



THE STAR

Media release

## The Star Gold Coast celebrates its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary since opening

23 NOVEMBER 2020

On this day thirty-five years ago, The Star Gold Coast opened its doors for the first time and has since transformed into a world-class integrated resort welcoming around 3.5 million guests each year.

The Star Gold Coast Gaming Operations Manager Steve Hennessey was part of the property's opening team and is one of a small contingent of passionate team members who have been with the property since the beginning.

"Before joining, I worked in the construction industry but I knew my heart wasn't in it. Then one day, I came across a newspaper ad promoting a range of trainee dealer positions at the new casino and to me, it sounded like a fun and exciting place to work," Mr Hennessey said.

"I was 23 and spent about two months working Monday to Friday from 7am to 4pm in my construction job, before going to the property's dealer training school in Bundall for another four hours each night.

"I was young and full of energy, and the hard work and training helped me earn a full-time croupier position when the property opened a few months later, and the rest you can say is history!"

Mr Hennessey, who has held numerous roles in the gaming department over the past 3.5 decades, recalls a time before the property opened when rumours were rife that jobs in the new casino would go to foreigners.

"Back then, the property was owned by an American company and I remember whispers swirling that the local jobs would be taken by Americans moving to the coast from overseas – fortunately it was just a rumour and since then, the property has become a real jobs beacon for the Gold Coast community," Mr Hennessey said.

"Over the years, it has connected thousands of locals to great careers in the tourism and hospitality industry and just about everyone knows someone who has worked there, from their grandparents to grandchildren.

"Even one of my daughters, Elly, has followed in my footsteps and is currently working in The Star's food and beverage department."

Mr Hennessey said one of the significant changes he has observed over the past 35 years has been the advancement of gaming technology; and the move to smoke-free indoor environments, a change that the property's parent company – The Star Entertainment Group – announced last month across the Group.

"Technology has made a huge difference in the way we operate, from simple things like shuffling the cards. When we first started, we had to shuffle them ourselves and now we have machines that can do it for us," Mr Hennessey said.

"When we first opened our doors, both guests and gaming management were able to smoke whilst working on the gaming floor, something you wouldn't hear about today!"

"It's been great to see the property restrict smoking to certain sections of our premium gaming areas over the years, but even better to see that we're moving to no indoor smoking completely by 2022.

"I've had a wonderful journey so far and I feel really honoured to have enjoyed a wide variety of roles over the years, and continue to be a part of The Star's history and future."

The Star Gold Coast General Manager Gaming Operations Ian Brown, who has also been with the property since day one, said he is immensely proud of the property's achievements in the past 35 years, and the efforts of the team who have worked hard to deliver thrilling guest experiences with all the fun and vibrant local spirit that the Gold Coast is renowned for.

"The Gold Coast is an iconic tourism and leisure destination and we've been delighted to be part of its dynamic community all these years and support history-making events like the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games and the first TV WEEK Logie Awards outside of Victoria," Mr Brown said.

"When we opened 35 years ago, the property had a strong focus on gaming but in the last six years I'm proud that this focus has significantly shifted towards our non-gaming offering.

"Today, we bring together a diverse array of award-winning restaurants and bars, spectacular entertainment and events, premium resort facilities, and luxury accommodation to create a world-class integrated on the Gold Coast.

"While we've undergone some incredible milestones so far – through the transformation of our existing property, the launch of The Darling, and the start of construction on our Dorsett hotel and apartments tower – we can't forget that the future is just as bright with our approved \$2 billion+ masterplan in the pipeline with our consortium partners."

#### **Fun facts and history about The Star Gold Coast:**

1. It cost \$186 million to build the property, which originally opened as 'The Conrad Jupiters Casino and Resort' in November 1985, featuring more than 1400 team members.
2. It took 16 months to design the 75 uniforms the team wore when it opened.
3. The first big win at the property was \$20,000 on a Keno video machine.
4. More than 8 billion cards have been dealt in the casino since opening!
5. The property has hosted a range of artists at its expansive Garden Kitchen & Bar lawn including Amy Shark, Stafford Brothers, and Havana Brown.
6. Thousands of world-renowned entertainers have performed on stage in The Star Gold Coast theatre including the likes of Rod Stewart, The Beach Boys, Rihanna, Mariah Carey, Belinda Carlisle; and Australian favourites such as Jimmy Barnes, Human Nature, Tina Turner, The Veronicas, Diesel, and Guy Sebastian.
7. In 2014, the property embarked on a multi-million dollar transformation involving one of the most extensive hotel refurbishments ever undertaken in Australia, the build of a new luxury suite hotel, a new poolside experience, and an array of new, contemporary restaurants and bars.
8. Launching in 2014, Cucina Vivo becomes the property's first indoor-outdoor dining venue, with its design inspired by the cliff-top restaurants along the Amalfi Coast to create a seaside atmosphere.
9. In 2015, the property turned the sod on its first luxury suite hotel, later to be called 'The Darling', signifying the start of construction.
10. In 2015, the property was announced as the first official partner of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.
11. In the same year, the property unveiled its world-class Penthouse, Executive Deluxe Rooms, and lavish suites in its refurbished hotel (later to become 'The Star Grand').
12. In 2016, one of Australia's largest permanent outdoor projection systems was installed, using 36,771,840 pixels to illuminate the property's facade. To launch the design, lovable Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games mascot Borobi bounced, darted, and surfed across the building's facade.
13. In 2016, the property expanded its culinary offering, with the opening of Mei Wei Dumplings and M&G Café and Bar. With a name that translates to 'delicious', Mei Wei Dumplings' menu saw the introduction of 120 new ingredients to the property.
14. In 2016, the property refurbished its 596 existing rooms, complemented by a refreshed Lobby Level and check-in area.
15. In the same year, the property's first mixed-use tower received state government approval as part of a joint venture with Hong Kong-based partners, Chow Tai Fook Enterprises and Far East Consortium.
16. On 30 March 2017, 'Jupiters Gold Coast' was rebranded to 'The Star Gold Coast'
17. In 2017, the property continued its transformation including revitalising an array of food and beverage outlets to later become Imperial at The Star, Cherry, Food Quarter, Latitude, and Sports Bar.
18. In 2017, The Star Gold Coast unveiled the names of its two hotels, The Darling and The Star Grand.
19. In 2018, The Darling officially opened with around 250 guests for a star-studded evening including Kris Smith, Ian Thorpe, and Rodger Corser; along with business and government dignitaries including Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk. Shortly after, Nineteen at The Star launched, delivering a signature rooftop venue with a superior dining and beverage experience with spectacular beach and city skyline views.

