

Green light for Titanic tycoon's Aussie dinosaur park

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Eccentric Australian mining magnate Clive Palmer was Thursday given the green light to build "the world's biggest" park of giant robotic dinosaurs, despite hundreds of objections filed by local residents.

A spokeswoman for the Sunshine Coast Regional Council said Palmer's plan to erect up to 160 animatronic dinosaurs at his Coolum Resort was approved "unanimously by council this morning", with local officials hoping for a tourism boost.

The exhibit will include five Tyrannosaurus rex robots, the largest towering at 8.5 metres (28 feet) in height, as well as a 10-metre Ruyangosaurus. The creatures, which are on order from China, will move their tails and chests and blink their eyes.

There are already two specimens on display at Coolum, north of Brisbane, and a third under construction, a Palmer spokesman told AFP.

"Jeff the T-rex (is) near the golf course pro shop, (there is) Bones the Skeleton and a giant crocodile is being installed," the spokesman said.

"More dinosaurs (are) coming in (the) next few weeks."

Palmer, a larger-than-life character who has made a fortune in mining and is currently building a replica of the Titanic to re-enact the ill-fated ship's Atlantic voyage in 2016, has described Coolum as the world's biggest dinosaur exhibit.

Asked earlier this year why he was building the Titanic replica, Palmer said: "I want to spend the money I've got before I die".

The council said Coolum "has the potential to attract new patronage and maintain the economic viability of the resort", rejecting local resident concerns about noise and fears the dinosaurs would lessen the resort's reputation and image.

"The additional attractions form a minor part (approximately 1.3 hectares) of the 150 hectare resort," it said.

It said the exhibits would be motion-sensor controlled and have a predetermined performance time, minimising noise, with a master volume control able to be adjusted "to ensure that they do not disturb either resort patrons or nearby residents".

Palmer is also running for office in Australia's national elections this year in an audacious and unlikely bid for the prime ministership.

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