

Boat industry action call

MP crosses line in sand

by Tanya Westthorp

THE marine industry has challenged under-siege MP Peta-Kaye Croft to make good on her promise to fix the Broadwater and end years of ignorance.

The newly-elected Broadwater MP has gone into damage control after coming under fire for defending the State Government's inaction on dredging the sand-clogged waterway.

Ms Croft has promised to arrange high-level talks between marine industry representatives, new Transport Minister Rachel Nolan and Tourism Minister Peter Lawlor.

"What I'm asking for is to find a solution to provide for a continuous maintenance dredging program rather than an ad hoc one," said Ms Croft.

"I am there to support the industry and to get into the ear of the minister and make sure their concerns are heard."

However, Ms Croft has her work cut out for her after spending the past eight years making unsuccessful attempts to convince the past three transport ministers to commit ongoing funding to dredging.

Maritimo boss Bill Barry-Cotter said he would not hold his breath.

"I honestly don't believe it will help," he said.

Broadwater drama

A SUPERYACHT was another victim of the shallow Broadwater on the weekend when it ran aground on the eastern side of Wavebreak Island.

About 5.15pm on Saturday the 34m vessel became stuck and in the windy conditions the Volunteer Marine Rescue boat sent to help overturned.

The VMR boat took 45 minutes to tow the superyacht almost 5km to Marina Mirage.

"They don't care, haven't got the money and they haven't got the intelligence to realise what it could achieve."

Gold Coast City Marina director Dean Leigh-Smith said he believed Ms Croft wanted to fix the Broadwater but said that without action 'talk is cheap'.

"Is it going to be like shuffling deckchairs on the *Titanic* or is it going to be productive?" he said.

Ms Croft landed in hot water when she said, the day after being re-elected, the Coomera-based boating industry should have realised there might be navigational issues when they decided to establish on the (Coomera) river.

The industry said that she had 'no idea' about boating issues and having her at the helm of the Broadwater was like 'getting a chef to fly a helicopter'.



Things are looking up for Gold Coast City Marina, says director Dean Leigh-Smith ● Picture: Mike Batterham

Superyachts coasting in for overhauls

by Tanya Westthorp

THE aquatic big end of town is back.

Up to 20 superyachts worth more than \$80 million are streaming in for major refits at the Gold Coast City Marina – the most in a long time.

Marina director Dean Leigh-Smith said the bookings were a welcome relief for the struggling boating industry which had been hit hard by the global financial downturn.

"Our superyacht sheds are 90 per cent booked until May-June, but there is room for more," he said.

"And these are significant refit works, generally costing about 10 per cent of the boat's value."

Fourteen superyachts are already in the shipyard for engineering and complete upgrades costing hundreds of thousands of dollars.

And another six are due within the next few months including some 'very significant' superyachts.

"If there is a positive out of our shrinking dollar, it's that it is a very appealing destination for European and US luxury yachts," he said.

Mr Leigh-Smith said the owners often chartered their boats around the Queensland coast after injecting hundreds of thousands into the Gold Coast economy paying for refits.

"Whereas two years ago they might have taken that boat and traded it in, they are probably leaning towards giving their current toy a birthday present," he said.

Mr Leigh-Smith the Broadwater dredging was also restoring boating confidence and said he was bracing for a busy period leading up to May's Sanctuary Cove Boat Show.