

# INDUSTRY Today



**Blackwater students think big**  
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## Expo energy

Over 70 suppliers and exhibitors attended Gladstone Engineering Alliance's (GEA) Supply Chain Expo held at the Gladstone Entertainment Convention Centre on Thursday, 27 April.

Full story page 6 and photos on pages 18 and 19



Steven Rennie, Gary Longmore and Nathan Ting.

## QLD to benefit from coal

High coal prices could net Queensland an extra \$5 billion in taxes as the state government defends its royalty regime against a sustained campaign from the mining lobby.

The Queensland Resources Council produced the figure based on its analysis of federal resources and energy forecasts, which predict coal prices will stay high this year amid the war in Ukraine.

Full story page 4

## Resources strength drives budget

The Queensland Resources Council (QRC) said it was clear that strong demand and high prices for resources, particularly Queensland's coal and gas, has made a major contribution to the improvement in the Government's bottom line in the 2023-24 Federal Budget.

QRC Chief Executive Ian Macfarlane said when resources are strong, the economy is strong and every Australian benefits.

Full story page 5

# Going green

Queensland's port city is fast shaping up as the clean energy capital, with Gladstone currently home to the highest number of hydrogen projects in the workings across the state.

The Gladstone State Development Area (SDA) is at the centre of the region's renewables boom, which has cemented its status as an industrial hotspot for green giants.

A cluster of global companies have chosen Gladstone as the home of major clean fuel developments.

The Hydrogen Utility (H2U) is among the companies that aim to harness the region's potential for green hydrogen.

Having secured a strategic site in Yarwun for its planned \$4.7 billion green hydrogen and ammonia H2- HubTM Gladstone development, H2U has since secured a coordinated project declaration in April 2022, and the terms of reference for an environmental impact statement in February 2023.

It is currently engaged in front-end engineering and environmental studies.

The proposed two-stage development, expected to create more than 500 jobs, will support the decarbonisation of existing nearby industrial operations in Yarwun and connect to port facilities to export green hydrogen and ammonia to offshore markets including Japan and Korea.

H2U founder and CEO, Dr Attilio Pigneri, said Gladstone was the ideal location to support the scope and ambition of the project.

"Working with the team at EDQ, we have been able to secure a uniquely strategic site for our H2-HubTM Gladstone project, with proximity to domestic off-takers, water and power infrastructure and connectivity to existing port facilities," Dr Pigneri said.

"These elements, combined with the coordinated project approval framework that is available for projects within the State Development Area, and the breadth of infrastructure and operational capabilities associated with the Port of Gladstone, have been the key to our developing strategic relationships with cornerstone off-takers in the domestic

and export markets.

"Including our partnerships with Orica, the leading global manufacturer of ammonia and technical explosives, and Korea East-West Power, the operator of one of the largest portfolios of power generation assets in Korea."

As Central Queensland's renewables boom continues, several pumped hydro schemes are also being explored across regional Queensland as the state's transition to clean energy ramps up.

One example is the Sunshine Hydro proposal for a \$2 billion pumped hydro and green hydrogen facility that would provide enough renewable energy to power the equivalent of 600,000 homes.

Fortescue Future Industries and Alpha HPA are among the renewable energy heavyweights building on Queensland Government-developed land within the 26,934-hectare Gladstone SDA.

Continued page 3

## Supporting industry with portal

Banana Shire Council (BSC) and Gladstone Engineering Alliance (GEA) have teamed up with CS Energy to launch an online portal that will support local industry and small to medium enterprises explore the major wind opportunities brewing in Central Queensland.

The portal will demonstrate the existing expertise in the region and the capability of local businesses ready to provide services that will support the construction, operation, and maintenance of wind projects.

Full story page 15

## The editor's desk

A few weeks ago, I visited Gladstone to attend the GEA Supply Chain Expo.

It was great to see how many people were in attendance, and I managed to catch up with a few people I recognised.

Lucky for me as well, my sister was able to tag along and take some names while I took the photos. We even snagged a couple of cupcakes from one of the stalls.

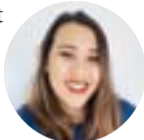
As always, it is great to see what is happening within the schools throughout Central Queensland and what they are learning in STEM and industry.

A new thing we are doing in Industry Today is having profiles where industry professionals complete a short Q and A.

Make sure you check it out on page 13.

As always, enjoy.

- Khrysti Balanay



## INDUSTRY TODAY



Blackwater North State School students explore STEM.

Pictures: SUPPLIED

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# Students immersed

Innovative workshops using robots and paper aeroplanes, delivered by the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy (QMEA) has helped Blackwater students in primary school get a glimpse of the exciting world of the resources and energy sector.

Thanks to support from Coronado Global Resources' Curragh mine, about 60 students from Years 3 to 6 from Blackwater North State School and Blackwater State School bolstered their science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) skills and built new coding capabilities.

QRC Director of Skills, Education and Diversity, Ms Katrina-Lee Jones said it's never too early for students to discover how their classroom learning can be applied to real-world scenarios, especially in an industry operating in their own backyard.

"The purpose of today's educational experiences is to demonstrate the exciting, dynamic characteristics of the resources and energy sector - from simple engineering concepts all the way to advanced technologies," Ms Jones said.

"QMEA engagements like are all about

sparkling interest in STEM subjects from an early age, helping the next generation make connections with a leading industry, and guiding them on a potential pathway to a rewarding career."

Coronado Global Resources Chief People and Sustainability Officer, Ms Emma Pollard said the company's valuable partnership with the QMEA helps build regional skills development in the community in which it operates.

"Under the guidance of experienced professionals from Curragh Mine, students as young as seven today got the opportunity to take what they're learning in school and solve real challenges," Ms Pollard said.

"During the first session today, students programmed Lego EV3 robots to autonomously drive around a simulated mini-mine site, something they would see automated trucks do on-site."

Blackwater State School Principal, Mrs Lisa Sweeney said during the second session, students explored the wonders of physics as they worked in teams to construct a paper aeroplane with the longest flight time.

"As educators, we understand programs don't have to be highly technical or intensive to reach students, and incorporating simple concepts in an entertaining way is highly effective," Mrs Sweeney said.

"Students had two 'test flights' today where they could take on advice from industry mentors to improve their prototype, before competing against the other teams for first place.

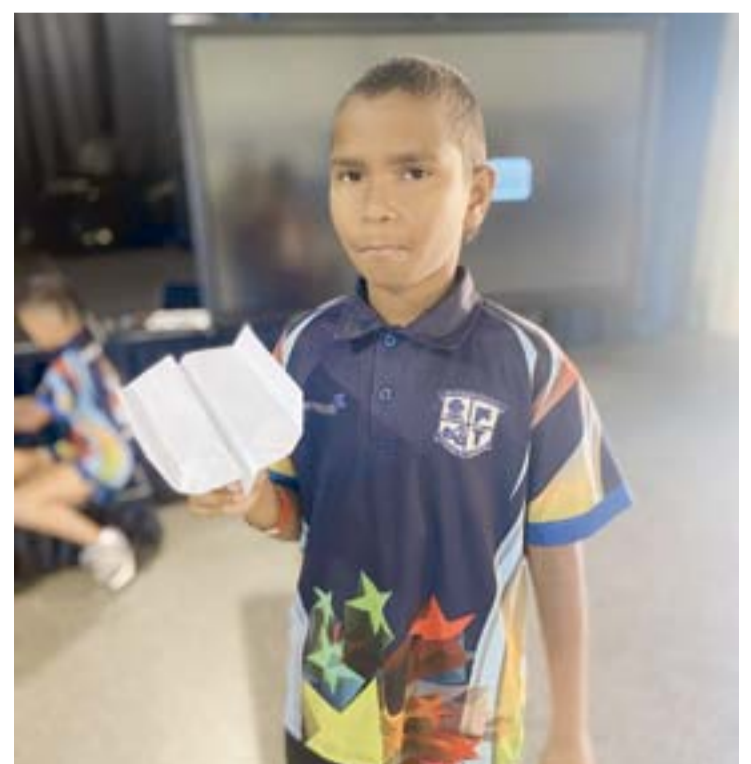
"This allowed them to not only bolster their tangible STEM skills, but also their valuable life skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork."

As Australia's largest and most successful industry-led education and schools initiative, the QMEA seeks to broaden student and teacher knowledge of career opportunities in resources.

The academy encourages a talent pipeline of employees into vocational and professional careers, with a focus on female and Indigenous participation. The QMEA currently engages with 91 schools and is a partnership between the QRC and the Queensland Government under its Gateway to Industry Schools program.



Coronado Global Resources visited the schools to show them the resources and energy sector.



A Blackwater State School student constructed a paper aeroplane.

# Search on for top dogs

Queensland's top exporters are encouraged to enter the 2023 Queensland Export Awards with applications open until Friday, 9 June.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk officially launched the awards in Bundaberg during a visit to last year's top winner Bundaberg Brewed Drinks.

"What better place to launch the 2023 awards than in Bundaberg with the Member for Bundaberg Tom Smith at the reigning Queensland Exporter of the Year - Bundaberg Brewed Drinks.

"Bundaberg Brewed Drinks is a great regional Queensland success story that started local and went global, now exporting to around 60 countries," Ms Palaszczuk said.

"Our state has a \$145 billion export industry that goes from strength to strength.

"One-in-five Qld jobs are linked to the export sector and our regions play a huge role with around 40 per cent of our more than 7000 exporting businesses based in regional Qld.

"Queensland is well and truly out front when it comes to exports and these awards are an opportunity for the hard work, perseverance and achievements of entrants to be acknowledged and honoured.

"I'm also proud that we are the first state to introduce a First Nations category honouring Indigenous exporters."

Queensland companies can apply now in 13 national categories and two state-based categories from agribusiness to creative industries.

Judging is by a panel of experienced business leaders from across industry, with winners named at an Awards Gala in Brisbane in October.

Past finalists and winners have included small and large exporters from all over Queensland.

There are separate categories for the Small



The Bundaberg Brewed Drinks team celebrated their win.

Picture: SUPPLIED

Business Award, Regional Exporter Award and Emerging Exporter Award, so regardless of exporters size or location, they are able to compete.

