

INDUSTRY *Today*

April 2024 edition



**Resources Council
reveals State of the Sector**

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Baralaba Coal set to expand coal operations in CQ

Baralaba Coal is proposing to expand its coal mining footprint in Central Queensland, creating more than 500 new jobs during operation.

Already the owners of the Baralaba North mine in the Banana Shire, Baralaba Coal is planning for the Baralaba South Coal Project, an open-cut mine capable of producing 2.5 million tonnes per annum for about 23 years.

The project was first mooted more than a decade ago, but its march through the approvals process halted in 2015.

Now, the State Department of Environment, Science and Innovation has invited public submissions for the project's environmental impact statement.

"The project is a component of Baralaba Coal Company's Baralaba Expansion Project which was declared a prescribed project... on 31 July 2013 by the Queensland Minister for State Development," corporate documents stated.

"The Baralaba South Project lies between the Baralaba North Mine and... the train load out facility and it is intended to operate the Baralaba South Project as part of a mine complex with the Baralaba North Mine at product coal production rates up to the maximum limits of the company's infrastructure approvals, which currently stand at 3.5Mtpa of product coal between the two operations.

"This will enable flexibility of production between the two mines while fully

utilising the established, constructed and approved haulage and rail transport infrastructure that the companies have invested significantly in."

A new electricity transmission line from the Baralaba substation will supply power to the site with some 4.5 kilometres of the council controlled Baralaba-Moura Road to be realigned.

The existing train loadout facility near Moura will be used for coal haulage.

"The peak estimated workforce required for the project would be up to 521 workers... it is anticipated that workforce transport to the project would be approximately five per cent fly-in fly-out, 70 per cent drive-in drive-out and 25 per cent local," the initial advice statement stated.

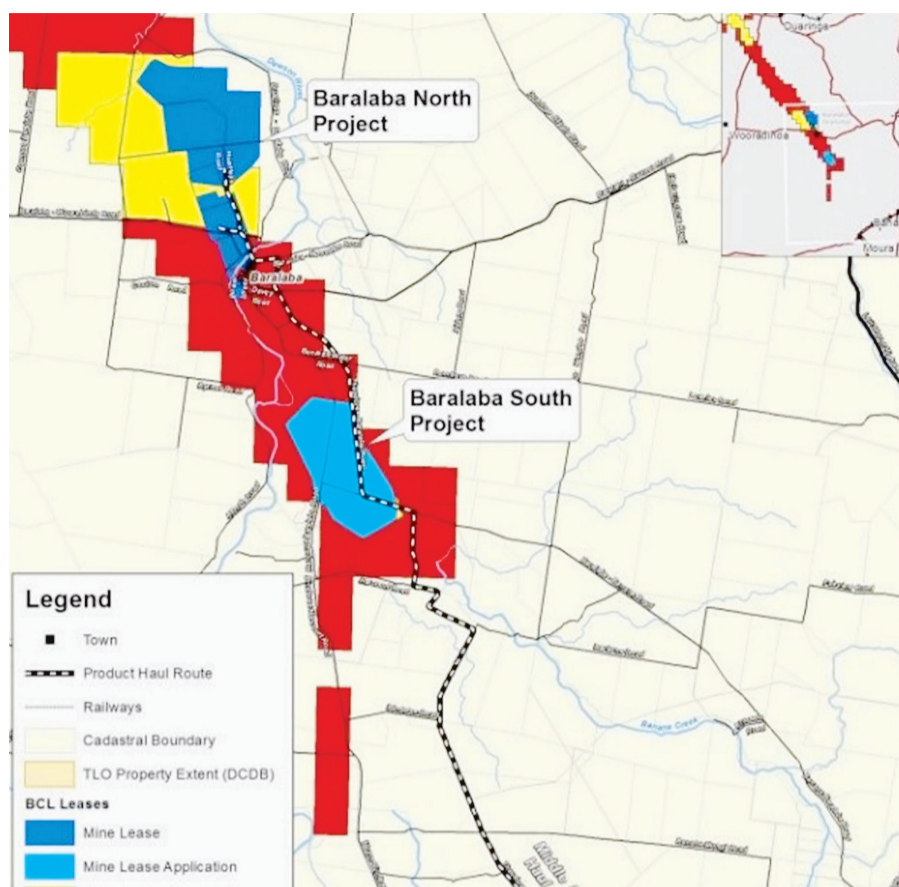
The project workforce during construction is estimated to be about 150 employees.

Baralaba Coal owns and operates an accommodation camp at the Baralaba Caravan Park which can be expanded to add an extra 255 units for peak periods

"The project will continue to support local suppliers and contractors as is the case for operations at the Baralaba North Mine, providing additional security and longevity of employment in the region," the company said.

Baralaba Coal has reopened its community office in the town centre, held open sessions and met with affected individuals.

Submissions close on May 1.



The proposed Baralaba South coal mine project is open for public comment until 1 May.

