



GREAT BLEND: Asian Pacific Group chief executive William Deague at The Johnson. Picture: Adam Armstrong.

QLD Business

Brisbane's first signature Art Series boutique hotel and apartments, The Johnson opens in the former Main Roads Building in Spring Hill

Chris Herde, The Courier-Mail
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WILLIAM Deague looks for that something special whenever he embarks on a new project.

And three years ago the Asian Pacific Group chief executive found that “something special” in the Karl Langer designed former Mains Roads building on Boundary St, Spring Hill.

Last month, The Johnson, officially opened its doors showcasing a signature Art Series boutique hotel, residential apartments, serviced offices, a 50m Michael Klim designed rooftop pool and terrace, and adjoining restaurant, bar and cafe, the Tumbling Stone.

Named after master Australian colourist and abstract artist Michael Johnson, the 16-storey former State Government-owned building changed hands for \$21.5 million before undergoing a \$65 million refurbishment.

Mr Deague said the company’s first Brisbane project was not a risk construction wise.

“But we were very surprised when it was put on the heritage register three days after we settled on the property,” he said.

“The bones of the building were fantastic and we worked well with the Heritage Department and were happy with the result.”

The industrial undertone of the building provided the perfect gallery styled space to showcase Johnson’s work, with guests offered the opportunity to experience signature originals and giclee prints.

Heritage-listed artwork has also been restored, including The Red Cube, a large metal sculpture at the entrance of the property, commemorating its original opening.



SPECIAL: Asian Pacific Group CEO William Deague outside The Johnson. Picture: Adam Armstrong.

The building has 87 hotel suites and two penthouses; conference and events facilities and 180 units, 10 penthouses and three Sky Penthouses as well as the restaurant.

Melbourne-based Mr Deague said the mixed use nature of The Johnson was a “great blend”.

“We wanted to expand the Art Series Hotel but it’s financially difficult to make a hotel stack up on its own these days with the cost of construction and other things,” he said.

“The beauty of this model is that these offerings all feed off each other.

Mr Deague said the apartments have all been sold and the settlement process started this week.

“We’ve been forensic with every purchaser,” he said. “We know a couple of them might be a bit slow but they will get there.

“It’s certainly not the Armageddon everyone is talking about. We have got very positive feedback so far and the valuations have been fine.”

Asian Pacific Group’s next Art Series hotel in Brisbane will be at the Howard Smith Wharves.

Mr Deague said he was in negotiations with artists and hoped to make an announcement of the name of the 170 plus room hotel in the next two months.

“We are also in final negotiations with a builder for a construction should start late this year or early in 2017,” he said.