

# Geared up for Chinese influx

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GOLD Coast businesses are looking to avoid a customer culture shock ahead of an unprecedented surge in Chinese tourism and investment.

A program aimed at preparing businesses for the cultural expectations of Chinese tourists has been rolled out across the city in order to capitalise on the lucrative Asian market.

Gold Coast Tourism chief executive Martin Winter said the Engaging the China Market Program session would teach businesses how to capitalise on growing opportunities.

"Visitor numbers from China have doubled in five years to see this market become the city's largest source of international visitors," he said.

"With the direct services now in full flight we expect this market will continue to grow."

Currently more than 250,000 Chinese tourists visit the city every year.

That figure is set to explode to 350,000 in 2020 as tourism leaders set their sights on Wuhan, the Gold Coast's newest sister city.

Director of ravConsult and co-facilitator of the program, Trevor Lee, said businesses needed to stock menus in Mandarin and provide tourists with Chinese-speaking staff.

"Their basic expectations are met when they have access to menus in Chinese language, some Chinese or Asian food offerings, access to a Chinese speaker or Chinese language helpline, UnionPay International payment facilities are available, maps, brochures and other product collateral are in Simplified Chinese language,

and Wi-Fi is available and free.

"These are all expected, as they are normal in China."

Co-facilitator and TravConsult general manager, Lilly Choi-Lee, said businesses needed to capitalise by making the city memorable.

"When a waiter in a restaurant in Surfers Paradise, or a sales attendant in a luxury brand store at Pacific Fair Shopping Centre, or even a security screener at Gold Coast Airport shows genuine intent to engage and help and use some basic greetings or friendly expressions in Mandarin language, Chinese visitors are wowed," she said.

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MARTIN WINTER

"These are the types of interactions that exceed their expectations."

Study Gold Coast chief executive officer Shannon Willoughby said the city needed to start working with locally based Chinese students.

"This program builds on our work creating networks between business and the Chinese student community," Ms Willoughby said.

"Raising the employability skills for students is one of the key objectives for Study Gold Coast and the sector more broadly. This program is a positive partnership which showcases to the world the Gold Coast is willing to help upskill its students, and in turn our local businesses benefit."



Casey Lyons has quit his job to concentrate on a charity that works to destigmatise mental illness.

Picture: GLENN HAMPSON

## Casey driving home mental illness message

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CHARITY worker Casey Lyons watched his best friend slowly slip away and is determined to ensure no one else suffers in silence.

The 26-year-old has quit his job as a carpenter and given up playing for his beloved Burleigh Bears to concentrate on the charity he started.

LIVIN was created to

wipe out the stigma on mental illness and raise awareness for suicide prevention once and for all.

Mr Lyons, 26, said losing his best friend in 2013 made him decide it was time to act. "I watched my friend Dwayne suffer in silence for years," the Burleigh Heads resident said.

"Eventually he took his own life because he couldn't handle the stigma attached to depression and bipolar.

"I was having to say no to

too many opportunities. So I quit my job to get the message out to as many people as possible."

The People's Choice winner in the Community Spirit category in this year's Pride of Australia Awards spent yesterday at the Broadwater Parklands for Heroes Day raising awareness for local suicide prevention services.

The day was in honour of Sea World waterskier Travis Lloyd who took his own life earlier this year.

Waterskiers put on two shows to raise money for four local charities.

Mr Lyons said it was a great opportunity to spread the message further about mental illness.

"We go to events like these to try and smash the stigma so people feel comfortable getting the help they deserve," he said.

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## Fewer cyclones blow just as risky

FORECASTS for a quieter cyclone season shouldn't stop Queenslanders preparing for the worst, an expert warns.

The Bureau of Meteorology predicted fewer cyclones this season, running from November to April next year, because of a strong El Nino effect.

But Dr David Henderson says residents should remem-

ber a single storm cell could still do significant damage.

The James Cook University's Cyclone Testing Station director said well-prepared homes - that have been well maintained and regularly checked by a builder or certifier - were less likely to lose a roof in high winds.

Dr Henderson said this was

even more important for older homes which could often have just two nails holding the battens to the rafters.

Homeowners also needed to take responsibility for updating their properties.

The bureau's outlook predicts about four tropical cyclones to form along the east coast this season.

## Vaccination pricking state's conscience

QUEENSLAND parents have the highest level of "conscientious objection" to vaccination in the country, with 2 per cent choosing to leave their children exposed to preventable diseases.

Figures from the Department of Health show there are 9209 Queensland children under the age of 7 whose par-

ents have formally recorded an objection to being vaccinated.

The rate in Queensland - 2.07 per cent - is below the national average is 1.52 per cent.

The figures will be the subject of debate when health officials appear at a federal parliamentary inquiry into the Federal Government's "no jab, no pay" laws in Brisbane today.

Vaccination sceptics will face off with pro-vaccination groups, the Australian Medical Association and Federal Department of Health at the public hearing.

Last week "no jab, no play" laws were introduced in Queensland meaning child care centres can refuse unvaccinated children.