Bundaberg Brewed Drinks won the major

Queensland Exporter of the Year Award last October after also winning the Agribusiness, Food and Beverages category.

Bundaberg Brewed Drinks impressed judges with its significant export success, product

quality and continual range development.

Past winners have also included POPULOUS and Next Level Racing.

Further details on the awards can be found at [exportawards.qld.gov.au](http://exportawards.qld.gov.au)

## Gladstone going greener as clean energy capital

From page 1

It comes as about one-third of the 40-plus green hydrogen-related projects across the state sit in Central Queensland, including several major ventures flagged for Gladstone.

Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) General Manager, Debbie McNamara, said the Gladstone SDA was set to skyrocket as a destination for clean energy development.

"These companies could have gone anywhere in Australia, and they chose Gladstone – so that's a strong vote of confidence in the region's future," Ms McNamara said.

"With access to Port of Gladstone and other industrial infrastructure, EDQ's Aldoga and Yarwun sites are ideal for large-scale projects tapping into hydrogen export markets.

Jobs at the Aldoga and Yarwun sites are expected to be more than 5500 by June 2024.



Aldoga's site in the Gladstone State Development Area.



Yarwun Estate in the Gladstone State Development Area. Pictures: SUPPLIED



Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) General Manager, Debbie McNamara.

Gladstone's leading role in the growing green energy sector is expected to bring benefits across construction, manufacturing, and a range of other local service industries.

"We're focused on generating opportunities for growth through projects that create

quality local jobs, setting Gladstone up for generations to come," Ms McNamara said.

"We anticipate interest in industrial land within the Gladstone SDA, and other regional areas, will build as more businesses explore opportunities to invest in Queensland."



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# Coal royalties defended

By Nick Gibbs, AAP

High coal prices could net Queensland an extra \$5 billion in taxes as the state government defends its royalty regime against a sustained campaign from the mining lobby.

The Queensland Resources Council produced the figure based on its analysis of federal resources and energy forecasts, which predict coal prices will stay high this year amid the war in Ukraine.

“Last year, the Queensland government announced it would add three higher tiers to the state’s royalty tax system, costing coal producers an estimated extra \$800 million in 2022/23,” the lobby group said in a statement on Thursday.

“The latest price forecast from the Office of the Chief Economist suggests the amount will be closer to an extra \$5 billion, bringing the total amount of coal royalties paid by coal companies this financial year to an unprecedented \$13 billion.”

The added tiers targeting record global prices mean mining companies have been paying higher royalties on each tonne of coal sold for more than \$175.

Treasurer Cameron Dick said he was satisfied with the impact of the higher coal royalties as strong prices delivered good returns for both coal producers and the state.

“The coalmining lobby’s \$40 million campaign against fair royalties will not have any impact on the government’s position,” he said in a statement on Thursday.

Mr Dick said revenue forecasts would be provided through the state budget, due to be released on 13 June.

QRC chief executive Ian Macfarlane said the change to the state’s royalty regime would mean fewer jobs and less investment.

“The frustrating reality is that before the new tax tiers were introduced, coal companies would have still contributed a record \$8.3 billion in royalties to the state budget this financial year because coal prices have been so strong,” he said.

“When prices are high, the amount of royalties paid by companies increases. That’s how the previous system worked and it was working well for Queensland.”

An increase in global steelmaking means prices for metallurgical coal have lifted, but prices are expected to drop in subsequent years, according to the chief economist’s report.

“The Australian premium hard coking coal price is estimated to fall from an average US\$377 a tonne in 2022 to around US\$160 a tonne (in real terms) by 2028,” it said.

While thermal coal prices have eased recently, factors including persistent weather disruptions, fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and difficulty accessing finance and insurance mean they remain relatively high.

“Falling prices are expected to see export values ease from the record \$65 billion forecast for 2022/23 to a more typical level of around \$19 billion in real terms by 2027/28,” the report said.



Producers pay the Queensland government higher royalties on coal sold for over \$175 a tonne. Picture: SUPPLIED

## Record apprentice intake by Energex and Ergon Energy

Energex and Ergon Energy are offering a record of around 160 new apprenticeships across Queensland in 2024, with positions available in areas such as Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns.

The electricity distribution networks are increasing their apprentice intake numbers by 10 per cent each year for 10 years as part of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan and supporting the rollout of advanced technologies, including batteries and systems to support rooftop solar and EVs. The increase in apprentice numbers each year means the Government-owned distribution networks are now among the largest employers of apprentices in Queensland.

“Our apprentices soon get to learn that they’ll be working on a power network that’s constantly evolving to keep pace with technological advancements and increasing demand, which means they’ll be in a job where they’re challenged daily and never stop learning,” Energy Queensland’s Acting Chief Executive Officer Peter Scott said.

“Furthermore, if they stay on with us after their apprenticeship, they’ve got professional development options such as further education, technical or leadership positions and, with additional jobs up for grabs each year, it’ll be great to get these motivated people on board.



Energex and Ergon Energy Network are offering a record intake of 160 new apprentice positions in 2024, with a focus on diversifying the workforce. Picture: SUPPLIED

“Energex and Ergon Energy Network currently have 517 apprentices, in various stages of their four-year apprenticeship, undertaking trades across five disciplines including distribution linesperson, electrotechnology electrician, communication technician, transmission linesperson, and mechanical fitter.”

Minister for Energy Mick de Brenni said

the number of apprenticeships at the state-owned power distributors will grow year on year, giving candidates a better chance of scoring a secure energy industry job.

The key criteria for the positions include:

Be aged at least 17 at the time of their apprenticeship starting (i.e., by mid-January next year). There’s no upper age limit.

Be a permanent resident or hold a sub-

class 866 or 200 visa.

Completed Year 12 and passed Senior Maths A or General Maths and English (and a science subject is also very handy to have) OR completed equivalent pre-vocational studies incl a Certificate II in Electrotechnology OR have relevant work experience.

For more information on how to apply visit the Ergon Energy and Energex websites.

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# Resources sector strong

The Queensland Resources Council (QRC) said it was clear that strong demand and high prices for resources, particularly Queensland's coal and gas, has made a major contribution to the improvement in the Government's bottom line in the 2023-24 Federal Budget.

QRC Chief Executive Ian Macfarlane said when resources are strong, the economy is strong and every Australian benefits.

"The Budget has confirmed an estimated \$41 billion improvement on Treasury forecasts from just over six months ago," he said.

"Tax revenue from resources exports will contribute 20 per cent – or \$8 billion – of the extra \$41 billion now expected next financial year, which has proved the difference in the Government being able to deliver a \$4 billion budget surplus."

Mr Macfarlane said the strong long-term outlook for the resources sector is the shining light for the national economy as Australia faces economic headwinds at home and internationally.

"The resources sector is proud of its significant contribution to Australia's economic security and the QRC urges Governments to focus on policies that encourage the essential private investment required to develop projects that benefit all Australians," Mr Macfarlane said.

"In Queensland, coal, gas and minerals producers contributed a record \$94.6 billion to the state's economy in the 2021/22 financial year and the latest estimates indicate this figure will be exceeded this year.

"This contribution includes over \$27 billion being spent purchasing goods and services from local businesses, particularly in regional Queensland.

"The Queensland resources sector is also



QRC Chief Executive Ian Macfarlane said when resources are strong, the economy is strong and every Australian benefits. Picture: SUPPLIED

helping with cost-of-living pressures for more than 450 thousand Queenslanders whose jobs are supported by the resources sector, including 61 thousand directly employed in an industry with the highest average income in Australia."

The QRC said while the assistance being provided to some homeowners and businesses with rising energy costs will be welcomed, the

Government needs to focus on long-term solutions by increasing supply.

"Queensland's onshore gas producers are playing a crucial role in guaranteeing Australia's energy supply in the transition to a decarbonised future, but the current unprecedented Federal Government intervention in the market has created serious uncertainty among international investors," Mr Macfarlane said.

The QRC welcomes the Government's investment of \$57.1 million to develop critical minerals international partnerships and \$23.4 million for critical minerals policy development and project facilitation.

This new investment builds on the \$2 billion Critical Minerals Facility and \$1 billion targeted to value-adding in resources, under the National Reconstruction Fund.

**Other budget initiatives welcomed by the QRC include:**

- The \$400 million Industrial Transformation Stream to support the growth of new clean energy industries in regional areas, as well as innovative efforts to decarbonise existing industrial activities.
- The \$600 million Safeguard Transformation Stream of the Powering the Regions Fund will support trade-exposed facilities covered by the Safeguard Mechanism to reduce their on-site emissions and boost their global competitiveness.
- \$14.3 million to partner with the Queensland Government, supporting research and development into reducing emissions in Australia's energy resources sector.

"This budget underlines the importance of keeping the resources sector strong," Mr Macfarlane said.

"It is more important than ever that there is policy consistency and stability at both the State and Federal level to give investors the confidence to go ahead with new projects and jobs.

"Communities across Queensland and Australia rely on a strong resources sector.

"The QRC looks forward to working with the Federal and State Governments on the best policies to support investment and jobs."

## Students secure future in mining as new boom looms

With Australia on the brink of a resources mining boom, trainees and apprentices will be in demand more than ever before to secure the workforce future for the mining sector.

Meeting with BHP's FutureFit Academy trainees and apprentices Member for Capricornia Michelle Landry said they boost the pipeline of workers that are needed to ensure a strong economy.

"The apprentices and trainees at BHP's FutureFit Academy are critical to meeting the high demand for workers as we lead into another mining boom," Ms Landry said.

BHP have partnered with CQUniversity to deliver training for students at the Paget academy.

"Locals in Central Queensland know CQUniversity offers the best higher education in regional Australia," Ms Landry said.

"For BHP to also recognise this is a true credit to the work of our local university."

The BHP FutureFit Academy (FFA), launched in May 2020, has to date welcomed

over 800 apprentices and trainees across the two locations at Mackay in Queensland and Perth in Western Australia.

FFA graduates are guaranteed roles with BHP and are deployed to the company's Operations Services teams, which provide maintenance and production support to BHP's operations across Australia.

