to simple, commonsense environmental 'good practices' that deliver real benefits to guests and the environment.

The requirements involved in achieving such accreditation included energy efficiency, water minimisation and water management.

In March 2006, Ray Group demonstrated its commitment to ecologically sustainable development by participating in the first pilot study project to evaluate and test the new Green Globe Precinct & Planning Design Standard (PPDS).

Green Globe is a certification program that responds directly to the major environmental problems facing the planet, including the greenhouse effect, over-use of freshwater resources, destruction of biodiversity, production of solid and biological waste and social issues.

With the assistance of Ray Group the two year pilot study resulted in not only the establishment of the new Green Globe PPDS but also in Salt Village achieving the first PPDS Green Globe Certification and setting the benchmark for the award.

To attain certification Salt Village had to be successfully benchmarked against a number of key environmental, social and economic performance indicators. These included:

masterplanning, siting, water usage, waste management, and energy efficiency, social and economic commitment.

Taken together, these strategies have resulted in the creation of a truly world class seaside village that is a beacon for the successful co-existence of development and the natural environment - and the continuing efforts of the community will ensure Salt Village remains environmentally sound well into the future.