

EXPLORING THE GREAT BARRIER REEF



- A Perspective From Yorkeys Knob, Part 1 of 3

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Chances are, that unless you are very familiar with Cairns, then you have never heard of Yorkeys Knob. It is a sleepy beachside village 15km north of Cairns.

Immediately north of Cairns is the sprawling delta of the Barron River. The first high land on the coast as you go north toward Port Douglas is an isolated hill, right on the coast, surrounded on all other sides by cane fields criss-crossed by the streams that drain off the rainforest covered mountains of the Great Dividing range which are at their closest to the coast from Cardwell in the south, as far north as Cooktown. As they say in the tourist blurb this is where the "Rainforest meets the Reef".

In the 1880s this hill was the home of a Yorkshireman named George Lawson who eked out a living as a beche de mer fisherman. He was a bit of a local character, famous for inadvertently blowing off most of his right arm trying his luck out at Green Island with a few sticks of dynamite and then managing to get himself home with the assistance of an aboriginal boy to get help. One armed or not, he lived here and the prominent headland on the coast became known as Yorkey's Knob with no priapic implications that I know of.

The term "Wet Tropics" is not coined idly. During the wet season, say January to mid April, the deluge can be such that for days at a time Yorkeys Knob can become Yorkeys Island, as there are only one and a

bit roads and they regularly flood. At times like this the sense of isolation is accentuated, particularly if the power goes out as well, which it does regularly in a cyclone. Most of the homes up here have generators as does the local store, and because a good proportion of medical specialists live up on the Knob itself there is a gazetted helicopter landing pad at the Half Moon Bay Golf club for when it is Yorkeys Island and there are medical emergencies at the community hospital in Cairns.



Above: The vast Aquis Resort Casino complex proposed for Yorkeys is predictably controversial.
Right: This is why - even liberal minded conservatives are worried about the scale and size of the Aquis proposal and its likely impact on the local environment.

