

MERCURY

www.themercury.com.au

FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2014

\$1.20 incl GST

FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2014 05

NEWSFRONT

themercury.com.au

Saffire expands horizon

Federal plans a new luxury hotel offering

ACCOLADES: The success of Saffire resort at Coles Bay has the Federal Group eager to cash in on the luxury tourism market.

Picture: TOURISM TASMANIA

FEDERAL Group has promised to unveil plans for a new luxury hotel on the back of the success of its \$1800-a-night East Coast resort Saffire.

Almost four years after opening, Saffire has had its best season yet, topping 80 per cent occupancy over summer.

Weekends have been fully booked and stays over Christmas have to be booked at least a year in advance.

Federal Group spokesman Daniel Hanna said the success of Saffire had cemented the company's focus on the luxury travel market, promising new venues would soon be revealed.

"There's one project we have in mind," he said.



HANNAH MARTIN

"You'll definitely see more from the company in the near future, in terms of luxury."

Mr Hanna said the secret project would open before the company followed through with already announced plans for a "sister" property to Saffire at Port Arthur.

He said there was no time frame set for the Port Arthur development at the Motor Inn right above the World Heritage site, but the project would capitalise on the area's history.

Mr Hanna ruled out Federal Group partnering with MONA for an accommodation project at the Berridale museum, despite hype about the potential union in the tourism industry.

The company's new focus follows the recent sell-off of several mostly 3.5-star-rated properties to RACT.

"We see the best opportunity for growth [in tourism] for the state, in general, is at the luxury end," Mr Hanna said.

He said the success of Saffire, where rooms cost as much as \$2800 per night, showed people were willing to pay top dollar for a luxury experience.

Saffire general manager

Justin King said the resort, near Coles Bay and the Freycinet National Park, had seen yearly growth, topped by a 35 per cent increase in business over the past 18 months.

He said repeat visitors were responsible for most of the growth, which had "exceeded" company expectations.

Saffire has scooped a swag of state, national and international accolades. Just this week it was named Best Luxury Lodge by Australian Traveller magazine.

Mr King said the resort's food offering was a key to its success, with 24 new menus each year and six different daily menus on rotation at one time.

Menus were made up almost entirely of Tasmanian produce.

Despite the hefty price tag, Mr King said a stay at Saffire was "value for money", with all meals and drinks included in the room rate, as well as \$400 worth of minibar goods and \$100 worth of spa treatments.

Wines included in the price tag average \$80 to \$90 a bottle and meals had been praised by the likes of MasterChef's Matt Preston.

Mr King said attention to detail and a focus on customer service were keys to the venue's success, with items such as in-room books, magazines and DVDs tailored for each guest.

He said developing new ex-

periences was also key to keeping people coming.

Saffire recently launched a gourmet picnic activity, with a guided 5km walk to South Hazards beach, where guests were greeted by a chef who prepared a lunch including fresh seafood, cheeses and petit desserts, before returning to the resort by a boat.

The company had leased land in the National Park to operate the "standing camp".

Mr King said guests mostly came from Melbourne and Sydney, but there had been a significant growth in the number of Chinese visitors.

Tasmanians accounted for 10 per cent of guests and a quarter were repeat visitors.