

Another outbreak of fungus in sugar

A NEW outbreak of a fungus disease that could devastate the \$1 billion sugar industry has been found in north Queensland.

The Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations is calling for calm following the most recent discovery of sugarcane smut.

Farmers found the smut in a field west of Ingham yesterday, ABC Radio reported.

It is the northernmost discovery of the fungus disease, said Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations spokesman Patrick Russell.

"It certainly does not have to be destroyed. Growers will be able to grow that cane out and it will be able to be harvested," he said.

"There is no need for anyone to panic, to do anything rash. We just need to monitor how big an outbreak this is and at this stage and from our initial surveys, it is a very minor outbreak."

Sugarcane smut is a highly infectious disease that can reduce yields by at least 30 per cent.

The fine black powder of fungal spores is harmless to humans and animals, so does not affect processed sugar.

Driver was too drunk to walk

A DRINK-driver who blew seven times the limit got behind the wheel because he was too drunk to walk.

But he insists he is no road menace.

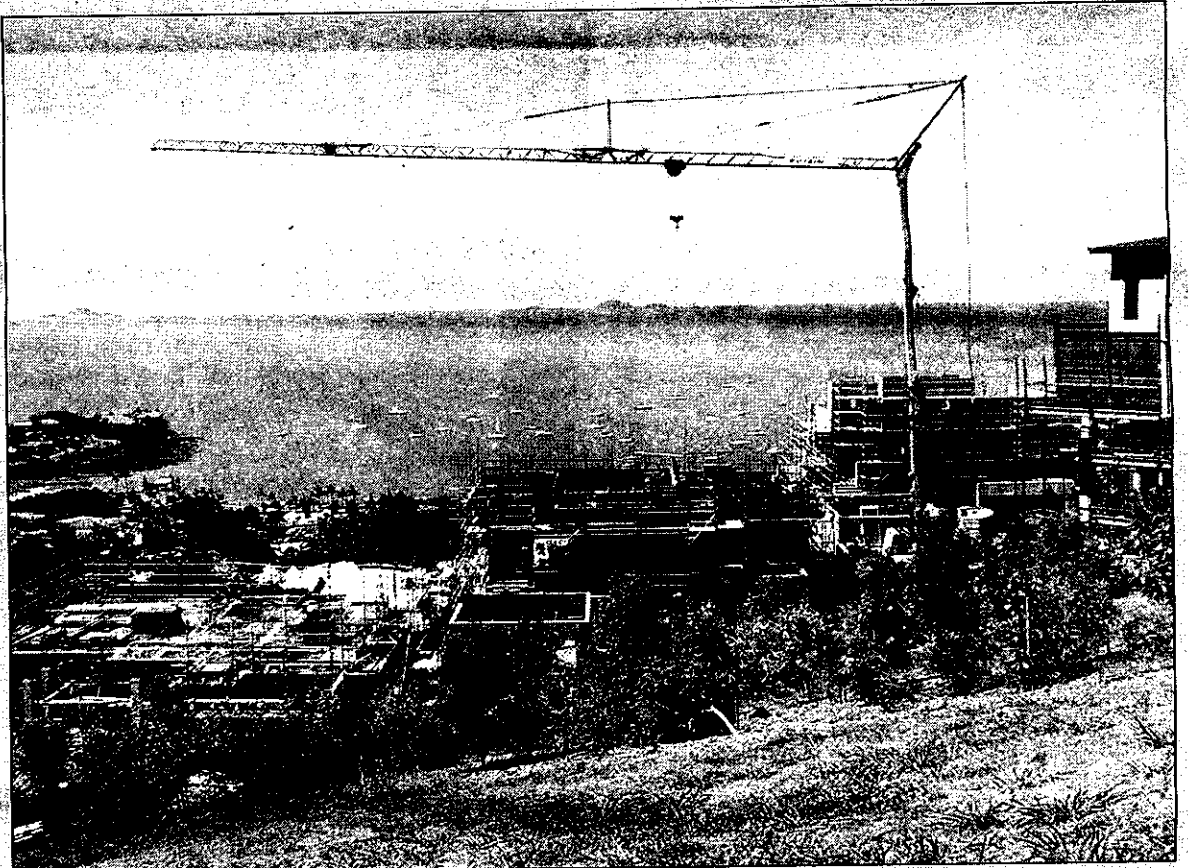
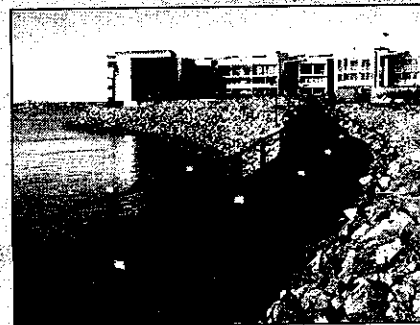
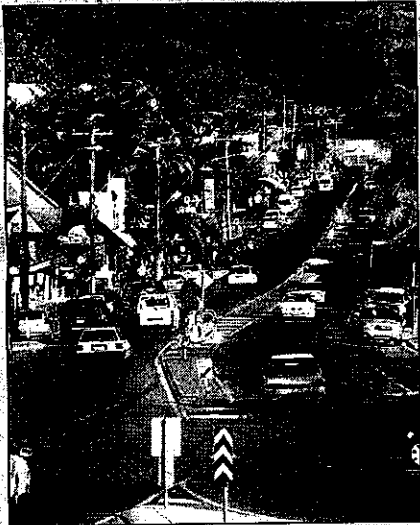
Police nabbed Dean Bailey, 37, outside his home one block from the local pub with a fresh six-pack of beer in his car as he blew 0.347.

