

Luxury villas planned for secluded Saffire



Saffire Freycinet's new multi-generational villas will cater to wealthy families

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Tasmanian businessman Greg Farrell, head of the family-owned Federal Group, has yielded to overwhelming demand at his wildly popular six-star Saffire Freycinet resort at remote Coles Bay in Tasmania, and is building multi-generational villas to cater to the new trend of wealthy families or like-minded couples travelling together.

The first cab off the rank is a three-bedroom villa that will cost an estimated \$8700 a night, including all meals, drinks and experiences. It will be built on the northwestern section of Saffire, set back high on the escarpment overlooking Great Oyster Bay and the Hazard mountain ranges. A four-bedroom villa will be set on another elevated position on the coastal property above the ex-

isting Tasmanian devil compound.

"We are seeing more and more families travelling together and more like-minded couples travelling together either domestically or internationally, this has been designed to work for them," Mr Farrell said.

This is the first change to the Saffire resort since its opening 14 years ago, and comes after three years of consultation with guests.

Closer to Hobart, Mr Farrell, Tasmania's largest private employer with 2500 staff, has just finished a \$65m renovation of Wrest Point casino, which he says is doing well with both domestic and international tourists. But he admits the state has just emerged from a tough winter, particularly for mid-range tourism operators, principally because Australia is not attracting as many interna-

tional guests as it once did. "Tourism in the winter months was quite soft, (but) for premium products it was strong. For the middle market and regional markets it has been tough. A number of tourism operators felt the pinch. We are probably seeing less international visitors coming into Australia," he said.

"There's still a strong surge of Aussies travelling overseas, a lot of competition between the states for intrastate and interstate tourists particularly, because NSW and Queensland are not getting as many international guests and are fighting harder for NSW and Queensland guests.

"That has caused more competitive tension."

Meanwhile, Mr Farrell would not be drawn on the cost of developing the villas at Saffire, but he admitted the villas will be "ex-

tremely expensive", adding that the facilities in the three-bedder will include heated pool, outdoor spa bath, outdoor fireplace, two internal fireplaces, two Vintec fridges, dining space and finishing kitchen, as well as an expansive lounge and separate TV area. There's also alfresco dining around the barbecue and pool deck and separate internal dining table.

He is also using as many Tasmanian supplies and products as possible.

Construction of the three-bedroom villa is expected to start in the middle of next year, with the opening slated for spring 2026, and bookings released six months prior.

Mr Farrell said once the three-bedroom villa, which is designed by Atlis Architecture, is operational he will turn to the construc-

tion of the four-bedder, saying he wants to gauge the public's response and fine-tune any design elements.

"Saffire runs essentially full through the peak tourism seasons. Over the winter months there is a greater opportunity to visit," Mr Farrell said. "But from now until Easter it runs essentially full and has a very significant amount of repeat customers, both domestic and international.

"We have one American couple who have been here every year for 12 years, and stay around a week. It's their break every year."

Federal Hotels is also constructing a 28-bay, two-level driving range at its Country Club at Launceston, which will open in April. The redevelopment will include bars, restaurants and private rooms.