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Burnett Heads Marina is out of liquidation: what the $250m Gateway project means for the town and the Bundaberg economy

For four years the empty site at the mouth of the Burnett River has been one of the Bundaberg region's quietest talking points — a half-started, then completely stalled, waterfront development that locals had almost stopped believing in. That changed in 2026, when the long-troubled Gateway Marina at Burnett Heads finally came out of liquidation and back into the hands of the man who dreamed it up in the first place. For a town of roughly 2,000 people that sits at the literal gateway to the southern Great Barrier Reef, it is hard to overstate what a resolved, funded marina could mean.

How a $250 million project ended up in liquidation

The Gateway Marina was always ambitious. Planned across a site of roughly 76,000 square metres on Marina Drive at Burnett Heads, the approved masterplan called for a 318-berth marina, luxury waterfront apartments, a yacht club and a run of retail and hospitality tenancies — a headline figure of about $250 million by completion. Earthworks and early construction began in 2022 and, for a while, it looked like the region was finally getting the marine precinct it had talked about for a generation.

Then it stopped. In 2023 the project ground to a halt amid a dispute between the company's directors over funding, and work on site simply ceased. With the money gone and the partnership fractured, the company was placed into receivership and liquidation. Todd Gammel and Barry Taylor of insolvency firm HLB Mann Judd were appointed as receivers and managers, tasked with recovering an estimated $7.9 million owed to creditors, and the site was put to market through a competitive sale process managed by Colliers.

Back in the founder's hands

After a receivership sale campaign that drew national attention from marine and property investors, the 76,000-square-metre site was sold in 2026 to Simon Harvey — the original developer behind the Gateway vision. Rather than a new owner tearing up the plans and starting again, the person who conceived the precinct has taken back full control, keeping the existing approvals intact. Premium stage-one marina berths have been flagged to open in late 2026, which would make it the first tangible sign of life on the water since the project stalled.

That continuity matters. Approvals for a 318-berth marina, a yacht club and waterfront residential are difficult and expensive to win, and a buyer who already understands the site, the approvals and the community is far more likely to actually build than a distressed-asset speculator looking to flip the land. It is the difference between a development that gets finished and one that becomes another stalled headline.

Why a marina is such a big deal for Burnett Heads

Burnett Heads is small, but its location is extraordinary. It is one of the closest mainland launch points to Lady Elliot Island and Lady Musgrave Island — two of the most accessible coral cays on the entire Great Barrier Reef — and it already hosts a working port and the existing Bundaberg Port Marina. A completed 318-berth marina would dramatically expand the region's capacity to base boats, run reef and island charters, and service passing vessels on the east-coast cruising route between the Gold Coast, the Whitsundays and beyond.

Every one of those berths is an economic unit. Boats need fuel, maintenance, chandlery, antifouling, electrical and mechanical work; crews and owners need accommodation, restaurants, cafés and groceries; and reef charters bring visitors who spend money across the wider Bundaberg region before and after they get on the water. A marine precinct does not just create jobs on the jetty — it seeds an entire cluster of small businesses around it.

The economic flow-on for the Bundaberg region

The immediate impact is construction. Finishing a project of this scale means trades, suppliers and civil contractors back on site for an extended build, with wages flowing straight into the local economy. But the more valuable impact is the ongoing one. Once operational, a marina of this size supports permanent jobs in marine services, hospitality, retail, tourism and property management — the kind of year-round employment a regional town rarely gets from a single project.

There is a tourism dividend, too. Bundaberg has spent years building its reputation beyond rum and sugar into a genuine reef-and-nature destination, and a premium marina strengthens that story. It gives the region a marquee waterfront address to market, a base for reef tourism operators to grow, and a reason for boating visitors to stop, stay and spend rather than sail past. For a region competing for tourist attention against the Whitsundays and the Sunshine Coast, that is a meaningful edge.

A note of realistic caution

None of this is guaranteed simply because the site has changed hands. The project still has to be financed and physically built, and the history of the last four years is a reminder that approvals and ambition are not the same as completed berths. The late-2026 stage-one target is the milestone to watch: if premium berths genuinely open on schedule, it will be the strongest signal yet that the Gateway is real this time. If they slip, the community has every reason to keep its optimism measured.

The bottom line

After four years in limbo and a spell in liquidation, the Burnett Heads Marina finally has a clear owner, intact approvals and a stated timeline. For a town perched at the doorstep of the southern Great Barrier Reef, a funded 318-berth marina is more than a property play — it is potentially the anchor for a whole new marine economy on the Coral Coast. The Bundaberg region has heard big promises about this site before. This time, for the first time in years, there is a credible reason to believe them.

Figures cited here are drawn from the receivers' and Colliers' sale campaign and public reporting on the project. As with any development, timelines and staging can change.