The FFA will train 2500 people over five years with an associated investment of \$300 million.

Vice President Operations Services Matt Furrer said he couldn't be prouder of what they've created with FFA.

"No one is investing in trades and training like we are," he said.

"Operations Services is successfully providing opportunities for thousands of Australians to benefit from permanent, well-paid jobs and high-value training and career development.

"It works for our 4000-strong team, it works for BHP, and the communities where we operate."



MP Michelle Landry tests out some of the equipment. Picture: SUPPLIED



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Adrian Robertson.

# Expo highlights local input

By Khrysti Balanay

Over 70 suppliers and exhibitors attended Gladstone Engineering Alliance's (GEA) Supply Chain Expo held at the Gladstone Entertainment Convention Centre on Thursday, 27 April.

GEA general manager Peter Masters said the expo's objective is to demonstrate the capabilities and capacities of the local businesses in the Central Queensland supply chain.

"We have existing industries that have supported the region for a long time, and our members who are present at the event contribute to sustaining these industries," Mr Master said.

"It is an opportunity to showcase what can be achieved locally and help keep the industries running smoothly.

"As our economy transitions towards decarbonisation, we are seeing many emerging industries come to the forefront.

"They don't need to look outside town or overseas for manufacturing solutions. We have been proving our abilities for a long time."

Mr Masters said that while Covid did knock several industries back, Gladstone is back on the radar for Australian and international companies.

"We have had numerous international visitors in the Gladstone region, some of who came to the expo," he said.

"The growth of Gladstone continues, and we are honoured to have high-calibre individuals attending this event.

"They have the opportunity to see the available options and engage in meaningful conversations.

"As a community, we should be proud of what we can offer to the international market."

Mr Masters said he also wanted to highlight the work of his colleagues who helped put together the expo and is looking forward to future events run by the company.

"In August, we will be holding our annual golf day, a fun and unique event where we invite our members to let loose and enjoy themselves," he said.

"This year, it will be a charity golf day where our members can choose the charity they want to support through a survey. The proceeds from the golf day will be donated to the chosen charity.



GEA General Manager Peter Masters and GEA Gladstone Area Manager Cameron Hausler.



Junior Eltagonda and Gavin Ellis.



Scott Lewald and Alex Werchon.



Dennis Vinski, Andrew Mura and Shawn Elliot.

"We will host a two-day industry conference focused on energy and manufacturing in September.

"This conference will include an awards

night where attendees can learn about the latest maintenance works in the industry and get insights into emerging industries.

"We look forward to everyone joining us

for these exciting events at the entertainment centre."

See more GEA Supply Chain Expo photos on pages 18 and 19.

- On-site maintenance, shutdown and workshop facilities
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- Civil and concreting
- Blast and paint

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# Keep the shears clicking

The newly formed National Wool Harvesting and Training (NWHAT) Advisory Group has highlighted some potential solutions to current workforce issues at a conference in Sydney on 14 April.

The group agreed the priority would be to get shearing recognised on the Skilled Occupation list, to open up access to the 400 (Temporary Work – Short Stay Specialist) and 482 (Temporary Skill Shortage) Visa options – both of which are relatively cheaper and more timely options.

Both the Shearing Contractors Association of Australia (SCAA) and the WA Shearing Industry Association (WASIA) have highlighted that labour shortages are real and more work needs to be done to bring staff in from overseas for the peak seasons across Australia.

“Progress has been made with the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme for shearers and outlined the two pathways currently being pursued – these being through Palladium (who helps facilitate the scheme on behalf of the Australian Government) or through an Accredited Labour Hire company,” SCAA Executive Officer Jason Letchford said.

“We are working closely with AWI to have initial training at the Falkiner Memorial Field Station in Conargo in Southern NSW.”

WoolProducers Australia Chief Executive Jo Hall saw the value in adding to the labour force.

“I was recently in India as part of the Australian trade delegation, and a labour and skills exchange type of scheme may be an option that aligns well with the recently ratified Australia-India Free Trade Agreement.”

The meeting also heard a proposal by the WA WoolTAG to have a National Campaign to promote increased recruitment of shed workers from farming families.

WASIA President Darren Spencer said it was a proposal worth pursuing.

“Attracting shed staff can be difficult, but



The conference discussed improving the standard of workplaces to help attract more people into the industry.

Picture: SUPPLIED

in Western Australia, we have had some recent success in promoting role models within schools,” Mr Spencer said.

“While some kids may have grown up on the farm, they do not necessarily know the opportunities for holiday or part-time work in sheds.”

The group also heard from SCAA Shearer Woolhandler Training, AWI and AWEX on recent training and initiatives to attract and retain wool harvesting staff.

All agreed that improving the workplace standard, whether in terms of in-shed equipment, facilities or work practices, will help attract more people into the industry.

Membership includes representatives from the State Wool Training Advisory Groups (WoolTAGs) chaired by AgForce Queensland, Livestock SA, NSWFarmers, Victorian Farmers Federation and Pastoralists and Graziers Association of Western Australia.

Other key industry representatives were from the Australian Wool Exchange, the National Council of Wool Selling Brokers of Australia, the Shearing Contractors Association of Australia, the WA Shearing Industry Association and WoolProducers Australia.

The independent Chair of the Committee is AWI Director Don Macdonald, who said the group is working very well.

“Wool harvesting is the number one issue for woolgrowers,” Mr Macdonald said.

“The advisory group is a great opportunity for all key industry organisations to work together.

“Collaboration is the way to go, and collectively we’ve got a better chance of resolving the challenges.

“The state training advisory groups are working well together and sharing information that benefits the industry nationally.

“It’s clear that many growers, shearers and contractors who have lifted their game are getting better results.

“As an industry, we need those improvements to spread more widely”.



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# Minister meets the innovators

Queensland's Manufacturing Minister Glenn Butcher met with leading innovators at the Australian Manufacturing Week showcase, which ran from Tuesday, 9 May until Friday 12 May in Melbourne.

The Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water and many of Queensland's leading manufacturers were front and centre at the event.

Australian Manufacturing Week attracted innovators and technology specialists from around the world, and the event serves as a vital networking and professional development opportunity for anyone working in the sector.

"We're excited to connect with the leading innovators in this sector, identifying the latest technology and processes that can be introduced to the factory floor and further streamline a business," Mr Butcher said.

"We know that manufacturing is the backbone of the Queensland economy, contributing \$20 billion a year to the coffers and supporting local regional communities through jobs and business growth."

Leading Queensland manufacturer, Elexon Electronics, exhibited at Australian Manufacturing Week to demonstrate new capabilities and attract international customers.

Elexon Electronics is based in Brendale and in 2019 received a Made in Queensland grant of \$890,000 to increase production capacity, reduce manufacturing costs, and create new job opportunities.

Since then, Elexon has doubled its manufacturing capacity, implemented aerospace quality standards and started supplying to defence customers.

Just in the past month Elexon employed eight new assemblers and plans to move to a new and larger purpose-built facility in the soon-to-be-developed Technology Park in Petrie.

"We have recently updated our facility to adopt industry 4.0 manufacturing processes and the result is a one-of-a-kind manufacturing capability suited for the needs of defence and aerospace industries," Elexon Electronics CEO Frank Faller said.

"We have a unique set up of high-end technology.

"There's nothing similar to this anywhere in Australia and we're using Australian Manufacturing Week to showcase our upgraded capabilities and demonstrate to international customers that this capability exists in Australia and that we are competitive with others overseas."



The Infrastructure Investment Program review will not look at projects already under construction.

Picture: JEREMY NG/AAP

# Clearing 'clogged' infrastructure list

By Andrew Brown and Tess Ikonou, AAP

The future of some road and rail projects could be in jeopardy as the government vows to review the country's "clogged" infrastructure pipeline.

Infrastructure Minister Catherine King said the 90-day review of the Infrastructure Investment Program was a chance to go back to the drawing board to ensure as many projects as possible could be rolled out.

The infrastructure pipeline is worth \$120 billion and has 738 projects, 162 of which have a government commitment of \$5 million or less, compared with 146 when Labor was last in government 10 years ago.

Ms King said cost overruns meant some projects previously announced by the coalition would not be able to be delivered.

Projects already announced in the budget or under construction would not be impacted by the review and Ms King said there was no target for how many projects would be cut.

"We have seen massive cost overruns, because again, the government previously did not do the work to actually make sure we had proper costings for these project," she said.

"They were interested in the announce-

ment, interested in the media, interested in the electoral outcome, not interested in the actual delivery of infrastructure."

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the review would ensure the program remained sustainable.

"We want to make sure that the sort of disasters that have occurred, whereby projects that might have cost hundreds of millions of dollars, had yet \$80 million or \$50 million attached to them with no prospect of it being included," he said on Monday.

"Projects were being announced with no consultation with state governments, with no state government funding, that couldn't possibly be delivered."

Ms King said the pipeline was clogged, with large delays on many of the infrastructure measures.

Nationals leader David Littleproud said the review would leave regional parts of the country at risk, warning of crucial projects being scrapped.

"You've got to ask the question about the sincerity of Catherine King in this government. This is about setting up a budget that regional Australia pay," he told Sky News.

"If the road and rail infrastructure isn't right

and to get product from a paddock to your plate, or onto a ship, then the bills aren't paid and your cost of living goes up."

Opposition infrastructure spokeswoman Bridget McKenzie said the government's "razor gangs" would cut important work.

"Continually cutting back on infrastructure projects will be a handbrake on economic growth and a barrier to driving national efficiencies needed to support budget repair and tackling inflation," she said.

"At the very time when the government budget repair strategy should be to invest in productivity enhancing capital and cut back on unnecessary recurrent expenditure, Labor seem determined to do the opposite, dooming the nation to a slow and painful recovery."

Australian Constructors Association chief executive Jon Davies said the review would lead to cancellation and deferrals on multiple builds.

"Delivery of infrastructure is not like a tap. It can't simply be turned on and off," he said.

"It is vital that industry is consulted in the review to avoid inflicting further pain on an industry that is already doing it tough as a result of having to absorb significant rises in material and labour costs."