Thiess trialling hybrids

State Gas Limited has entered into an initial offtake agreement with Thiess for delivery of Compressed Natural Gas to the Curragh coal mine site, near Blackwater in Central Queensland.

As part of its role as contract miner at Curragh, Thiess has been evaluating hybrid mine-truck engine technology and has now agreed with the Curragh mine owner Coronado Global Resources to extend and expand the trial.

Initial CNG supply volumes will be small to support an orderly ramp-up of production from the CNG facility and to establish efficient loading and unloading processes for the virtual pipeline at Curragh.

Ongoing success of the trial and progressive optimisation of loading and unloading using the virtual pipeline, could ultimately support up to 100GJ of CNG per day, for each mine truck included in the trial.

The trial will initially support two trucks, with a view to converting more engines to hybrid technology subject to Thiess and the Curragh mine-owner's satisfaction with the trial result.

State Gas executive chairman Richard Cottee said the need for environmentally superior fuel sources are required to support the long-term orderly transition of major industrial fuel users to more sustainable renewable energy sources.

"My own business experience bears witness to the fact that whenever one pioneers innovation, there are always some hurdles to overcome before one reaches the finish line," he said.

"The signing of this contract is testimony that those hurdles are largely behind State Gas, now meaning CNG will now become available at source in Queensland facilitating its journey towards a cleaner, more environmentally friendly future."

The provision of CNG using the virtual pipeline is a bundled gas supply solution, which reflects significant added value when compared to raw natural gas sourced from the traditional pipeline network.

Raw coal seam gas from Rougemont 2/3 is processed by the CNG facility to meet gas specifications and pressures required for the



Thiess is trialling CNG on two of its mining fleet via a virtual gas pipeline from Rolleston to the Curragh coal mine near Blackwater.

Picture: SUPPLIED

efficient operation of the hybrid mine-truck engines in the trial.

The ability for State Gas to supply increasing quantities of CNG to a location on the Curragh mine site where the mine-trucks can be safely loaded is a unique aspect of State Gas's value proposition.

For this reason, the contracted price for CNG under this supply arrangement is at a premium to the spot price of raw pipeline gas.

As part of the CNG supply arrangement, it is the intention of State Gas and Thiess

to work together to increase the volume of gas supplied during the trial and investigate opportunities to include additional trucks and extend the length of the supply arrangement.

Subject to the success of the initial supply arrangement and the trial, State Gas anticipates identifying other opportunities where State Gas CNG could be applied to support similar projects in the mining sector.

State Gas is in the final stages of commissioning its "first-of-its-kind" in Australia, coal seam gas (CSG) to compressed natural gas (CNG) pilot plant.

Once commissioned, the CNG Facility will be able to compress up to 1.7TJ/day of pipeline quality natural gas for supply to users in the Southern Bowen Basin and surrounding areas.

CNG will be transported using specially designed gas tube trailers which allow gas to be delivered to customers that are remote from traditional gas pipeline infrastructure.

CSG will be sourced from State Gas' Rougemont 2/3 dual lateral exploration and appraisal well, located within the Rolleston West Project area.

Mining sector seeks aid

A new Queensland Resources Council (QRC) report has revealed strong growth on the way for the mining sector, but its bright future depends on state government support.

Two-thirds of member chief executive officers surveyed for the State of the Sector report believe demand for their commodities, including coal, will increase over the next three years.

The report confirms steelmaking coal, gas and thermal coal will continue to be Queensland's biggest export commodities, with copper, silver, lead, zinc, gold, aluminium and bauxite all showing potential to create new jobs and drive future economic growth across the state on the back of the global transition to low-emission technologies.

However, the report revealed Queensland's slow-moving regulatory environment and the impact of uncompetitive government policies, such as the introduction of the world's highest coal royalty tax rates in mid-2022, is stifling future growth and employment plans.

QRC chief executive officer Janette Hew-



Two-thirds of chief executive officers surveyed for the Queensland Resource Council's State of the Sector report believe demand for their commodities, including coal, will increase over the next three years. Picture: FILE

son said the number of mining and energy companies planning to expand their Queensland operations over the next 12 months has halved compared to the same time last year, falling from 35 per cent to 17 per cent.

"Our report also shows the number of resources CEOs who expect to increase

their workforce over the next 12 months has dropped from 40 per cent at the beginning of 2023 to 28 per cent this year which is not good news for Queensland," Ms Hewson said.

"The resources sector and State Government need to work together more closely to ensure Queensland can continue to attract long-term investment in new mining and energy projects, which offer decades of well-paid jobs and stimulate economic activity throughout the state.

"Our sector can supply the raw materials needed to make the steel, batteries and low-emission technologies required for the global energy transition, but companies want to invest in jurisdictions which offer a stable and internationally competitive policy environment.

"Right now, companies are telling us that isn't Queensland, so we have some work to do to restore our reputation as a secure, long-term investment destination for resources projects."