He said he had guzzled 20 stubbies while watching the cricket before venturing out for more booze, but he believes he was perfectly in control.

Mr Bailey said he preferred to drive to the liquor store at Riddells Creek, 50km northwest of Melbourne, because last time he walked, he fell into a pothole and injured his leg.

"I was OK, I was walking and talking," Mr Bailey said.

'House full' sign at \$3 billion Airlie



ALL NEW: The main street of Airlie (top left) will be changed forever. New vistas include these luxury homes and a boardwalk development area

By GILLIAN CUMMING
property editor

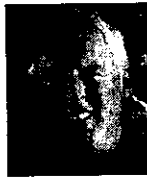
A \$750 MILLION golf resort community led a \$1 billion development splurge approved for Airlie Beach by Whitsunday Shire Council last week.

The council is set to put up the "house full" sign at the holiday hotspot, with a massive \$3 billion worth of development now in the pipeline over 10 years.

Whitsunday Mayor Mario Demartini believes that despite the development splurge, Airlie Beach will remain a village-style enclave.

"It's a buoyant community," he said. "Development will continue for at least 10 years. But that's about all this beachside village can take."

The 283ha Whitsunday Springs Resort by



BUILD: Mario Demartini and Stephen Head

Melbourne-based developer Links Living Ltd was given the nod by the council on Tuesday night.

Also approved was Gold Coast-based Resort Corp's \$130 million five-star resort and convention centre on 2ha at Waterson Way close to the heart of Airlie village, along with a \$120 million first-stage integrated residential estate by Clough Property Developments Pty Ltd on 52ha at nearby Cannonvale. These develop-

ments join another \$1 billion in projects already approved and waiting to start plus another \$1 billion worth of development under way.

Mr Demartini said the Links Living project was a major coup as it would add the first international-standard golf course to the Airlie region.

"It was our only short-coming, so it will be a great attraction to have an international golf course," he said.

Whitsunday Springs Resort will be a master-planned community on the edge of Riordanvale, northwest of the centre of Airlie.

It will comprise 2500 houses and townhouses on community and freehold title, an 18-hole golf course and club house, a commercial village centre with a range of community facilities, a 150-bed hotel and sporting facilities

that include a swimming pool, tennis courts and gym.

Links Living managing director Stephen Head said the company was "looking forward to taking the project from concept to fruition".

Construction of Whitsunday Springs is expected to begin in March-April, starting with the golf course and commercial centre.

The late addition of a 500-delegate convention centre to the Resort Corp project is another bonus for Airlie Beach.

Once completed by Christmas 2008 it will be the largest mainland convention facility in the Whitsundays.

The 210-unit ocean-view resort will be built over five levels, with 60 per cent one-bedroom units, 28 per cent two-bedroom and 12 per cent three-bedroom.

The resort will include a

five-star restaurant, bars, day spa, children's club, gym and swimming pools. Construction is due to start in mid-2007.

Resort Corp general manager Adam Slijderink said the 567sqm state-of-the-art convention centre would put the Airlie Beach conferencing market on the national and international map.

Clough Property general manager John Tucker said the development of 150 residential lots would begin in the first half of next year, signalling the start of a long-term project that ultimately would result in 1800 residences over 108ha. Approvals for the entire project are to be sought from the council.

"We're targeting the permanent population in a project to be developed over several years," he said.

• Kirra revival, Page 40