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# Gas supplies in spotlight

It was an electric atmosphere in Brisbane on Tuesday as a crowd of 80 keen investors and energy enthusiasts came together to learn about the exciting potential of local oil and gas explorers from Queensland's Bowen, Cooper and Surat Basins.

With gas supply a key issue facing Australia, these four explorers are well positioned to step up and meet the challenge.

Speaking at the Investment Showcase event, Queensland Exploration Council (QEC) Chair Kim Wainwright emphasised the importance of supporting explorers on their pathway to production, and expressed excitement at bringing together the state's top gas explorers to generate interest in growing exploration.

"As the largest onshore gas producer in the country, Queensland plays a crucial role in supplying gas to the eastern market. Further exploration is needed to secure that supply, so events like this are of vital importance in maintaining the sunshine state's premier position as the leading Australian onshore exploration destination," Ms Wainwright said.

"With a sense of optimism and anticipation in the air, it's clear that these Queensland gas explorers are on the brink of something big – and investors are eager to seize the opportunity to learn about the innovative solutions being implemented by these explorers and get in on the ground floor."

Presenting at the event, Armour Energy CEO Christian Lange said the company's vision is to build a leading exploration and production company, and given its proximity to distribution networks, to focus on supplying gas to the Eastern states.

"A unique aspect of Armour Energy's portfolio is the relatively short routes available for commercialisation of new discoveries," Mr Lange said.

"With Armour Energy's strong balance sheet, we'll be able to intelligently invest in growing production and reserves, while ensur-



The Investment Showcase explored the potential of oil and gas in Queensland's Bowen, Cooper and Surat Basins.

Picture: SUPPLIED

ing that we maintain our outstanding safety and environmental track record."

Also presenting at the QEC Investment Showcase event, Bengal Energy Exploration Manager Mike Nisbet said the Cooper Basin exploration company is well positioned to capture rare oil and gas opportunities by way of its proprietary technology early production systems.

"Our producing and prospective light oil and natural gas assets in the Cooper Basin present a unique exposure to potentially high impact exploration and production projects," Mr Nisbet said.

Presenter John Phillips, CEO and Manag-

ing Director of Blue Energy, emphasized the advantages of natural gas and the ongoing necessity of the gas industry.

"Turning off fossil fuel too soon will lead to a lower standard of living. It's vital for not only power generation, but also plays a crucial role in the production of fertilizers, plastics, bricks, glass, and refining critical minerals used for batteries and other applications," Mr Phillips said.

"Global primary energy consumption is 80 per cent fossil fuel based – you can't switch that to renewables overnight.

"Right now, the North Bowen Basin is the medium and long-term solution to the east

coast gas users' woes – it just needs nation building gas infrastructure."

Lauren Bennett, CEO and Managing Director for presenting company Omega Oil and Gas stated that given the forecast gas supply shortages, finding, and developing new sources of unencumbered gas is critical.

"Omega's proximity to well established Queensland gas infrastructure and the clear requirement for more gas in the major population centres to feed industry, places Omega in a favourable position to build on the gas discovery at its Canyon 2 site and further de-risk a potential 3-TCF of prospective gas resource," Ms Bennett said.

<b>Pump Model:</b>	<b>3HRSS-H</b>
<b>2 x 370-Watt Panel Post Mount System.</b>	<b>9000 Ltrs Per Day at Total Head of 30 Mtrs.</b>
<b>Total System Price, Automatic, to top of bore:</b>	<b>"Complete. \$4990 incl GST</b>

<b>Pump Model:</b>	<b>4HRSS</b>
<b>2 x 370-Watt Panel Post Mount System.</b>	<b>14,000 Ltrs Per Day at Total Head of 30 Mtrs.</b>
<b>Total System price, Automatic, to top of bore:</b>	<b>"Complete. \$5290 incl GST</b>

<b>Pump Model:</b>	<b>4HRSS-H</b>
<b>4 x 330 -Watt Panel Post Mount System.</b>	<b>18,000 Ltrs Per Day at Total Head of 30 Mtrs.</b>
<b>Total System Price, Automatic to top of bore:</b>	<b>"Complete. \$7535 incl GST</b>

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# Rio Tinto's rosy picture

By Lloyd Jones, AAP

Rio Tinto has a critical role to play in enabling the global energy transition by supplying essential minerals for the renewable technologies needed, the mining giant's shareholders have been told.

Addressing the group's annual general meeting in Perth on Thursday, board chair Dominic Barton said the future of the company was "looking bright" as it marked 150 years of operation.

Having emerged from a challenging period, Rio Tinto had laid the foundations to become "the global mining company of choice", he said.

The energy transition and the drive to net zero, coupled with a renewed focus on security of supply, provided further opportunities for Rio Tinto, Mr Barton said.

He said if the world was to meet the Paris climate accord goals it would need 700 billion tonnes of copper over the next 20 years, while by 2050 windpower capacity would have to increase eightfold.

"To put that into perspective, one wind turbine of three megawatts requires 300 tonnes of steel, five tonnes of copper, three tonnes of aluminium and two tonnes of rare earths."

Mr Barton said electric vehicles and battery storage would raise lithium demand more than 40 times by 2040 while 20 times more cobalt and nickel would be needed.

"So we have a critical role to play in enabling this energy transition, supplying essential minerals ... all of which are vital for the transition to a low-carbon economy."

Mr Barton said Rio Tinto delivered strong financial results in 2022 with the momentum continuing into 2023.

It declared total dividends of \$US8 billion



CEO Jakob Stausholm at Rio Tinto's AGM in Perth where shareholders were told of a "bright future". Picture: MATT JELONEK/AAP

(\$A12 billion) to shareholders last year, "our second-largest ordinary dividend in our 150-year history" and paid \$US10.8 billion in taxes and royalties.

"Building trust with our key stakeholders and strengthening our social licence was also a key focus of 2022," Mr Barton said.

"While it's for others to judge our progress on those points, I'm proud of some recent achievements, particularly agreements reached with Indigenous peoples."

Mr Barton said the industry was at an "inflection point" with balanced decision-making required to meet the needs of the energy tran-

sition and continued global growth.

"How do we fulfil our role in the energy transition in a way that is socially and environmentally responsible and yet sufficiently commercial to attract the investment required?"

Mr Barton said he believed Rio Tinto was up to the challenge to reduce its own emissions by 50 per cent by 2030 and to meet a net-zero target by 2050.

In response to a question from the floor he said the company supported the proposed voice to parliament but was not telling its employees which way to vote in the referendum later this year.

Chief executive Jakob Stausholm said the company had underlying earnings of \$US13.3 billion last year and a return on capital employed of 25 per cent.

Profit after tax attributable to Rio Tinto shareholders was \$US12.4 billion and balance sheets remained strong with net debt of \$US4.2 billion.

Mr Stausholm said 2022 was the fourth consecutive fatality-free year for the company but it continued to strengthen its safety culture.

Rio Tinto was also changing the way it partnered with communities, especially with Indigenous peoples, he said.

"Moving to a model of co-management of country and improving our agreements will deliver more enduring socio-economic heritage and environmental outcomes and in turn greater certainty for mine development."

Mr Stausholm said a highlight was creating with local Aboriginal people the Juukan Gorge Legacy Foundation as part of the remedy to the destruction by Rio Tinto of rock shelters in the gorge in May 2020.

"But we know it will be a long journey to rebuild trust."

## Builders welcome targeted support for apprentices

Peak body for the building and construction industry Master Builders Australia has welcomed the Federal Government's announcement of strengthening targeted support and services available for apprentices.

Chief executive officer Denita Wawn said with around half of the apprentices failing to complete a trade apprenticeship at a time when the industry is facing critical skill shortages, this investment is a sensible step to give apprentices the best possible chance to remain in the industry.

"Construction is the backbone of the Australian economy, employing approximately 1.3 million people, providing infrastructure, commercial and community buildings, and homes for the growing population," Ms Wawn said.

"Nearly 10 per cent of the 1.26 million people employed in construction are apprentices or trainees, the highest proportion of any industry in Australia."

"On 30 September 2022, 121,479 appren-



Nearly 10 per cent of the 1.26 million people employed in construction are apprentices or trainees. Picture: KHRYSYTI BALANAY

tics and trainees in training were employed in the building and construction industry. This is three in every ten apprentice and trainees employed in Australia and significantly more than any other industry sector."

With Australia's population projected to

grow by over 50 per cent between 2022 and 2060, reaching nearly 40 million people, the industry will require a significant workforce to undertake the necessary building and construction work.

"Work-integrated learning pathways, in-

cluding apprenticeships, traineeships and cadetships, are critical to ensuring the building and construction industry has a pipeline of skilled workers," Ms Wawn said.

"The early stages of an apprenticeship are the most tenuous. Pastoral care can benefit apprentices, is a core element of the group training organisation model, and likely one of the main reasons that GTOs have higher completion rates than small employers."

"The construction industry attracts more male than female workers. Improving the attractiveness of the industry to women presents a massive opportunity to increase the pool of potential workers."

"Initiatives such as Master Builders Australia's Women Building Australia program are supporting retention through mentoring, helping to dispel misperceptions about the industry, encouraging more women into construction, sharing the stories of women in the industry, and nurturing career progression and business resilience."



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# Dairy sector forecasts

Australian dairy producers can look forward to another favourable season in 2023/24, with the sector set for its fourth consecutive profitable year, Rabobank says in its recently-released annual Australian Dairy Seasonal Outlook.

The agribusiness banking specialist says while the upcoming season's milk price will likely be lower than the "lofty highs" currently being offered across parts of the southern export region – reflecting the current downturn in the global commodity price cycle – there is a "firm landing zone" expected for new season Australian milk prices.

This is due to stronger domestic dairy market returns, a weak Australian dollar and "aggressive recruitment and retention strategies" by dairy processors in a competitive market for milk supply.

These are providing a buffering effect to the full extent of global pressures, according to report author, Rabobank senior dairy analyst Michael Harvey.

With the 1 June deadline approaching for minimum milk price offers from Australian dairy companies, the bank is forecasting minimum offers for new season milk in southern Australia to be between AUD 8.50/kgMS and AUD 9.00/kgMS.