Ms Hewson said a bright note out of the report was that 72 per cent of resources companies expect to buy more products and

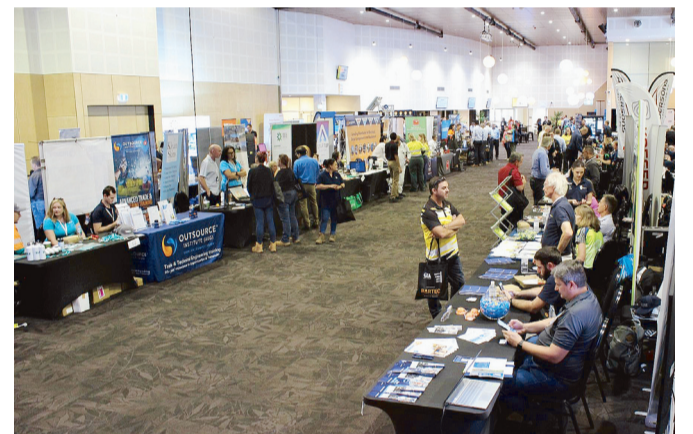
services from local and Indigenous businesses over the next 12 months, adding to the industry's already significant contribution to regional jobs and economies.

The quarterly report found the industry's number one concern is policy uncertainty, followed by rising costs and an ongoing skilled worker shortage.

Mining and energy companies contributed almost \$117 billion to the Queensland economy last financial year and supported the jobs of more than 530,000 people directly or indirectly.

State treasurer Cameron Dick's mid-year budget update highlighted \$12.8 billion in royalty revenue would be collected by the Queensland Government this financial year, some of which is being ploughed back into easing cost-of-living pressures.

"We are delivering the biggest energy rebates in the country – those rebates are providing a minimum of \$550 off every Queenslanders power bill, funded through the public ownership of energy assets and funded by progressive coal royalties," Mr Dick said.



The 2024 Gladstone Engineering Alliance (GEA) Supply Chain Expo will be held on Wednesday, 24 April, from 8am to 3pm at the Gladstone Entertainment Convention Centre. Pictures: SUPPLIED

Gladstone Supply Chain Expo a giant opportunity

By Breanna Lloyd

The 2024 Gladstone Engineering Alliance (GEA) Supply Chain Expo is set to return to the harbour city with a mighty bang.

Organisers say this is an incredible opportunity for the Central Queensland industry supply chain to exhibit its offerings and engage with professional industry leaders and innovators in the industry.

Proudly presented by Australia Pacific LNG and operated by ConocoPhillips, the event will be held on Wednesday, 24 April,

from 8am to 3pm at the Gladstone Entertainment Convention Centre.

GEA general manager Alison Murdoch said attendees would benefit from the numerous networking and learning opportunities presented.

The expo can help attendees obtain market research, find loyal consumers, maintain market share and make their brand known to others.

Mrs Murdoch said the event had gained significant interest with stallholders coming

back year after year.

"The expo is an important platform for supply chain businesses to exhibit exceptional products and services and strengthen their professional network," she said.

"The Supply Chain Expo is a fantastic opportunity to network, catch up with colleagues, and do business all in one setting.

"It's a great opportunity not to be missed.

"We're excited to welcome you to the 2024 Supply Chain Expo."

The free event will host up to 70 different supply chain stalls and Mrs Murdoch said GEA were immensely grateful for the support from their sponsors; Mecha, Stanwell and CQH2 Project, BK Recycling, Gladstone Manufacturing Hub, Gladstone News/Elevate Media and event supporter Andersons Auto City.

"There are still opportunities available to host a stall," she said.

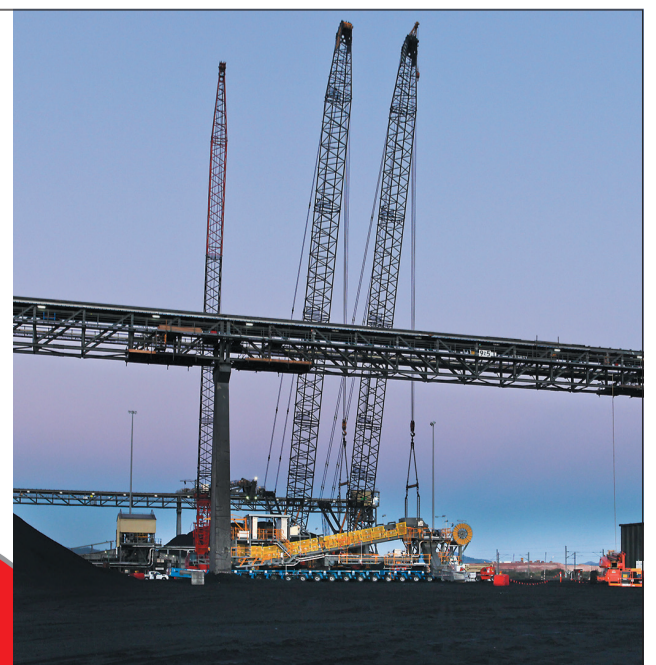
If you would like any further event information, please contact us at GEA (07)4972 9060.



