

Note to Self

2nd November 2013

Dear Owners and Investors,

I want you all to click the link below and then scroll to the back page

<http://www.cairnswatch.com.au/uploads/uploads/201310fullreport.pdf>

I then want you all to do a little celebratory dance - Cairns has been moved from the "Bottom of the Market" and into the Recovery Phase!! I knew it was coming and I have been writing about this for months, but there you have it from Industry Analysts so it must be true.

<http://www.cairnspost.com.au/business/aquis-developers-look-for-july-2014-start-date-for-casino-and-resort-development-at-yorkeys-knob/story-fnjpusdv-1226751587830>

The developers of Aquis have lodged their Environment Impact Statement with the Co-Ordinator General in Brisbane on Friday. The July construction date is "on target".

<http://www.cairnspost.com.au/business/business-confidence-lifting-in-cairns-as-interest-piggy-backs-aquis-resort-and-casino-vision-at-yorkeys-knob/story-fnjpusdv-1226750983872>

The word is now out and it will only be a matter of time before we really start to see things shift in the property market

<http://www.cairnspost.com.au/business/cairns-airport-plans-nine-flights-per-day-for-quests-if-aquis-casino-and-resort-goes-ahead-at-yorkeys-knob/story-fnjpusdv-1226751002804>

The airport is working on more flights to bring the people into Cairns.

I don't think anyone really thought that we would finish such a long, dark time in this way. If you could see the smile on my face each time I see an image of Aquis!

Today isn't about tenants, it isn't about buying property - it is all about renovating. Now that Ron is at the Nursing Home and we have brought home the manual wheelie walker, two go go mobiles and his electric wheel chair - we decided it was time to get into renovating his unit as he really won't ever be coming home. It was a pretty sad day when we had to go through the unit and decide on what to keep, what we could give away and what was to be thrown out. Although Ron is a miserable, cantankerous old bugger he really has been there with us from pretty much the beginning.

I can't count how many hours we have spent at Sheridan Street over the past ten years. As he looked after our dogs, he would see us on the way in and out of the city as we dropped off and picked up our furry kids. Most days he would see us covered in paint, dirt and never during day light hours would we return back. We have been there with him over who knows how many hospital visits, but the classic would have to be the second last time the Ambulance came to get him. We knew he was really sick and when Ramon asked him what was wrong he said "I'm dying, I'm just taking a really long time to do it."

Before we moved him into this unit, we did repaint and do a few things in the unit but essentially it was pretty much original. The kitchen was the original one and the bathroom as you will see from the photos is definitely original. There are 8 units in this complex and four units that are on the ground floor all have cast iron bath tubs that were put in and then the brick work built around it. This is the job we have been dreading for so long.

We did the best we could with the bathrooms to make them nice enough to rent out - but really we would have no choice but to rip them out completely and start again - one day.

The Big Man in the Sky has been watching down on us, and in return for all the "I collect Old People" we look after he has given us The Frenchman. Ramon, The Frenchman and I stood around and tossed a coin as to who would get the job and as luck would have it The Frenchman lost the toss. Oh to be young and fit - and be enthusiastic about cutting a cast iron bath in half and demolishing the bathroom. You have no idea how heavy this bath was - Ramon and William struggled to drag it outside and onto the trailer - and that was when it was cut in half.

So the plan is - The Frenchman is going to cut the bath tub, demolish the walls, put the water proof membrane down, tile and then put the vanity, toilet and shower screen in and it will all be done.

Working on a new place is oh so simple. When you start doing anything on an older place what you think you need to do, never turns out to be what you end up doing. The vanity had the waste pipe coming up through the concrete floor and after 60 years of water going through the pipe, as soon as Ramon put any pressure on it it snapped at the base. Not at the point where you can put a collar on it and then extend a new piece up - oh no that would be too simple. This snapped under the concrete floor.

So the new plan is - The Frenchman is going to cut the bath tub, demolish the walls, cut down deep enough to get to the pipe, put a collar on and extend the pipe, put the water proof membrane down, tile and then put the vanity, toilet and shower screen in and it will all be done.

