

Accommodation upgrade

The innovative revamp and rebranding of pivotally-located existing hotel assets is transforming accommodation options for guests.

With a lack of development sites and cost of construction hampering the pipeline of new hotel assets around New Zealand, comprehensive refurbishment projects are optimising existing assets in prime locations.

Bayleys' *Hotels, Tourism and Leisure* explores initiatives by two proactive hotel operators to reposition themselves in a competitive visitor accommodation market.

WELCOME JW MARRIOTT

JW Marriott, the flagship brand of Marriott International's luxury hotel portfolio, has partnered with global property development and investment company C.P. Group on the comprehensive refurbishment of the former Stamford Plaza to launch JW Marriott Auckland.

Located in lower Albert Street, central Auckland, the impressive building originally opened in 1984 as The Regent hotel, New Zealand's first real five-star hotel, and the transformation of the full-scale luxury facility is nearing completion.

General manager JW Marriott

Auckland, Girish Talreja says of the 8,700-plus hotels operated by Marriott International worldwide, there are over 100 luxury JW Marriott hotels named after company founder John Willard Marriott.

"We are selective about properties honoured to be a JW Marriott hotel and very prescriptive of the partners that we work with. C.P. Group shares a very synchronous vision for this hotel, and brings robust industry expertise to the project.

"Most JW Marriott hotels are new-builds however, this building has a significant legacy. The large porte cochère, extensive use of marble and granite in the hotel, the grand lobby and ballroom and extensive back of house spaces met the rigorous JW Marriott brand expectations."

In December 2021 the hotel lobby lounge, JW Kitchen and JW bar were refreshed, and all guest rooms and suites upgraded with new JW Signature mattresses and larger smart televisions.

"The first set of 40 fully-renovated rooms opened to guests in March 2024 and we are progressing with the next set

of 40 rooms, moving upwards through the hotel and finishing with the upper suites by the end of 2024," says Talreja.

"Work is almost complete on the circa-\$1million upgrade of the JW Ballroom event space, with state-of-the-art audio visuals, lighting and acoustics, and upgrades to four smaller meeting spaces will follow."

The guiding look and feel of the hotel centres on "beautiful collisions", blending raw and refined elements inspired by New Zealand's natural environment to create a haven within the bustling CBD, says Talreja.

"The JW Marriott brand is founded on principles of well-being, and uses serene and neutral tones to create a calm, balanced space for relaxation."

Working very closely with the dedicated project team, Talreja says the hotel transformation has proceeded smoothly. With no structural work required, and fabrication and build work done off-site ahead of installation, there's been minimal disruption to guests.

Two new food and beverage outlets will open during the year – the main restaurant celebrating New Zealand produce with global influences, and a Japanese teppanyaki restaurant for experiential dining, while an Executive Lounge for Marriott Bonvoy Elite members will open late-2024.



Artist's impression of the new restaurant at JW Marriott Auckland, expected to open in July 2024.

NEW-LOOK CARNMORE HOTELS

Carnmore Hospitality Management manages hotels and other hospitality operations around New Zealand. It partners with owners to achieve business goals, enhance the brand, and can actively improve operations through cost-effective high-impact renovations.

Director of operations for Carnmore, Andrew French says two properties within its management portfolio illustrate the value-upside and enhanced guest experience possible through a carefully-executed refurbishment programme.

In June 2020, Carnmore took over the management of the then-underperforming and rundown Parklane Motor Inn in Takapuna, repositioning it as Carnmore Hotel Takapuna.

"The 1970s-built property had seen minimal reinvestment to guest accommodation, exterior maintenance, water tightness, plant and machinery or landscaping – all confirmed pre-purchase via our due diligence process for the now-owner," explains French.

With the hotel trading well-below market, he says Carnmore orchestrated a staged refurbishment project funded largely from the hotel's generated cash-flow, and used Carnmore's

proven existing contacts, suppliers and tradespeople to control timelines.

"By engaging a talented hands-on maintenance team to oversee contractors, we undertook the project in various stages and remained open for business, with minimal disruption to guests."

Nearly four years on, every element of the operation has been improved. The project was within budget, exceeded the owners' expectations, and the hotel now offers highly-desirable and guest-focused accommodation with modern, spacious rooms close to Takapuna's beach and many amenities.

Meanwhile in Christchurch, Carnmore took over management of the former COSA hotel in September 2021, rebranding as Carnmore Hotel Christchurch.

"We identified three key areas to address: the look and feel of the 88 guest rooms spread across four floors, the lack of an adequate food and beverage offering, and the tired public areas and reception space," says French.

Personality, warmth and sophistication were easily injected to the guest accommodation through soft furnishings and improved amenities, however there were challenges elsewhere.

"The existing café was fairly basic, with limited fare and no liquor licence," says French.

"We engaged specialist Christchurch-based designer Gemma Attwood from Pluvio to work closely with us on concepts and details for a compelling food and beverage offering and a

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ANDREW FRENCH
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, CARNMORE HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

feasibility process confirmed that an improved restaurant and bar amenity would enhance accommodation revenues, and suit local demand, too.

"The new Hoi Polloi restaurant and bar is a place for everyone, and while still early days, is attracting very solid and welcome support from hotel guests and is rapidly becoming the 'go to' destination for locals."

French says the sparse lobby and reception area was reworked to provide a great first impression with decorative greenery, comfortable seating, new lighting, and mood music.

With the hotel owners enthusiastically endorsing Carnmore's concepts, work was undertaken by Christchurch-based construction firm Trent Builders with all materials sourced within New Zealand to mitigate time and cost over-runs, bringing the revitalised Carnmore Hotel Christchurch in on budget and on time.



Carnmore Hospitality Management took over the management of the rebranded Carnmore Hotel Takapuna in 2020.