20. During the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, The Star Gold Coast's Celebration Lawn was lit up with nightly themed events including *Best of British*, *Caribbean Celebration*, *Party Pasifika*, and *The Great Aussie BBQ*. The expansive lawn also featured live performances from the Potbelleez (DJ set) and Havana Brown. International superstars Dami Im and Jimmy Barnes graced the theatre stage.
21. In 2018, The Star Gold Coast proudly announced a three-year agreement as Principal Partner and Naming Rights Partner of the internationally celebrated Magic Millions Carnival and Raceday.
22. In the same year, along with its consortium partners, the sod was turned for the property's first \$400 million mixed-use tower featuring the internationally-acclaimed Dorsett hotel, and apartments.
23. The Star Gold Coast shone at the 2018 Queensland Hotel Association's (QHA) Awards for Excellence with The Darling winning 'Best Deluxe Accommodation', and The Star Gold Coast winning 'Best Redeveloped Accommodation Hotel/Resort'.
24. In the same year, the state government approved a \$2billion+ masterplan for The Star Gold Coast, including an additional four towers and associated world-class resort amenities.
25. In 2019, The Star Gold Coast invited guests to enjoy 'live on the Lawn' activations at Garden Kitchen and Bar across the Pacific Fair Magic Millions Polo and Magic Millions Raceday weekends.
26. The Star Gold Coast announced a partnership with Blink TV, SBS's production partner, for 'Eurovision – Australia Decides – Gold Coast 2019'. The event saw 10 of Australia's biggest artists compete in a live show at the Gold Coast Convention & Exhibition Centre with Kate Miller-Heidke becoming the winner.
27. In 2019, The Star Entertainment Group announced plans to fast-track development of a fourth hotel via its \$2 billion+ investment at The Star Gold Coast, in a proposed \$500m, 63-storey second mixed-use tower.
28. The Star Gold Coast was officially recognised as one of five finalists in the 2019 G2E Asia Awards for 'Best integrated resort in Asia, outside Macau and Singapore'.
29. In the same year, The Star Gold Coast played host to the 61st TV WEEK Logie Awards for the second consecutive year. The event involved six days to transform The Star Pavilion Ballroom; eight hours to lay the main red carpet run; the length of the media wall stretched to 15 metres; 85 chefs to expertly prepare the main dinner service; and 200 metres for the total length of the red carpet.
30. In 2019, The Star Gold Coast celebrated its 25th-year anniversary with Surf Life Saving Queensland, its longest serving community partnership, donating more than half a million dollars over the years to help protect the lives of countless beachgoers along Queensland's coast.
31. In the ultimate curtain raiser to The Star Gold Coast's new world-class poker space, the property announced a star-studded Celebrity Poker Tournament, on the eve of Australia's first ever World Poker Tour® Festival, featuring the likes of former Australian cricket champion Shane Warne and Australian female poker legend Lynn Gilmartin.
32. In 2019, The Darling was honoured on the national stage, taking home 'Best Deluxe Accommodation' at the National Australian Hotels Association (AHA) Awards for Excellence. The Star Gold Coast also won 'Best Redeveloped Hotel – Accommodation Division'.
33. In 2020, The Star Gold Coast launched new 'at home' dining experiences during the unprecedented global coronavirus pandemic.
34. In the same year, The Star Entertainment Group committed to smoke-free indoor environments by end of 2022, including at The Star Gold Coast.
35. Since opening in 2014, Kiyomi and its team have won several major awards, including a chef's hat in 2016, 2017, and 2018 at the Good Food Guide Awards. It also won 'Japanese Restaurant' back to back in the 2019 and 2020 R&CA Awards for Excellence (QLD & NT).
36. The Star Gold Coast has used the following quantities of food items in its restaurants over the past 35 years:
  - More than one million litres of cream
  - More than 700 tonnes of bacon
  - More than 4,500 tonnes of chicken
  - More than 12 million eggs
  - More than 24 million oysters
  - More than 1,200 tonnes of prawns

**For more information:**

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