

QHA REVIEW

MARCH 2010



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Well Spotted!
The Spotted Cow, Toowoomba

Across The Bar
Meet Bowen's Barry Allen



QUEENSLAND'S OWN HOTEL PUBLICATION



WELL SPOTTED!

Toowoomba can be a tough town for a hotelier. With three times more pubs per person than Brisbane, it's not easy to stand out from the crowd. But one hotel has carved a niche in this market and proven that with foresight and planning, it's possible to become the venue of choice.

The Spotted Cow has been around almost as long as Toowoomba itself. The Coorey family took it over 15 years ago and from the beginning set about putting the hotel firmly on the map for locals and visitors. Under the guidance of Michael, Dianne and Phillip, their eldest son, the hotel has doubled its footprint and has built a solid reputation for great food and an outstanding selection of wine and beers. Proprietor Michael Coorey says, "It's

important for a hotel, in any market to have a point of difference."

Reviving an old timer

The Cooreys kicked off the transformation of The Cow in 2004 when they commissioned Paynter Dixon, one of Queensland's pre-eminent project managers in hospitality, to oversee an upgrade of the facilities. In this initial stage a feature bar was added to the English style pub and an upgrade of the

existing courtyard was completed to provide extra seating for bistro dining. The new bar became the Vintage Jersey Bar in recognition of the hotel's long association with rugby and focused on European beers to showcase the hotel's amazing range of imported beers (The Cow keeps 20 different brands of beer on tap at any time and stocks an enormous range, 90 at last count, of bottled beers). This ranging concept was pounced on by Phillip



over 12 years ago after living in Europe. He developed a passion for these styles of beers and has made them a point of difference synonymous to The Spotted Cow.

According to Michael, "The renovations were so successful that it became immediately apparent that we had to expand the bar and food operations ASAP to cater for the rising patronage".

Mastering the plan

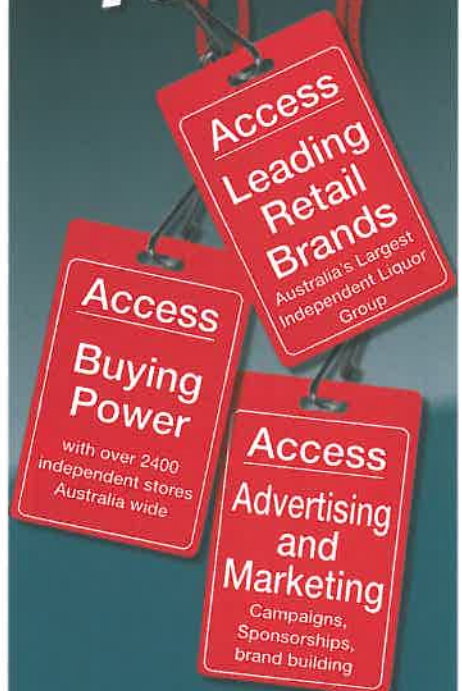
While he had faith in The Cow's ability to sustain its newfound popularity, Michael was determined that any additional work would not be a knee-jerk reaction and must have the ability to add to the hotel's success. He knew that whatever he did to The Cow at that point, he needed to do it with the future (and the hotel's potential) in mind.

Coorey turned again to Paynter Dixon



and business development manager for Paynter Dixon, Mark Shulman, to help him crystallise the opportunities for The Cow. Mark and the Paynter Dixon team set to work on establishing a masterplan for the redevelopment. "It's easy to perform a makeover on a hotel," says Mark. "But a successful refurbishment

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relies on the input and ownership of key stakeholders. It must take into account business objectives, operational constraints, as well as functional design and finishes.”

The masterplan for The Spotted Cow took these points into consideration. It included the acquisition of land adjacent to the hotel. This property was converted into carpark space and storage area, a necessity for the extended hotel. These works needed

to be completed before commencing the redevelopment to the hotel.

The masterplan had to cover a range of issues from amalgamating ownership of the separate lots (carpark and hotel), to creating a seamless flow of old to new in the design and finishes of the hotel. Most importantly, because the building works would touch every part of the existing ground floor space of the hotel, the plan had to consider how

Michael and Dianne would continue to service their patrons during the building works.

Grand designs

It was important that the ambience of the pub, which has been one of its key drawcards from the time of the original works, was to be maintained in the redeveloped areas.

While the works definitely delivered new and inviting spaces, they also focussed on the



We speak beer.

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practical aspects of operating a hotel. A second DOSA was added and toilet facilities throughout the hotel were refurbished. Brand new kitchen facilities, back of house facilities and new purpose built storage means as the patronage continues to grow at The Cow the operations can continue to run like a well oiled machine.

The showcase area created in this stage is the dining and function room. Clients are welcomed at the entry by a life sized Friesian Cow, high ceilings and huge exposed timber beams giving the area a welcoming open environment to enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the dining room. Bi fold windows extend the length of the development adding to the open feeling of the building. The Cow also boasts a new café and lounge nooks while the relocation of the gaming room takes advantage of an existing Designated Outdoor Smoking Area.

Payback time

Michael already considers the latest \$2 million plus that he has spent on the hotel to be money well spent. "We had 200 people in

our function room on Australia Day enjoying our traditional annual yabby races and our initial functions, the Sir Viv Richards sportsman's lunch and dinner the following evening sold out virtually as we announced it," he said. Not only can the hotel cater for large numbers and significant events, it can do it without alienating the continuous flow of locals and visitors to Toowoomba who are drawn to the hotel by its fabulous food, great wine, unusual and rare beers and ambience.

As his patronage moves from excellent to extreme, Michael is thankful that he took the time to analyse his business, consider the path for the future and work with professionals to bring his dream to life.

It could be said that the hotel was better known outside the region, however The Cow is gaining iconic status in Toowoomba and while some may say it's a big call to make that claim in a city with as many hotels as Toowoomba, Michael says he only has to look at the numbers to know his hotel is definitely on the map. **Q**



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