

## High hopes for new clubhouse

Rae Wilson  
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Skydive Ramblers owners Susie McLachlan and her father, Dave McEvoy, have opened a new clubhouse at Sunshine Coast Airport.

**Brett Wortman**

AFTER colouring Sunshine Coast skies with vibrant canopies since 2000, family business Skydive Ramblers hopes a new clubhouse just a short jump from an airport runway will attract skydivers from across Australia and the world.

The business, which facilitates about 20,000 skydives a year on the Sunshine Coast and at Rainbow Beach and Toogoolawah, hopes the new bright blue building will draw more visitors to the Coast to experience "one of the country's most impressive skydive sites".

The clubhouse, which cost half a million dollars and was partly funded by a \$100,000 Australian Tourism Development Program grant, is a dream come true for Sunshine Coasters Susie McLachlan and her father, Dave McEvoy.

Ms McLachlan, who has done more than 2600 jumps and is an Australian gold and silver medallist for formation skydiving, said she hoped the number of skydivers on the Coast would double from 1500 a year to generate nearly half a million dollars in new business.

Attracting more skydivers means more tourism dollars spent on accommodation, food and other Coast services.

"The new clubhouse will become a vibrant hub where passionate skydivers can congregate, irrespective of whether they have done thousands of jumps or if they are trying a tandem for the first time," Ms McLachlan said.

"We want to make the most of this tourism destination. We're purely about taking locals and travellers on tandem jumps.

"This facility gives us the opportunity to welcome people and make them feel comfortable about jumping out of our perfectly good plane.

"We can train people in a custom-designed environment and then have a laugh with our customers and their family and friends when they review the video of their jump on the big screens straight after their jump."

The business previously operated from a back room at Coolum Beach Hotel.

Ms McLachlan said while that served them well for 11 years, this new facility was custom-built with huge areas for packing parachutes, big-screen TVs and their own kitchen and bathrooms.

The new clubhouse is on the corner of Airport Dr and Kittyhawk Cl, meaning the Ramblers can board their aircraft quickly and "take advantage of great weather conditions as they happen".

"So, ultimately, we can take up more loads and get more people's hair in the air," Ms McLachlan said.

Ms McLachlan said a lot of customers were celebrating special birthdays and special occasions or travelled from interstate or abroad, noting they had a marriage proposal, 40th and 50th birthdays and United Kingdom tourists among their jumpers at the weekend.

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