Then there were the water pipes. These are original and clogged full of junk. Ramon couldn't work out why the toilet was taking so long to fill. He thought it was a blockage in the filter going into the cistern. As he traced it back he ended up cutting the pipe and found there was about a millimetre of actual area that the water could flow through - the rest was packed solid. We knew that if we didn't put in new pipe work as soon as you put the brand new tiles in, one of the pipes is going to leak or get completely blocked and we will have to cut all the tiles to get to it. This meant cutting the walls and chasing in new pipe frames for the shower head and taps.

So the new plan is - The Frenchman is going to cut the bath tub, demolish the walls, cut down deep enough to get to the pipe, put a collar on and extend the pipe, put in new pipes to the shower, put the water proof membrane down, tile and then put the vanity, toilet and shower screen in and it will all be done.

Now you can't put new pipe work to the shower and then expect the ones going to the vanity or toilet to be fine. So we now have to chase in hot and cold water lines across the wall to get to where the vanity will be.

This is about the time that we realise (see although I am not there doing the physical work I am still there in spirit) that the drains in the floor aren't going to cope so we now have to look to jack hammer the entire floor out to be able to get enough drop and fall on the shower and vanity as well as putting in new drain pipes.

You guessed it - the new plan is - The Frenchman is going to cut the bath tub, demolish the walls, cut down deep enough to get to the pipe, put a collar on and extend the pipe, put in new pipes to the shower, chase in water lines to the toilet and vanity in the wall, cut the concrete floor out to put in the new drainage, put the water proof membrane down, tile and then put the vanity, toilet and shower screen in and it will all be done.

As you will see in the photos for some reason unknown to us when they built the bathroom, they put a concrete pad on which they put the toilet on. For us to put in the shower screen we need 900mm width from the edge of the concrete pad to the side wall. You guess it, it isn't 900mm it is 800mm.

I just love adjusting the plans - The Frenchman is going to cut the bath tub, demolish the walls, cut down deep enough to get to the pipe, put a collar on and extend the pipe, put in new pipes to the shower, chase in water lines to the toilet and vanity in the wall, cut the concrete floor out to put in the new drainage, cut the concrete pad so it is wide enough for the shower screen, put the water proof membrane down, tile and then put the vanity, toilet and shower screen in and it will all be done.

When they were building Sheridan Street, there was no thought about hiding the electrical wires, they are just there - no conduit or anything! We couldn't leave this in place so the boys had to then chase into the wall the electrical cables so they could neatly tile the walls.

It is about this time that they go to fit the shower screen and realise that it now extends about 100mm into the window - yes the same 100mm that was cut out from the concrete pad that the toilet sits on. If you leave it the water is going to sit on the window sill and will not have any where to go, or if it does then it will run down the wall behind the toilet and pool on the floor there. The boys now have to build a new wall on the existing window so when you are having a shower the water will stay in the shower area.

The new and improved plan is - I just love adjusting the plans - The Frenchman is going to cut the bath tub, demolish the walls, cut down deep enough to get to the pipe, put a collar on and extend the pipe, put in new pipes to the shower, chase in water lines to the toilet and vanity in the wall, cut the concrete floor out to put in the new drainage, cut the concrete pad so it is wide enough for the shower screen, chase in the electrical cable, build up the window, put the water proof membrane down, tile and then put the vanity, toilet and shower screen in and it will all be done.

If you think that we are finished - you must be kidding. Ramon said to The Frenchman not to put the vanity hard up against the wall but it got lost in translation. Ramon came in to find the vanity fitted beautifully in place - taps fitted, drains connected and the silicone seal to the rear. This is about the time that The Frenchman realised that although it looked lovely you can't actually fully open the drawers to the vanity.

We wanted to put in a new door to the bathroom, and being able to walk into Bunnings and buy one that would fit perfectly just wasn't going to happen. They boys bought the closest one possible, cut the top off and reglued it internally as it was a hollow core door. They then had to build up the door jam so it would fit in width wise.