"At worst, this represents a 10 per cent decrease from 2022/23 prices and a farmgate milk price that is well above the medium-term average for southern Australia since the introduction of the industry's Dairy Code of Conduct in January 2020," Mr Harvey said.

"Another season of historically-elevated milk prices will support farmgate margins."

## Cost relief

The report – titled 'Looking for a Firm Landing Zone' – says there is "welcome relief" for dairy farmers from a recent record-high cost base, with lower prices for purchased feed and fertiliser flowing through balance sheets.

"Even if some dairy farmers see an easing in minimum price offers, this should come with cost relief," Mr Harvey said.

"Global feed benchmark prices are down compared with last year, although still above medium-term averages, while local wheat prices are tracking close to global trends.

"Locally, grain supplies are high, after several bumper winter crops, with the prospect of another decent winter crop this year meaning feed supply will be adequate for buyers and will help to dampen feed supply risks.

"Australian dairy farmers will already be seeing the benefits of a significant correction in global fertiliser prices and, therefore, a boost in affordability.

"Looking forward, Rabobank expects the underlying fundamentals in the fertiliser market to lead a period of price stability, which will assist Australian dairy farmers as they prepare their nutrient management programs for the year ahead."

However, the Rabobank Outlook warns, there will still be other cost headwinds on farm in 2023/24 – including higher interest rates – and "labour is a major headache".



Rabobank senior dairy analyst Michael Harvey.

Picture: SUPPLIED

"Despite the relief on purchased and home-grown feed costs, as Australian dairy farmers begin budgeting for the year ahead, they will still have to deal with a high-cost-of-production environment in the 2023/24 season, as inflationary pressures flow through in overhead costs, particularly the cost – and availability – of labour," Mr Harvey said.

"At the same time, interest rates are moving higher."

## Global dairy outlook

The report says milk prices in a number of dairy-exporting regions around the world have already fallen, following the large decline in global dairy commodity prices seen since their peak in the first half of 2022.

"Since that time, prices in the 'dairy commodity basket' have fallen significantly on the back of a shift in underlying fundamentals in the market," Mr Harvey said.

These included a return to growth in milk supply across most dairy-exporting regions (coupled with softer domestic demand), sluggish import appetite from the world's largest dairy importer China and widespread demand 'rationing' in many dairy markets

across retail, foodservice and ingredient channels.

As a result, Mr Harvey said, "indicative stream returns" for Australia's dairy product mix have fallen between 30 per cent and 40 per cent compared with the same time last year and are now at, or below, average returns of the previous five years.

Rabobank says "near-term global fundamentals" – including increasing growth in milk production in export regions through 2023 and "largely absent" Chinese buyers until the second half of the year – will keep downward pressure on global dairy commodity prices.

"However, at some stage the cycle will turn and global commodity prices will begin to increase, but this will depend on when China returns as a meaningful buyer in export markets," Mr Harvey said.

## Domestic market

Locally though, Australia's domestic market returns have reset for the better, the report says.

"The domestic market is experiencing a structural increase in consumer prices across

the dairy aisle, led by drinking milk and cheese in particular," Mr Harvey said

"This is driven by dairy processors passing through record-high farmgate prices and other input costs. This is important as it will support the value chain and lead to stable farmgate milk prices over multiple seasons for those milk producers supplying the domestic market."

## Local supply

Australia's dairy supply chain continues to be challenged by a declining milk pool, Rabobank says.

In 2022/23, the annual availability of milk for manufacturing will fall below six billion litres, for the first time since 1990.

## Investment

The Rabobank Outlook says consecutive seasons of farm sector profitability and industry stability are providing dairy producers with an opportunity to rethink their longer-term investment strategies.

"There has been a notable pick up in investment to increase labour efficiency and improve capacity," Mr Harvey said.



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Phil Henry, Dominique Lamb, Mary Ryan and Zac Garven.



Arty Stokes, Grantley Jack and Jack Duncan.



Zac Garven, Rob Carr and Paul Tydd.

# Celebrating 'small' glory

Advance Rockhampton hosted a Small Business Commissioner lunch at the Red Lion Hotel on Wednesday, 10 May.

Business leaders from organisations across Central Queensland attended to listen to Small Business Commissioner Dominique Lamb.

CQ Today's Peter Lynch attended to grab a few photos from the lunch.



Simon Irwin and Arty Stokes.



Arty Stokes, Grantley Jack, Mayor Tony Williams, Dominique Lamb, Rob Carr and Simon Irwin.

## Women empowering women in tech and information

CQUniversity Information and Communications Technology (ICT) academic Meena Jha wants to see fellow women excel in ICT.

So passionate about the cause, Dr Jha founded the Women in Technology (WinTECH) Society four years ago which continues to inspire and engage women in ICT today.

"There is a need to improve representation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and the Australian Government has started a conversation about diversity in STEM and ways to improve the underrepresentation of women in STEM," Dr Jha explained.

"WinTECH is a group of women dedicated to the advancement of women in the technology education and industry. Our mission is to provide opportunities, resources and mentoring to help women excel in their technology-related careers."

The WinTECH Society which is also made up of co-founder Dr Sangeetha Kutty and steering committee members Professor Giriya Chetty from University of Canberra and Dr



Zarnigor Rakhmonova and Meena Jha.

Picture: SUPPLIED

Anuradha Mathrani from Massey University, offers a variety of services and activities to help women in technology succeed.

"We provide educational seminars, net-

working events and mentorship programs. Our members also share their experiences and advice on topics such as career development, job search strategies and the

latest industry trends.

"We also encourage members to take part in our volunteer and outreach initiatives. Through these activities, we strive to create a supportive network of women in technology and promote the value of diversity in the industry.

One such member is CQUniversity Master of Information Systems International student from Uzbekistan, Zarnigor Rakhmonova.

"To improve my IT skills and knowledge, apart from the scheduled classes, I enthusiastically joined the WinTECH society which aims at building a community to empower women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics," Zarnigor said.

"I have participated in several activities organised by the WinTECH Society on various topics, such as Enter the world of Cyber Security and Business Analysis - From Theory to Practice where the industry experts share their unique experience with students.

"Personally, I am gaining valuable knowledge from each session, and looking forward to the upcoming workshops."

# Industry profile: Kelly Mann

**What company do you work for?**

The Hydraulic Shop.

**What is your position, and how long have you been in this role?**

I am the workshop Manager, and I have been in the role for three and a half years.

**Can you explain what you do and why it is important?**

The hydraulic shop repairs, rebuilds and engineers all things hydraulic, from hydraulic cylinders to pumps, motors and suspensions. We work with some of the major companies within the coal industry as well as the local farmers and local equipment owners.

**What is your favourite part about your job?**

As we are a local company owned and staffed by locals, my favourite part of the job is being able to help the local farmers and owners with their hydraulic problems.

**Why did you decide to pursue this career pathway?**

I took the role of workshop manager at the hydraulic shop to stop travelling away for work and allow me to work in Rocky close to home and get in more fishing time.

**Can you explain how you got into this career?**

My employment at the hydraulic shop was a recommendation from a mate of a mate, pure luck in the end. It turned out to be probably the best decision I ever made.

**What did you want to be when you were younger?**

Grew up on the farm, so farming was high on the list at the time.

**What is the best piece of advice you have ever received?**

Live life to the full because you're a long time dead.



Kelly Mann workshop manager at The Hydraulic Shop. Picture: PETER LYNCH

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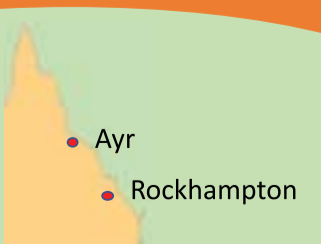


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# Up to 1000 jobs in pipeline

## Connecting Local Industry to Steelmaking Coal Procurement Opportunities

Assisting the resource and construction industry supply chain in planning and tendering for up-and-coming project procurement opportunities throughout Australia, Connecting Industry hosted an event this week focussed on the development of the Olive Downs Complex.

A large-scale, world-class steelmaking coal mine located in the Bowen Basin of Queensland approximately 40km southeast of Moranbah, the mine is expected to create up to 500 jobs during construction and more than 1,000 new jobs when the project reaches full operation.

The development is expected to provide numerous benefits to the region, including indigenous employment and training opportunities for members of the Barada Barna aboriginal community and recruitment policies focussed on locally-based personnel and gender equality.

### Aged Care Workers pay increase

Last week's federal budget delivered an historic 15 per cent pay rise for aged workers, in line with the Fair Work Commission's order to increase wages for underpaid workers in the sector. It is hoped that the increase will both attract and retain employees, in a predominantly female dominated sector that 'has been historically undervalued' says Australia's minister for aged care, Anika Wells.



The aged care sector has grown significantly across the country, by 65 per cent over the last five years according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistic Labour Force data. In Central Queensland, the data shows growth in the sector over the last five years has been measured at 102 per cent. The government's Labour Market Insights data for Fitzroy shows that health care and social assistance workers account for 18.1 per cent of the local labour market. Compared to the next two largest employing sectors, the retail trade and mining sector, both representing 9 per cent of the local workforce, the scale and significance of this wage increase across the sector is clearly apparent.

Overall, women make up 70 per cent of managers and 84 per cent of non-managers in the sector and the move is a positive step towards addressing women's economic inequality in the workforce.

### Domestic and Family Violence Leave

Newly introduced this year, the Family and

Domestic Violence Leave entitlement is accessible for all employees. The entitlement, which applies to all employees, including part-time and casual, entitles employees to 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave each year. Businesses are obligated to understand the new entitlement and ensure compliance, which will include updating systems such as payroll and revising HR policies and procedures.

The leave is introduced as part of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, a policy framework that will be implemented over the next 10 years. The October budget invested \$1.7 billion in the plan, with an additional \$589.3 million invested in this month's budget.

Confidential information, counselling and support for people impacted by domestic and family violence (including employees and employers) is available at the 1800 RESPECT website, the national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service.

### Support for workforce participation

This year's federal budget was strongly focussed on the cost of living package, with increased payments to those receiving government payments. This included JobSeeker and student payments increasing by \$40 per fortnight from 20 September 2023.

