

GUIDE TO AFL 2022

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**NEW TREND IS
WHEEL DEAL
AMID FUEL HIKE**

THEY'RE zooming around our streets with young, old, fit and the not-so-fit at the handlebars — welcome to a new age of transportation.

There has been a swift rise in popularity of e-bikes and e-scooters and that's only set to grow as the cost of fuel bursts through the \$2 mark and surges into uncharted territory.

Clarke Williams, 5, and Dilyn Williams, 3, size up an e-bike at Urban Wheelz while Dikshya Gurung cruises the Cairns Esplanade on her e-scooter.

FULL STORY PAGE 6
Pictures: Brian Cassey



Innovative plan to fill struggling precinct's empty shops

TURNING CBD LIGHTS ON

BRONWYN FARR

CREATIVE entrepreneurs and start-up businesses are being encouraged to set up shop in the heart of Cairns in a landmark project to revitalise the ailing CBD.

Not-for-profit Renew Australia has partnered with landlords and council in a year-long project to fill vacant space with artists and businesses.

FULL STORY PAGE 3

'M' IS FOR MAKEOVER SUBURB SHAKES OFF ITS DARK PAST P4-5

Pumping vibrant fresh life into CBD



Renew Cairns project manager Phil Druery in the Shields St space to be occupied by artistic collective Golden Orb. Picture: Brendan Radke

BRONWYN FARR

CREATIVE entrepreneurs and start-up businesses are being encouraged to set up shop in the heart of Cairns in a landmark project to revitalise the ailing CBD.

Not-for-profit Renew Australia has partnered with CBD landlords and Cairns Regional Council in a year-long project where artists and businesses can occupy vacant space on a rolling 30-day lease free of charge, with indemnity insurance from Renew Australia giving landlords peace of mind.

Renew Cairns has been

launched with the first space in Shields St set to be occupied by an artistic collective under the banner Golden Orb, creating a gallery space.

Project manager Phil Druery said the retail vacancy rate in the CBD was 35 per cent to 40 per cent and for office space it was 18 per cent.

He has three premises on Shields St and one on the Esplanade so far – and 51 expressions of interest from those keen to get a foothold in the CBD.

"We've got really good quality spaces so far and when we had an inspection for 27 Shields St, about 45

came and they started talking to each other and networking about what they could do together," Mr Druery said.

"They may be start-ups or they may be businesses that are established and might have an online presence or a garage, and they can create a presence in a shopfront."

He said the aim was to enable people to build business capacity while revitalising the city.

"Certainly we don't see ourselves as any kind of solution to the CBD situation but this type of activation is good for owners, because the lights come on, and agents and

owners can bring people through the space," Mr Druery said.

Students at Cairns State High School are documenting the project in a film.

Participants are responsible for their own utilities but don't pay rent and are not tied into a six-month lease.

"So an owner can say, well this space has been sitting vacant for 18 months, it might not attract any tenants for 12 months – so why not turn the lights on and open it up and give people the opportunity to improve activity in the CBD?" Mr Druery said.

The project germinated in

Newcastle 20 years ago when that regional city experienced a downturn, and it is credited with transforming a city with an industrial past into a vibrant place.

Mayor Bob Manning said Renew Cairns would generate activity through occupancy and could help people trial their business, project or ideas in a commercial setting.

"By working with property owners to activate vacant or under-utilised commercial spaces, Renew Cairns can generate activity through occupancy," Cr Manning said.

Email at renewcairns@renewaustralia.org

Warning with new variant on rise

RACHAEL ROSEL AND DOMANII CAMERON

QUEENSLANDERS should not fear a return to masks and restrictions despite a new Covid subvariant, a leading infectious disease expert says.

NSW Health has flagged the possible return of masks and working-from-home orders as the state experiences a spike in cases linked to the new Omicron strain, BA.2.

Queensland has had a "slow and steady" increase in Covid-19 cases linked to BA.2, but microbiologist Paul Griffin said there was no need to be alarmed or to bring back restrictions.

Since December, less than 1 per cent of Covid-19 test samples detected the new BA.2 subvariant.

However Queensland Health said a "slow and steady cumulative increase" had been observed since then.

"Genomic sequencing is not done on every sample, but we undertake random and priority group sampling to understand the current variant/s or sublineages circulating in the community," a QH spokeswoman said.

Dr Griffin said Queenslanders would not have to worry about masks or work-from-home orders any time soon.

"It's good we're aware that there's a subvariant out there so we can emphasise the most important mitigation strategies we have, which is vaccination including booster," he said.

"Outside of that I don't think we need to do anything different right now."

Dr Griffin said although he believed masks would continue being used throughout the state, current case figures have shown there is no need for their immediate return.

One of the new cases is Health Minister Yvette D'Ath, who said she was presenting mild symptoms and would be working from home this week.

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