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Sun's out for solar visit

Premier Steven Miles visited the construction site of the Aldoga Solar Farm on Tuesday, 9 April and met some of the 350 local tradespeople involved in construction and commissioning.

Construction of the solar farm is now underway, with the facility to be operational by mid-2026, and operate for 30 years.

Located at Aldoga, about 20km northwest of Gladstone, the Aldoga Solar Farm will feature up to 820,000 solar modules with the capacity to produce 480 megawatts peak.

The project is strategically situated within the Gladstone State Development Area (SDA) on land owned by Economic Development Queensland (EDQ).

EDQ has signed a development lease with leading renewable energy company ACCIONA Energía as part of the Queensland Government's commitment to increasing renewable energy supply, generating jobs and supporting economic growth.

ACCIONA Energía's community benefits program will also provide \$120,000 in annual funding to local initiatives including scholarships with Central Queensland University, small grants and legacy projects.

ACCIONA Energía managing director Brett Wickham said the company's focus in Queensland is to keep building new electricity generation and creating new jobs within the state.

"Projects like Aldoga will help transition our energy system while providing the employment, training and procurement opportunities regional communities are asking for so they can take advantage of this booming industry," Mr Wickham said.

"The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, great partners in Stanwell and Economic Development Queensland and some of the best renewable resources in the country are why we want to keep building projects here."

100 per cent of the electricity produced at the Aldoga Solar Farm will be supplied to Stanwell Corporation's proposed Central Queensland Hydrogen project (CQ-H2) under a Power Purchase Agreement.



Premier Steven Miles met with local tradespeople earlier this month who have begun the construction of Aldoga Solar Farm. Pictures: SUPPLIED

CQ-H2 is Queensland's largest renewable hydrogen project, which aims to deliver renewable hydrogen through different carriers to Japan and Singapore, as well as supplying large domestic customers in Central Queensland.

Steel manufacturer Orrcon, that recently opened a production line facility in Northgate, will manufacture Queensland steel to be used in the construction of the solar farm.

The manufacturer is poised to supply components for a number of large-scale solar projects to help with the renewable energy transition.

Mr Miles said his Government has set to lift Queensland's ambition on climate action and reduce our emissions by 75 per cent by 2035 - to strengthen our economy and create jobs.

"This project will create hundreds of jobs for Central Queenslanders now and into the future," he said.

Regional Development Minister and Member for Gladstone Glenn Butcher said we've always known Gladstone was crucial for energy production and industry in Queensland.

"Now this project proves this region is well and truly driving the renewables sector here in Queensland," Mr Butcher said.

"This builds on other major local projects like the Central Queensland Hydrogen project and Fortescue Future Industries' hydrogen manufacturing facility.

The Aldoga Solar Farm will offer \$150 million in local procurement opportunities and deliver up to 350 jobs during construction and up to 10 ongoing full-time roles.



Queensland Premier Steven Miles with workers at the Aldoga Solar Farm.

FSG awarded upgrade works at Rolleston mine camp

Field Solutions Group has won a \$2.6 million contract to upgrade the connectivity infrastructure at Glencore's Rolleston mine village.

Utilising the company's Broadband network infrastructure, the camp will be upgraded to deliver new enhanced Internet, Foxtel and free-to-air media services to more than 350 accommodation blocks on the site by the end of 2024.

"Field Solutions is proud to add Glencore to its roster of premier Mining customers alongside Kestrel Coal and Ravenswood Gold," chief executive officer

Andrew Roberts said.

"The solution underscores our commitment to delivering state-of-the-art telecommunications solutions that meet the evolving needs of modern enterprises and communities.

"By integrating Cambium's XGS-PON technology, the company is set to provide unparalleled internet speed, reliability, and scalability, ensuring that residents of the work camp enjoy a seamless online experience."

As foreshadowed at FSG's AGM last No-

vember, the project showcases the unique benefits that Field Solutions provides to its enterprise clients by utilising rural and remote infrastructure, networks, and its local regional workforce to meet the demands of critical enterprise IT needs.

Cambium Networks' XGS-PON technology stands at the forefront of optical network innovations, offering superior bandwidth, enhanced security, and extensive coverage.

Mr Roberts said the project not only signifies a monumental step in the company's mission to bridge connectivity gaps

but also reinforces its position as pioneers in adopting next-

generation technologies to solve real-world challenges.

The upgrade will cater to the high-density living environment of the work camp, accommodating the diverse and demanding internet needs of its residents. From high-speed data transmission to robust internet access and media across 1001 rooms, the project aims to set a new standard for connectivity in work camps and similar settings.

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Federal Minister for Industry and Science Ed Husic and Premier Steven Miles and Fortescue Energy CEO Mark Hutchinson at the opening of the Gladstone Electrolyser Facility. Pictures: MATTHEW PEARCE



The Aldoga plant specialises in making electrolyzers for commercial scale green hydrogen exports.

