

Minister hops on board with Fusion



JIM Gard, left, showed Jan Jarratt MP and Minister Tony McGrady around one of his catamarans on Tuesday. Picture: LINDA BRADY.

by Linda Brady

A MINISTERIAL visit rounded off a busy week for Whitsunday catamaran builders Fusion catamarans as the flourishing company completed its fourth vessel in less than four months.

The Fusion workshop played host to State Development Minister Tony McGrady on Tuesday — a part of the minister's one-day trip to the Whitsunday region. Fusion is getting used to busy weeks — the company has doubled its output and almost tripled its staff in the last 12 months due to high demand.

"We started with six staff and we now have 16 — we'd like to have 40 by Christmas," director Jim Gard told the Whitsunday Times this week.

"We have the capacity to produce one catamaran kit every six days but we just don't have the room, which is why we're applying to council to build more sheds on our block."

Touring the factory floor, Minister McGrady said Fusion was an example of how the Whitsundays' economy was starting to diversify.

"It really is a great example of how a local business can run with their vision and succeed," he said, adding that the whole district could benefit from Fusion's enterprise.

"The company will soon bring two new boat building operations to the Whitsunday shire with the intention of creating a boat building cluster," the Minister said.

"They are also examining export opportunities in the US, South East Asia, South Africa and Europe."

The company is already making an impact on local businesses, using many local contractors to help finish the vessels.

Fusion, which opened its doors at the Blue Bay Industrial Estate in July last year, makes catamaran kits using a special moulding system, with the basic lock-up shell retailing at \$200,000 — about half the price of regular catamarans.