Changes to the JobSeeker program, equating to \$4.9 billion, and \$3.7 million of pension incentives are policy measures that have been

put in place to enhance workplace participation for older Australians.

Whilst this year's federal budget prioritised support for those currently outside the workforce, there is a real need to increase the skills, capacity and productivity of our current workers to meet the demands of a modern digital economy. Investment in new and emerging technologies and further education and skills development of those currently participating in the workforce are areas for improvement if we are to accelerate our economy.

### Jobs and Skills Australia releases latest recruitment survey results

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) have released new analysis that shows employers use many varied approaches to advertising their job vacancies.

The Jobs and Skills Australia, Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey shows that in Queensland, advertising on internet job boards is the most common method of finding staff, with 65 per cent of employers using this method in 2022. Social media usage in regional Queensland is an increasing method of advertising, with 32 per cent of employers using this method for higher skilled jobs, well above the national average of 20 per cent. Also, more prevalent in regional Queensland is word of mouth advertising, at 31 per cent.

For more information and insights about local job opportunities and recruitment support visit [JobsinCentralQueensland.au](http://JobsinCentralQueensland.au)

# There's one in nearly every CQ town, thank goodness

## OPINION with Warren Acutt

An industry that typically gets overlooked, or just gets lumped in a broad category, is a very important one in Central Queensland.

One that deserves greater individual recognition for the vital role they play.

You will find them in nearly every Central Queensland town, in some cases more than one. Some are owned and run by a local, others owned by a multi-national corporation.

They are not hotels, but their customers are known to like a chat, after all it may have been some time since their last face to face visit. They are Rural Traders, Agricultural Merchandisers, Rural Retailers, or just referred to by the name of the people (or business) that owns them. What they sell is diverse and thus the expectation of what the people who work there should know, would to an outsider appear truly daunting. Yet the information these people possess is relied upon, to the point livelihoods can depend on it.

What to grow, when to fertilise, with what, how to decrease production costs per hectare, what should I feed the ageing dog, how to get rid of the algae in the trough, should extra supplements be added to the stock feed. And if you have not got it, where and how soon can you get it?



Yet for the vital role these specialist stores perform in each of their communities, and the jobs they provide, they receive hardly any recognition. Just lumped under retail, or small business, if they do not carry a multi-national brand.

Imagine, if you can, Central Queensland (coast to the border) without these specialised rural traders in nearly every town. I am guessing there would be over 200 currently operating.

If they were not there, how many local jobs would never have been filled, possibly affecting if a school was to continue to operate, a bank keeping a physical presence (might be drawing a long bow here), let alone how productive the rural producers would be without being able to, easily and confidently, access their knowledge and in many cases purchase the needed products on the spot.

Re-investing the returns into their prop-



Rural retailers are vital for the community. Often they go above and beyond with advice and can answer those questions like "What to grow and when to fertilise." Picture: SUPPLIED

erty and local community.

As we allow Amazon and the like to dominate our spending dollars, consider the long term affect it will have on our communities, particularly in a region like Central Queensland, where one family leaving

a town could affect if a school continues to open.

Next time you drive past a specialist rural retailer, stop, even to just say thanks. It is the type of business that would appreciate it, (not look at you strangely).

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# Portal brings online link

Banana Shire Council (BSC) and Gladstone Engineering Alliance (GEA) have teamed up with CS Energy to launch an online portal that will support local industry and small to medium enterprises explore the major wind opportunities brewing in Central Queensland.

The portal was originally announced at the 19th annual GEA Major Industry and Energy Conference last year by Assistant Minister for Hydrogen Development, and the 50 per cent Renewable Energy Target 2023, Lance McCallum and has since been developed.

The portal will demonstrate the existing expertise in the region and the capability of local businesses ready to provide services that will support the construction, operation, and maintenance of wind projects.

GEA General Manager Peter Masters said the region is well-placed to take advantage of the opportunities presented through the sustainable and renewable energy transition.

“GEA is pleased to partner with CS Energy and the Banana Shire Council to deliver the GEA/BSC Wind Capability Mapping Portal, which will provide great benefits for our local business community throughout Central Queensland,” Mr Masters said.

“We are committed to assisting the Central Queensland Region prepare their businesses to take advantage of the opportunities associated with wind energy as efficiently and effectively as possible.”

With the influx development of wind energy hubs in Central Queensland, this portal provides local businesses with the ideal services and skill sets an opportunity to branch out into new business prospects.

CS Energy Acting CEO Andrew Varvari said the company is considering both equity and offtake opportunities in up to three large-scale wind developments in Central Queensland over the next four years.

“CS Energy is continuing to diversify into



The Gladstone Engineering Alliance (GEA) and the Banana Shire Council (BSC) have teamed up with CS Energy to launch an online portal that will support local industry and small to medium enterprises explore the major wind opportunities brewing in Central Queensland. Picture: SUPPLIED

new energy sources to support our customer's requirements and Queensland's future energy needs,” Mr Varvari said.

As of today, the GEA/BSC Wind Capability Mapping Portal is officially live and interested local suppliers are encouraged to visit the platform for more information or contact the GEA

team for further assistance.

Mayor of Banana Shire Council Cr Nev Ferrier said the new wind projects being investigated by CS Energy have the potential to create numerous jobs and opportunities for our local communities, which is crucial for economic growth within our region.

“Banana Shire Council is pleased to collaborate with GEA and CS Energy to launch the Wind Capability Mapping Portal,” Cr Ferrier said.

Register your business capability and capacity today by visiting the following link: <https://www.tsbesuppliersportal.com.au/r/central-queensland-windcapability-mapping-porta>

## Big building boost as government backs tradies

As hundreds of workers across Queensland participated in Labour Day marches, Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk announced the State Government would double its trades-based workers to 1000 tradies and apprentices in the next few years.

“QBuild is more than 160 years old - and we are proud to outline our clear plan for QBuild's future and boost the capability of its frontline,” Ms Palaszczuk said.

“Our government is growing QBuild to 1,000 trade and apprentice positions by 2026 - with plans to further increase the ranks to 1,500 by 2029.

“It is the strength and skill of our workforce that will build the schools and homes of the future and inspire the next generation of apprentices to do the same.”

The rebuilt QBuild will also support Queensland's construction sector in building government infrastructure projects in the

lead-up to Brisbane 2032.

QBuild staff are also among the first responders to natural disasters, helping to repair key infrastructure such as schools and social housing so communities can get back on their feet as soon as possible.

“QBuild tradies and apprentices will be out there in our communities, in every region, from Thursday Island to Townsville, Bundaberg to Brisbane, and everywhere in between,” Minister for Energy and Public Works Mick de Brenni said.

“The Rebuild QBuild program is a partnership with Queensland trade unions to ensure government returns an all important income capacity to deliver its critical projects and be able to respond to, and meet challenges in the industry.

“When a tradie joins the QBuild team, they're not just constructing buildings, they're literally building the State.”



Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk meets with the QBuild apprentices with Deputy Premier Steven Miles. Picture: PALASZCZUK FACEBOOK



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Wandoan State School students participated in the course.



# Students dive in deep

The Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy (QMEA) made waves at a Water 4 All workshop, thanks to support from Senex Energy, marking the official start to Term 2 engagements for the Queensland Resources Council's (QRC) education branch.

About 30 Year 7 students from Wandoan and Taroom state schools dove into exciting, hands-on activities giving them the opportunity to learn about water management through a resources industry perspective.

QRC Director of Skills, Education and Diversity, Ms Katrina-Lee Jones said the educational experience helps students apply fundamental science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) to solve real-world challenges.

"This valuable workshop, aligned with the national science curriculum, complements the classroom learning for these bright young minds in the early years of secondary school," Ms Jones said.

"Helping students explore technical aspects of water management, such as filtration and purification, allows them to make connections with the resources and energy sector, and deepens their understanding of suitable water quality for the environment and community."

Senex Energy Community Relations Manager Trevor Robertson said the workshop was a valuable opportunity for the students to discover the endless exciting career opportunities available to STEM professionals.

"Students were able to see firsthand the critical role experts like Senex's hydrogeologists and data and analytics managers play

in ensuring the quality and quantity of water needs are met across our operations," Mr Robertson said.

"Our hope is that students are encouraged to take an interest in STEM subjects and one day take up a job in the all-important resources sector which delivers so much for the local community and society in general."

Wandoan State School Principal, Mr Jack Mathewson said the students particularly enjoyed seeing innovative and leading technologies used in the jobs of today.

"Today, students used real-time water quality monitoring and data logging devices to investigate which methods of water filtration are the most effective and efficient," Mr Mathewson said.

"The QMEA workshops are a fantastic opportunity for students to apply their critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills while learning about local career opportunities in life after school."

As Australia's largest and most successful industry-led education and schools initiative, the QMEA seeks to broaden student and teacher knowledge of career opportunities in resources.

The academy encourages a talent pipeline of employees into vocational and professional careers, with a focus on female and Indigenous participation. The QMEA currently engages with 90 schools and is a partnership between the QRC and the Queensland Government under its Gateway to Industry Schools program.



A Taroom student participates in the QMEA workshop.

Pictures: SUPPLIED

## Australia-UK free trade deal heralds a new era

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak met in London on 5 May and announced the long-awaited entry into force date of midnight 31 May 2023 for the Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement (A-UK FTA), following the expected completion of UK domestic processes.

Prime Minister Albanese was in London to attend the Coronation of King Charles III, a significant week for both Australia's head of state and new era for Australia-UK trade relations.

The A-UK FTA, which was agreed in principle in June 2021 and signed on 17 December 2021, will see Australian beef and sheepmeat/goat meat access to the UK liberalised over a transition period.

"The FTA marks a new chapter in Australia-UK trade relations and, for our sector, provides an important framework to continue to do business with British customers and consumers," said Andrew McDonald, chair of the Australia-UK Red Meat Market Access Taskforce.

"Australia and the UK have a long history of trade with British consumers being loyal purchasers of Australian beef and sheepmeat.

"The FTA provides an opportunity to modernise our trading relationship for the future, and we look forward to more streamlined trade and reduced supply chain costs with the implementation of the agreement."