Taking hydrogen to world

By Matthew Pearce

Premier Steven Miles and State Government ministers visited the Gladstone Region on Monday, 8 April, to officially open Fortescue's world first Electrolyser Facility at Aldoga.

"This is probably the first cabinet in the world to meet at an electrolyser factory, with this facility locking in our place as a leader in the global hydrogen industry," Mr Miles said.

The Aldoga plant is Australia's first commercial scale hydrogen manufacturing facility specialising in making electrolyzers for commercial scale green hydrogen exports.

The facility is the first stage of a wider Green Energy Manufacturing Centre being developed by Fortescue on the 100-hectare site located on the Aldoga Industrial Estate in the Gladstone State Development Area.

Electrolysers use electricity to split water molecules into their two component elements, hydrogen and oxygen.

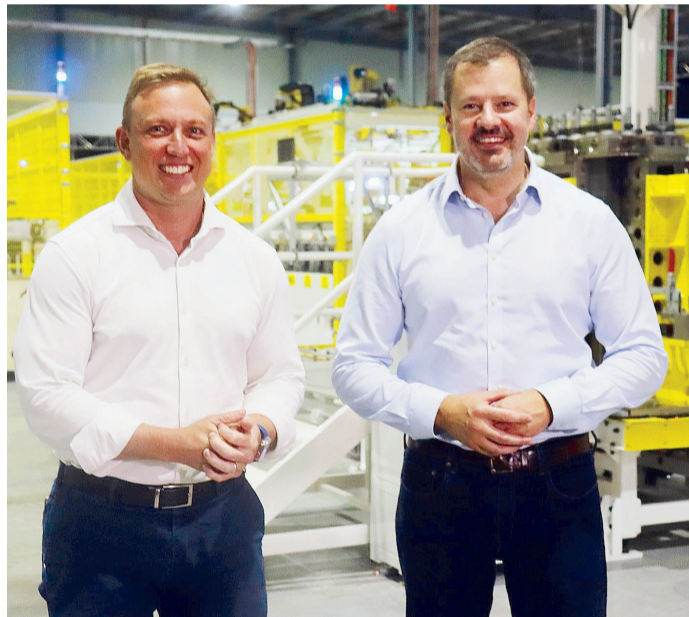
Fortescue Energy CEO Mark Hutchinson said green hydrogen offered a "real, tangible alternative" to fossil fuels, with the export of electrolyzers giving other countries the ability to produce their own hydrogen.

"The machines here are miracle machines," he said.

"Many places around the world don't have solar, wind and hydroelectric power, so they need to have the power in a different form."

Mr Hutchinson said the facility had an initial production capacity of over two gigawatts per annum - at full capacity, enough to produce more than 200,000 tonnes of green hydrogen each year.

"Over a 10 year period, we will sell electrolyser stacks all over the world and they will produce about 11 million tonnes of green hydrogen - equivalent to converting



Premier Steven Miles and Federal Minister for Industry and Science Ed Husic at the opening of Fortescue's new Electrolyser Facility at Aldoga.



Fortescue's new Electrolyser Facility at Aldoga. Picture: DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET

eight million cars to hydrogen. That's 40 per cent of all the cars in Australia."

Mr Miles said he had been looking forward to the facility's opening day since first visiting the site at Aldoga two years ago.

"Today we prove that Queensland and Gladstone can lead the world in its next energy revolution," he said.

"Gladstone was perfectly suited for this world's biggest electrolyser factory, because it is a town that embraces industry.

"We've proven that you can build a new industry from scratch in less than 10 years, as we did with the LNG industry.

"There is a highly skilled workforce here and we have all the infrastructure that we need, much of it state owned - transmission infrastructure, water infrastructure, port infrastructure.

"So it made sense that this was where we would prove that Queensland cannot just export hydrogen to the world, we can also make the electrolyzers that will produce that hydrogen."

The next phase of the facility's development - a 50MW green hydrogen production facility called PEM50 - received development approval from Queensland's Coordi-

nator General this week, paving the way for construction to begin.

PEM50 will use the locally made Proton Exchange Membrane (PEM) electrolyzers to produce green hydrogen for local and export markets.

There are also plans for third and fourth stages.

The first two stages will generate 240 jobs during construction and 93 ongoing local operational jobs.

Fortescue estimates that as the energy precinct continues to develop, more than 300 indirect local jobs will also be supported.

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Beefing up industry nous

By Matthew Pearce

More than 130 early career beef industry professionals and university students from six states and territories spent four days building their beef industry knowledge at the ICMJ Northern Conference in Rockhampton earlier this month.

The young attendees were joined by industry professionals from 20 different companies at the event on 3-6 April.

Hosted by CQUniversity and Teys Australia, the conference has been held since 2019 and includes professional development, workshops, presentations, the ever-popular carcass breakdown and a meat judging competition.

Student Meg Kennett, who is studying a Bachelor of Business Majoring in Agriculture at Marcus Olden College in Geelong said the conference helped her understand the wider supply chain.