As you can see it has all been finished now and it is hard to believe it is actually the same space! Now if you thought that was funny, you should hear all the other things that happened in the rest of the unit! I will save that for another day.

I do have to share with you another story from Sheridan Street. When Ramon and I first got Sheridan Street, we did everything ourselves but we were poor. We did the best we could with the limited resources that we had. We were doing up Ron's original unit upstairs. In the kitchen area it has lino, but the rest of the place had green concrete paint on the structure board. We had no money really in those early days and when we were at one of those discount shops where they had vinyl floor tiles.

They were 300 x 300 mm and you peeled off the back and stuck them down to the floor. They weren't the best design and were a funny timber look - but we figured that it would be better than green painted timber. I can remember sitting on the floor peeling the stickers off and putting them down as if it were yesterday! Our concern was that they wouldn't stick for long and we would have a fair few of them lift over time. We would cross that bridge when we came to it. We rented the unit out and there were a few changeovers.

We then got Mr D and it was a bad time to rent out the unit so we figured we either had to renovate it to get a better rent and better tenant or we could rent it out cheap to Mr D - seeing as we were heading off on a cruise we decided to rent it out cheap. Did I ever mention that we love to cruise? He had been there for years, and if he had of just not annoyed us he probably would still be there. It is one thing to have cheap rent, but to then annoy us over silly things and get into arguments with all the neighbours pushed us into the decision to move him on.

So there we are - Ramon, myself, The Frenchman and the coin. Guess who lost the toss and had to pull up the discount vinyl floor tiles? We originally thought these vinyl tiles would buy us a year, maybe two at the best before they started to lift. It seems that this was not the case at all - I could say it another way but I won't. These suckers weren't coming up without a fight. The next morning Ramon gets a text from The Frenchman and it said "Sorry, cannot come work today. I do tiles yesterday and I have BULBS on my hands." Attached was a picture of blisters!

For those of you that have been on this list for a while, you may remember my mood just before the end of the year. It could be conveyed in a song
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzly2yGTk4U>

Doing what we do every day is really hard work - mentally it is draining and it is so easy to become cranky. I know many of you won't believe this, but really I was such a quiet, non confrontational person before I got into property management. In the early days I would make Ramon go and do all the hard bits that I couldn't face doing. That girl is long gone - some days even I have to double take after I hear what I say.

As you know I am collecting the "naughty tenant" list that I will gladly be moving on early 2014. The arrears list came out and there were a few on there that have constantly been a bother for me. As tenants they may be good but to be honest I really don't have the time nor energy to continually chase them, especially now I know the market is getting better.

I called two of them and gave them the identical speech. I asked if they liked living in the property - to which of course they answered yes. I explained how the rear property had just been relet for \$20 per week more than what they were paying, and reconfirmed that they were on very cheap rent. Silence is coming from the other end as the cogs are turning wondering where I am going to. I then say "You do realise that you are behind in your rent again."

About this time the excuses start to come out but I cut them off. I tell them how good they are as a tenant, and how we appreciate the fact they look after the property BUT the simple fact is that when the owner gets the statement this afternoon and realises they are behind again they will call me.

This is where the Good Cop, Bad Cop comes into it. I tell them that the owner really isn't happy, but I want to keep them as tenants. If they want to stay in the unit they need to not only catch up, but not get into arrears again because next year the owner will realise the rents are moving and I will have no choice but to ask you leave.

They don't know it, but actually I am secretly the Bad Cop as well and will be only too happy to put them onto the "naughty list" if they keep being behind in the rent.

There you have it, another Note to Self. I do hope you have enjoyed my ramblings. I do like to get feedback as sometimes I think I send it out into cyber space and no one actually reads it! Any comments, or volunteers to do the next bathroom - please let me know.

I hope you are happy and well in your world.

Linda

PS Did I mention that it is only 39 more sleeps until we board the Diamond Princess?