From midnight 31 May, Australian beef and sheepmeat exports will enter the UK under a new tariff rate quota (TRQ) regime – with initial TRQ tonnages gradually increasing over a 10-year transition period. Product within the TRQ amounts will enter tariff free.

While there will be no TRQ regime post year 10, a volume safeguard provision will apply until the end of year 15, beyond which no safeguards will apply.

"We congratulate the Prime Ministers on finalising this significant milestone in Australia-UK relations and express our gratitude to all who have worked diligently to realise such an outcome," Mr McDonald said.



Prime Minister Anthony Albanese met with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at 10 Downing Street in London on 5 May.

Picture: PETER NICHOLLS/AAP



# Caravans tackle big issues

Caravan Industry Association of Australia's annual National Conference headed to the Gold Coast, with the support of Destination Gold Coast and Dometic Outdoor, with 1000 delegates from across the country coming together to discuss the future of the industry.

The conference, held from 10 to 12 May at RACV Royal Pines on the Gold Coast, saw caravan park operators, caravan and RV manufacturers, technology providers, regulators and state associations coming together to hear about and discuss some of the big topics arising across the industry.

"This year's conference has proven to be the biggest one yet," Caravan Industry Association of Australia Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Stuart Lamont said.

"We have really concentrated throughout the program on discussing the rising trends in today's economic, business and policy environments, which all promise to have a major impact on the industry of tomorrow.

"As an industry, we have seen unprecedented growth over the last two years, growth that has seen the industry achieve some dizzying milestones."

Last year, the caravan industry saw Australians make a record 15.1 million trips and stay 60.1 million visitor nights, most of which were in regional and rural Australia.

"The humble industry is no longer contributing \$27 billion annually to GDP, over 820,000 registered caravans and RVs travelling the country's roads," Mr Lamont said.

"These are numbers we are very proud of however we still have challenges and generational transformations on the horizon.

"These will be a major focus at the conference, ensuring our delivery of customer care and quality of experience remains, business models in tightening economic conditions are sustainable, and innovation in manufacturing and an electrified industry are fully explored."

To follow this theme, the conference in-



Australians made a record 15.1 million trips to mostly regional and rural areas.

Picture: SUPPLIED

cluded, for the first time, an Electric Vehicle (EV) and Future Fuels summit, focussed on the key elements of the industry's transition to a low emissions environment.

Along with the EV summit, leaders from across the industry will also spoke about 3D

applications and industry innovation, technology, the rise of AI in business use, accessibility opportunities, insurance, and the rise of ESG and sustainable tourism.

"We are really looking forward to having the industry all together, to reflect, learn, celebrate

and cast an eye to the future of the industry," Mr Lamont said.

"With a degree of uncertainty in the economic air, this is going to be a great opportunity for the industry to stop and celebrate a job well done and get ready for what the future holds."

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See the photos of suppliers and exhibitors at Gladstone Engineering Alliance's Supply Chain Expo.

# Supply chain expo success

By Khrysti Balanay

Read the full story back on page 6



Adrian Robertson.



Jeff Zawilla and Wesley Lucas.



Daniela Horvat and Lisa Kennedy.



Rebecca Oliver and Michele Tory.



Steve Hudson and Steven Foad.



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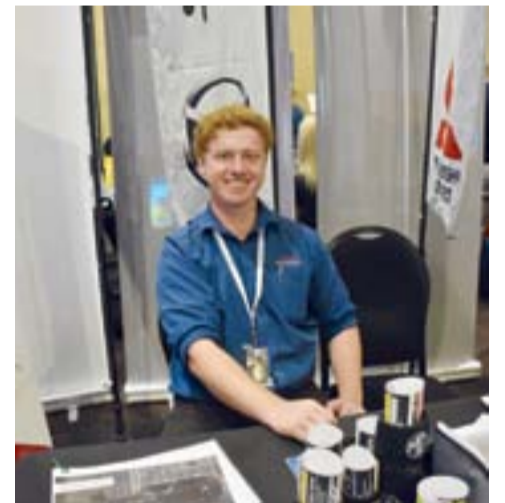
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# Career change a good move

By Khrysti Balanay

From the football field to working at JRT as a supervisor, it is a whole new ball game for David Taylor, but he enjoys every moment.

“Growing up in Blackwater, and my father being a coal train driver, I always thought I was going to go out in the mines,” Mr Taylor said.

“I thought I would be driving dozers because you would always see them when driving from Bluff to Blackwater on the road.

“It happened to be a chance meeting with JRT owner Jason Thomasson at a Capras game. I was sort of heading on a different path when I came home.

“I asked him what he did and said, ‘Yeah, I want to do that stuff.’”

Mr Taylor started at JRT five years ago but has been able to upskill to his current position.

“I started as a labourer onsite digging holes, spotting excavators and jumping in and out of machines at the quarry and the Stanwell power station,” he said.

“I learnt how to drive dozers and began working up to running sites.

“Being new to the industry, my crews are quite small, but they are between three to 12 people depending on the job.”

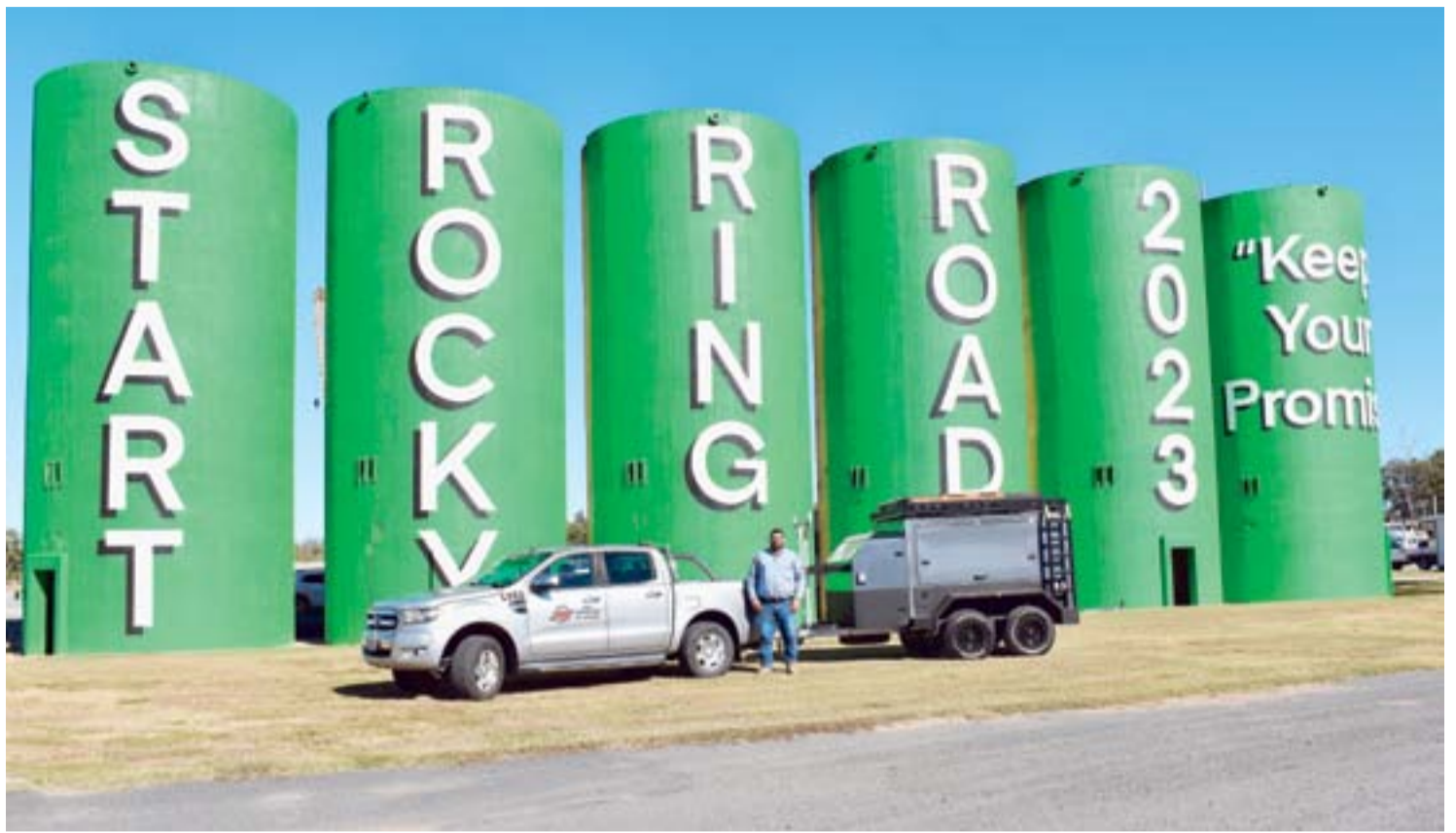
Mr Taylor said his first job as a supervisor was for a commercial subdivision at Parkhurst two years ago.

“I got put on with another guy to learn the ropes in becoming a supervisor and work closely with Jason,” he said.

“He’s been unreal to learn a lot from, along with the other supervisors who have been helpful and supportive.

“I recently finished two projects with Ergon Energy, one out in Longreach where we did an extension of a car park for their power poles.

“Coming back home, I finished a car park



David Taylor has been working at JRT for the past five years and is enjoying his new career.

Picture: KHRYSTI BALANAY

job last Friday where we hit every milestone. We completed each part of the program on time and ticked all the boxes, which was a great achievement for me.

“At the moment, I am jumping between four or five jobs. The next one is a subdivision, hopefully, there will be more work around the area.”

Mr Taylor said his favourite part of the job is

learning new skills.

“I am always asking dumb questions, people will probably be sick of me asking them, but you don’t get anywhere without asking,” Mr Taylor said.

“Working here is definitely a similar environment as a footy team.

“We have taken on six new Certificate 3 in Civil Construction apprentices recently, which

is great, especially with limited workers at the moment through all industries.

“Before going into supervising, I did a little stint in training and development here, and we put about 15 people through a Certificate 3 where they are coming into the back end of it now.

“That’s just one sort of the JRT is great at, upskilling employees.”

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Stokes mining Arty Stokes with Mary Ryan from Advance Rockhampton and Leon Waetford Boral.