“As a business college we don’t do a lot of animal science, so ICMJ provides that opportunity for us to delve into that deeper, science based understanding of meat, which is really really good for us in a sense that as producers we can come to understand better how our practices influence the end product,” she said.

“It’s important for everyone to be on the same page when it comes to meat quality, because we do want to create that consistent product.”

Speaking on the second day of the conference, Ms Kennett said she was most looking forward to meeting people and networking.

Part of the event program is the Industry and Careers Expo, highlighting the career opportunities available at some of Australia’s major meat processing companies, as well as several large vertically integrated beef supply chains and a variety of industry service providers.

“These are the people that we’re going to be working with in our future and we will be able to call on them in times of a gap in our knowledge, which is just unreal.”

ICMJ Northern Conference chairwoman Chloe Gould said the conference was a true “paddock to plate” learning experience.

The conference exposes participants to the fundamentals of meat quality, carcass specifications in today’s market, the requirements of the modern consumer and the role of new technologies in meeting those needs.

“Attendees learn about carcass characteristics, meat eating quality, what influences consumers, marketing and more,” she said.

“Being able to attract young talent to the beef industry and particularly to that northern industry is vitally important.

“The red meat industry and the supply chain is so broad, there’s so many opportunities out there from on-farm to the pro-



Chloe Gould and Meg Kennett at the ICMJ Northern Conference.

Picture: MATTHEW PEARCE



Assessing cattle at the saleyards.

Picture: SUPPLIED



Attendees listen to a presentation at the ICMJ Northern Conference.

Picture: MATTHEW PEARCE

cessing sector and being able to market and sell our beef globally into our international markets.”

Sam Turner from Animal Innovations and Management’s (AIM) graduate program volunteered to act as a coach at the conference, with his team eager to learn about the beef industry.

“AIM doesn’t manage any assets in this part of the supply chain (beef processing),” he said.

“We have a lot to do with primary production on a farm level, so it’s good for our employees to learn about this side of the

supply chain and what happens to cattle once they leave our farm.”

Mr Turner said he was interested in learning about new carcass assessment technology from MEQ Solutions, which he saw as a huge opportunity for the lamb industry.

“Lamb is very much assessment based, so if we can start to use technologies like the MEQ Probe to promote that quality assessment it’s a big step forward for the lamb industry and the eating quality of lamb in Australia.”

Like Ms Kennett, he said the biggest benefit of the conference was in networking.

“It’s a great opportunity for my team to meet like minded people and make connections that will probably last a lifetime and help them throughout their careers,” he said.

“To me, ICMJ was just as valuable as my university degree.

“I landed my position in the graduate program through the contacts I made through ICMJ.”

Cattle Australia deputy chair Adam Coffey spoke at the conference about issues affecting the beef sector like land management and biodiversity.



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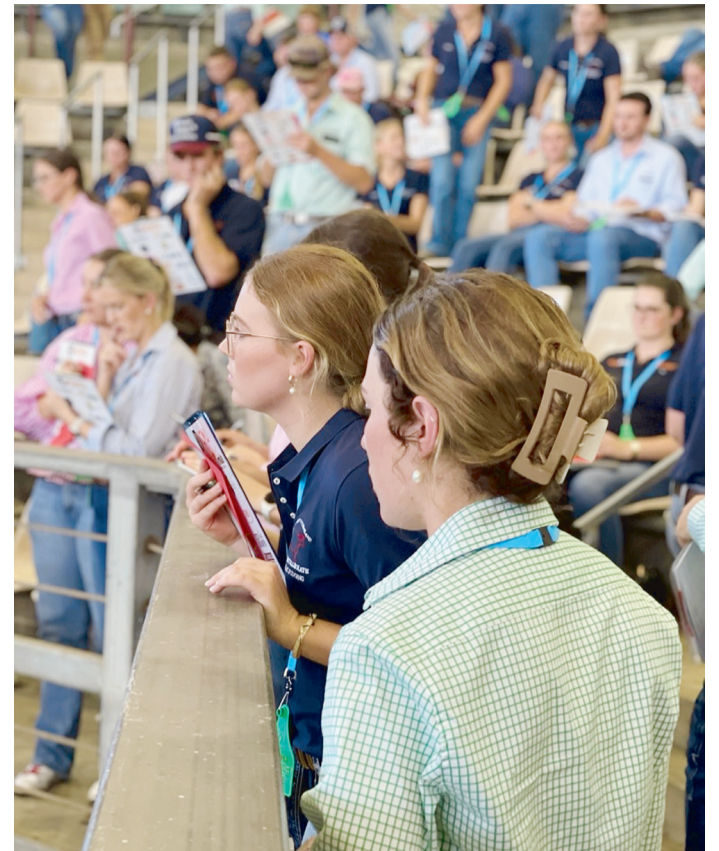
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Winners: Ben Spackman, Gabriella Stokes, Nick Greenwood and Jade Wilkinson from University of Queensland.
Picture: SUPPLIED



Watching the Paddock to Plate live animal assessment at CQLX.
Picture: SUPPLIED



Breaking down a carcass at the CQU's Central Queensland Innovation and Research Precinct.
Picture: SUPPLIED



Attendees listen to a presentation at the ICMJ Northern Conference.
Picture: MATTHEW PEARCE

"I own a property at Miriam Vale and have a big focus on producing grass fed products in an environmentally sustainable manner," he said.

