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BROOME CAMEL OPERATORS WIN ON CABLE BEACH

Two Broome camel operators who have provided beach rides for tourists for 25 years have over-turned a Council decision that would have forced them out of business.

Slater & Gordon lawyer Robyn Lord says it is a victory for the small player after they were priced out of the market by an opportunistic competitor and a council seeking profits.

"The camel ride on Cable Beach has been an iconic tourist experience since Abdul Casley started his business, Ships of the Desert, in 1981," said Ms Lord.

Alison and Alan Bird, who started Broome Camel Safaris in 1996, were also set to close after the Shire of Broome decided last December to award all three licenses for camel beach rides to the one company, Red Sun Camels Pty Ltd. The new licences were to take effect from January 1 2007.

Red Sun Camels had offered an amount of \$100,000 per year for each licence – a total of \$1.5 million over five years.

In their tender applications, Abdul Casley had offered to increase his annual fee to \$2200.

The WA State Administrative Tribunal today set aside the Shire of Broome's decision to award all three licences to the one company.

Justice Michael Barker ordered the Council to set a licence fee, reopen the process to applicants after reviewing its criteria for assessing tenders, and not determine the successful applicants solely on the amount they would pay.

Slater & Gordon lawyer Robyn Lord has praised her clients.

"It is rare for a Council to be held accountable in this manner, and Abdul and Alison have been courageous and committed in pursuing this matter," she said.

"The Broome Council obviously took the view that it could charge whatever it wanted for the licenses, and the right to operate on the beach should simply go to whoever had the deepest pockets. The decision today confirms this approach was neither fair nor correct

"Today's decision is a win for the Broome community as a whole, for WA tourism, and for the tourists who will come to Broome for an affordable beach camel ride."