Phil Henry with Butler Partners Director Chris Bloxom.

# Start the day with industry

CQ Today's Peter Lynch attended the industry breakfast at CocoBrew on Friday, 21 April.

Industry professionals regularly catch up for networking and to discuss community projects.

See the photos here.



Brad Bryant from RMS Civil and Wade Elliott from Vision Surveys.



David Lacy, iDetect and Danny Carr from QLD Complete Modular Solutions.



David Wilson and Jordan Gooch from Westpac Agri.



Graham Benson from McCosker Contracting with Capricornia Chamber of Commerce president Phil Henry and Danny Carr.



Dominic McGregor Laing O'Rourke, Tom Searl from Vision Surveys and Stephen Smith from The Manufacturing Hub.



Alison and Graham Sheppard with Smyth Financial Services Jason Smyth.



Grant Funch and Vickie White from Moore Accountants with Appleton's Studios Levi Appleton.

# Hudson steps up at Qantas

The Qantas Group has announced Vanessa Hudson will become the next CEO and Managing Director, taking over from Alan Joyce when he retires in November 2023.

Ms Hudson is currently the Group's Chief Financial Officer and has worked in a number of executive positions across the Group over 28 years, including Chief Customer Officer and Senior Vice President for Qantas across the Americas and New Zealand.

Ms Hudson will continue in her current role while also being CEO designate and joining the Board before taking over as the company's 13th CEO in 103 years following the Annual General Meeting.

An announcement on a new CFO will be made in the months ahead.

Chairman Richard Goyder said the appointment came after a rigorous selection process and allows for a smooth transition from current CEO Alan Joyce.

"A lot of thought has gone into this succession, and the Board had a number of high-quality candidates to consider, both internally and externally," Mr Goyder said.

"Vanessa has a deep understanding of this business after almost three decades in a range of roles both onshore and offshore, across commercial, customer and finance.

"She has a huge amount of airline experience, and she's an outstanding leader.

"For the past five years, Vanessa has had a direct hand in shaping our strategy as a member of the Group Management Committee, and her handling of the finance and treasury portfolio during the Covid crisis was outstanding. She also led the fleet selection process in 2022 for the renewal of our domestic jet aircraft over the next decade.

"A key strength of Qantas is the sheer depth of talent it has, and Vanessa will be supported by a deep bench of executives across the organisation as well as by the Board."



Qantas Group's Chief Financial Officer Vanessa Hudson will become the company's next CEO and Managing Director in November. Picture: SUPPLIED

Ms Hudson said it was an absolute honour to be asked to lead the national carrier.

"This is an exceptional company full of in-

credibly talented people, and it's very well positioned for the future.

"My focus will be delivering for those we

rely on and who rely on us – our customers, our employees, our shareholders and the communities we serve."

Mr Goyder paid tribute to Alan Joyce's leadership for what will be 15 years as Qantas Group CEO.

"This transition is happening at a time when the Qantas Group is extremely well positioned," Mr Goyder said.

"We have a clear strategy, a strong balance sheet and record profitability that supports a pipeline of investment for customers, opportunities for our people and returns to shareholders.

"Much of the credit for the bright future in front of Qantas goes to Alan.

He's faced more than his fair share of challenges as CEO, and he's managed them exceptionally well – from the GFC to record oil prices to intense competitive pressures and the Covid crisis.

"The company was restructured to deal with a number of external shocks, and Alan led it to several record profits," Mr Goyder said.

"He's overseen a lot of investment in aircraft, lounges, the creation of Jetstar, our cornerstone partnership with Emirates and innovations like the Perth-London route and Project Sunrise.

"Alan has done a superb job of leading a team that is absolutely committed to the national carrier's long-term success, and it's from that team that his successor has been chosen."

Alan Joyce said it's a logical time for him to step down.

"At the Board's request, I extended my time as CEO to see through the Covid recovery plan, so now that we're on the other side of that crisis," Mr Joyce said.

"There's still a lot I want to deliver in the next six months, and at the top of that list is ensuring a smooth handover to Vanessa, who I'm sure will excel in the role."

## Industry *TODAY* partnering with



**SUPPORTING REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

## CQIC monthly round-up

By CQIC representative Phil Henry

At its meeting on 10 March, CQIC again invited interested organisations to discuss the future of public infrastructure projects for the Central Queensland region.

Analysis undertaken by CQIC highlighted that once the Ring Road is completed, there will be no significant public infrastructure projects in the pipeline for the ensuing 15 years at least.

With this as background, participants in the audience were asked to contribute ideas that could be proposed to governments for forthcoming budgets, noting the long lead times needed to get major projects approved.

The CQIC team met on 19 April and is currently reviewing the proposals put forward at that workshop.

At its meeting, the CQIC team also returned to earlier discussions about how to ensure that local businesses get more work on these publicly funded projects.

This discussion highlighted that Project Close Out Reviews (PCORs) had yet to be undertaken for the various components of work recently performed at Shoalwater Bay Training Area.

These Reviews are designed to enable feedback to local suppliers, but importantly, PCORs enable local businesses to provide feedback to Prime Contractors on the impact on local suppliers of how procedures and processes are used when local contracts are let.

There is still a strong and widespread belief that regional, smaller businesses do not receive fair, open, and transparent treatment in these situations.

At its core, this reflects that the complexity of managing large infrastructure projects needs to be addressed to ensure that local businesses have fair and open access.

Ensuring a fair distribution of local content facilitates local suppliers to flow earnings back into the community through local sponsorships and support for



CQIC is looking at brining awareness, education and communication to regional industry. Picture: SUPPLIED

community enterprises.

All businesses can learn from PCOR outcomes and, as per project updates coordinated throughout the progress of the projects, the information can and will improve future project processes for all involved.

Anyone who has or is taking part in any Government funded projects wishing to make any suggestions on how they would like to see improvement in the processes of the projects or have any experiences from the projects, please forward them to Phil Henry, [resident@capricornchamber.com.au](mailto:president@capricornchamber.com.au).

With this feedback, and if we are successful in securing any significant projects in the future, we will be more prepared and knowledgeable regarding how to maximise success in obtaining work from such projects.

As usual, this is a work in progress and the CQIC focus is not only to strive to have more regional, funded infrastructure in the pipeline in the next five years but also to assist regional industries through awareness, education and communication.



## Volunteers and sponsors create vibrant atmosphere

For the 5th year, the Rockhampton community woke up bright and early on a picturesque Sunday morning to help RACQ CapRescue create clouds of colour in the Kershaw Gardens at Colour Me Capricorn Rockhampton, presented by DC Motors Nissan.

Over 550 participants ran, walked, danced, or strolled their way along the garden paths, creating a vibrant atmosphere and making it a colourful success by raising over \$13,000 for RACQ CapRescue.

Naming Rights Partner DC Motors, had a fantastic morning with all staff involved expressing how much fun the event was and that they will be back again next year.

“DC Motors has been a massive supporter of CapRescue for the longest time, it was a no brainer to support a fantastic cause in such a fun way!” Marketing and Events Manager for DC Motors, Eryn Mooney said. “Our General Manager is still trying to wash the colour powder from his hands!”

Volunteer contribution was at a record high with over 33 StepUp CapRescue Volunteers, supported by Thiess in attendance, including corporate volunteers from DC Motors and Blackwoods Rockhampton, plus student volunteers from the Rockhampton Grammar School. Volunteers from the CQU Health Clinic were also on hand to provide free sports massages to participants and host the warm-up.

“The success of Colour Me Capricorn relies heavily on the support of our volunteers,” Community Fundraising Officer, Caitlin Buttenshaw stated. “It’s one of the most popular events amongst our volunteers with everyone walking away smiling from ear to ear. This year some of the runners approached us about signing up to volunteer after seeing how excited the team was.”

Like all community events, Colour Me Capricorn relies heavily on the support of sponsors. Thanks goes out to this year’s event sponsors - Naming Rights Partner DC Motors Nissan and Water Station Sponsor Blackwoods Rockhampton. Livin the Bean also stepped up by fuelling the crew.

To volunteer for CapRescue or attend an upcoming event, check out their Facebook page and website- [caprescue.org.au](http://caprescue.org.au).



## Community support ensures rescue helicopter can fly



As many of us have been out and enjoying the school holidays and our incredible backyard, RACQ CapRescue always encourages you to be safe and prepared.

In their region of over 350,000 km<sup>2</sup>, your local Helicopter Rescue service is on call if things take a turn for the worst, thanks to the community’s support.

Recently Rescue300 had been tasked to several locations around our area where different activities have residents out and about.

One Saturday morning, the crew were called to Kirkwood near Gladstone to attend to a mountain biker who had a severe accident while riding with friends. Upon arrival at the scene, Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) Paramedics stabilised the patient, who had suspected spinal injuries. After conducting a thorough assessment of the area, it was determined that a winch

retrieval was required. A Rescue Crewman and Critical Care Paramedic were wired down to assess and package the patient, and all returned to the aircraft. They then transported the man to the Rockhampton Hospital, where he underwent further scans and treatment before being taken to Brisbane for more specialised treatment.

Another favourite Central Queensland pastime, the beaches of Great Keppel Island, saw CapRescue heading offshore. They were to retrieve a female patient in her late 30s and her daughter, aged 6 years old, after reports that both were suffering severe pain from a suspected Irukandji marine sting.

Upon landing, the onboard medical team stabilised both patients for air transport to Rockhampton Hospital for further treatment.

From inland to the ocean and everywhere in between, RACQ CapRescue is here for the 300,000+ residents 24/7, 365 days a year.

## Dedicated crew



The week starting March 6th was busy for RACQ CapRescue, with five tasks in three days.

One rescue that stood out included retrieving two patients, who had been involved in separate incidents in the area that were then transported from the same property.

It really showcased the dangers faced in rural, remote areas with a snake bite and altercation with a beast! Both patients were transported to Rockhampton hospital in stable condition for further treatment.

Despite the workload, the Rescue300 crew remained motivated to deliver their life-saving service throughout the rest of the week, even tackling some training.

Anyone would think with the smiles on their faces that they just might enjoy their jobs.

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