"Beef Australia wants to reset the narrative around livestock being a big cause of emissions and global warming.

"We want to shift focus to the cyclical nature of what we do as grass fed producers and how our cattle and our landscapes have a huge ability to sequester carbon out of the atmosphere, not just just contribute to emissions."

Mr Coffey said the ICMJ Northern Con-

ference allowed "the next generation of ag" to build networks and float ideas.

"The biggest risk for young people in these forums is they underestimate the impact of what a program like this can have on their lives and future careers, because it's just massive."

Other speakers on the program included AgForce president Georgie Somerset, as well as technical experts like DIT AgTech CEO Mark Peart, AMIC industry affairs manager Tim Ryan, and A Place to Call Home podcast host Sam Fryer.

The University of Queensland was

crowned champion university team at the beef judging competition in Rockhampton for the second year in a row followed closely by the University of New England.

In the Industry category, AACo came away with the champion team title, just 44 points ahead of runners up, NH Foods.

The competition is the culmination of the ICMJ Northern Conference and provides an opportunity for young industry professionals and university students to put their beef carcass knowledge and assessment skills to the test.

Competitors judge across several classes

including retail cut identification, overall questions, overall placings, commercial evaluation and beef judging.

The goal of the competition is to hone the delegates' skills on what drives carcass value which is a balance between the quantity of meat (yield) and the quality of the meat.

Individual awards were also handed out at the Gala Awards Dinner at the Great Western Hotel in Rockhampton on Saturday, 6 April, with Nick Greenwood from UQ crowned 2024 Northern Champion Meat Judging Individual ahead of Matilda Paesler from AACo.



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Queensland Virtual STEM Academy's Head of Department, Tim Bateup, Vinh Truong and Maxine Thomas from Origin Energy.

Picture: ROCHELLE FIELD

Virtual courses launched

By Rochelle Field

In an effort to boost enrolment in STEM subjects among students, a 30-week education initiative, featuring virtual courses led by energy industry professionals, has been launched.

The initiative, STEMventures, is a collaborative effort between Roma State College, Queensland Virtual STEM Academy, and Origin Energy, with the goal of providing students in Years 5 to 9 with authentic STEM experiences to inspire them to pursue STEM subjects.

Students in these classrooms are from schools across the state.

Queensland Virtual STEM Academy's head of department Tim Bateup said STEM subjects were for everyone.

"There's a common misconception that STEM subjects are only for certain types of people such as those who consistently achieve top grades, or are naturally inclined

towards maths and science," he said.

"As a result of this misunderstanding, we are seeing young students, particularly in regional communities, put off from exploring STEM-related subjects during their schooling."

The reality is that STEM can be applied in a diverse range of settings outside of science, and that success in STEM is achievable for anyone; it just requires a bit of hard work, dedication and motivation.

"STEMventures aims to ignite student passion for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, fostering the confidence necessary for their smooth transition into senior schooling pathways focused on STEM," Mr Bateup said.

"Ultimately, this initiative empowers students to envision themselves embarking on further studies or pursuing careers within STEM-related fields."

The program is extending its reach far

beyond the Maranoa region, offering a variety of digital courses to schools via the Queensland Virtual STEM Academy in places such as Central Queensland.

In the inaugural session for one of the courses on Thursday, 28 March, Origin's Vinh Truong introduced students to STEM and discussed how STEM principles have been applied in his various roles, ranging from his current role as a field engineer to his past experiences working in a chocolate shop as a kid.

Mr Truong, who also has prior experience as a university student ambassador and in STEM mentoring roles, said he was proud the company could play a role in inspiring STEM learning while also showcasing the diverse career paths available within Origin.

"As the upstream operator for Australia Pacific LNG, Origin has a strong presence in the Maranoa and surrounding regions, providing numerous job and training opportunities for locals," he said.

"Through initiatives such as this we can inspire and develop the next generation of energy industry professionals, particularly within the regions where Origin's operations are based."

For year 8 Rockhampton State High School student Kirra Lokan, her takeaway was the career opportunities there are for people that study STEM.

"All of the people that we learn about and how they had experience in STEM to go do big jobs like managers or superintendents," Kirra said.

Kirra found learning virtually quite beneficial compared to the usual busy classroom.

"It helps you with public speaking without actually being in front of the people physically," Kirra said.

Queensland state schools interested in joining the Virtual STEM Academy can email Tim Bateup at tbate54@eq.edu.au for more information.



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CQUniversity has announced a new round of scholarships that are specifically designed to support industry.

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CQUniversity has announced a new round of scholarships that are specifically designed to support industry.

Known as the Elevate Program, the research higher degree (RHD) scholarships aim to provide development and research opportunities for industry and for emerging leaders in specialised fields.

CQUniversity co-invests with industry to support a dedicated masters or PhD student to work on a specific business challenge or policy issue, with students able to work from an industry site, from one of CQUniversity's many campus locations Australia wide, or split between locations.

Applications for 2024 scholarships are now open and dean of the School of Graduate Research Professor Susan Kinnear is urging organisations to apply.

"The Elevate scholarships are a unique way for organisations within different industries to develop their workforce, fill niche skills gaps, respond to business problems

and identify new business opportunities," Prof Kinnear said.

"We designed the Elevate program as a way for organisations to advance their operations by investing in expertise. Since its inception in 2020, we have co-funded 70 projects with a range of industry and community partners."

One such partner is livestock feed additive developer and manufacturer Bioproton, who has supported one student through CQUniversity's Elevate program, with a second scholar set to commence in 2024.

Research and development manager Dr Wendy Chen said Bioproton was proud to partner with CQUniversity.

"The Elevate program has been instrumental in supporting our innovation initiatives at Bioproton," Dr Chen said.

"Partnering with CQUniversity has granted us access to cutting-edge research capabilities and driven minds, enriching our R&D endeavors. Through this industry-uni-

versity collaboration, we've not only tackled complex challenges in livestock feed additives but also uncovered new possibilities for growth and sustainability within our industry, thereby enhancing our competitive edge in the market."

Dr Chen said Bioproton was proud of the progress they'd made with the current scholar and eagerly anticipated the fresh perspectives that the upcoming scholar will bring in 2024.

"This partnership truly exemplifies our commitment to continuous improvement and industry leadership. We are excited to continue our partnership with CQUniversity and look forward to the valuable contributions of our upcoming scholar in 2024."

Prof Kinnear said businesses and partners were offered the opportunity to access specialised knowledge, facilities and support of a world-class research university to help grow a pipeline of talent, solve technical challenges, work on product development and find solutions to current and

emerging challenges.

"Not only is this an innovative way to grow required expertise, but it is also a way for businesses to gain a student who is fully committed to a specific project for two or three years with the added reassurance of an expert supervisory team who have specialist research skills backing them," she said.

All Elevate students have access to CQUniversity's research infrastructure such as labs, equipment and specialised software and technologies, which can also prove beneficial to the industry partner.

"CQUniversity works alongside our partners throughout the entire process to support them and their student/s. Interim deliverables can also be designed into the project so that our partners can benefit from the research results sooner rather than later."

As part of the program, CQUniversity co-funds the delivery of a scholarship to each student that provides them with a living allowance (stipend) of \$40,000 per year.

Martine wins scholarship to fulfill mining dream

The Cathedral College's Martine David is one of two students awarded a Girls in Resources scholarship.

Martine, who is studying Year 12 at the Rockhampton-based school and Lisa Hennessey (Good Shepherd Catholic College, Mount Isa) were recognised following their involvement with the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy.

The duo's transition from school to a career in the resources sector will be made

easier with the \$5000 scholarship providing financial support while studying or during their first year of an apprenticeship.

Martine completed the QMEA and Women in Mining and Resources Queensland (WIMARQ) GIRLS Mentoring Program in 2023.

She said growing up in Moranbah with a father who worked in the mines for 43 years gave her a desire to pursue a mining career.

"I'm interested in supporting the people who work in the resources and energy sector and will start studying for an associate degree in Occupational Health and Safety at Central Queensland University (CQU) this month," she said.

BMA Hay Point Coal Terminal general manager Linda Murry said the scholarship program was designed to promote STEM and vocational pathways in the resources sector.

"Diversity is the key to success for the resources industry and these scholarships help us to support talented young women and men who may well go on to become industry leaders," she said.

"I congratulate Martine and Lisa on winning these scholarships and I look forward to seeing where this opportunity takes them – their futures certainly look bright."



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Key to renewable future

By Dr Heidi Edmonds,
Queensland Projects Beyond Zero
Emissions senior project manager

The Gladstone region is making impressive progress towards decarbonising existing industry and attracting new business.

As these exciting projects ramp up, they need to maximise benefits to the community, such as the creation of local jobs and training, and minimise impacts on nature and prime agricultural land.

The planning of projects needs to understand competing land uses, engage stakeholders and be done with free prior and informed consent of First Nations people.

The economics is clear.

Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE) has shown that by powering and connecting existing and new industry in Gladstone with 100 per cent renewable energy in a Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct (i.e. a clean industry ecosystem of co-located industries), we can create 11,000 new jobs, attract new capital investment of \$7.8 billion and generate \$2 billion in revenue per annum by 2032.

Existing local skills, infrastructure, and plentiful sun and wind give the Gladstone region this advantage.

The big players are moving. Rio Tinto now has Queensland based power purchase agreements (PPAs) for over 1GW of wind power (from Windlab in Bungaban in South Queensland) to complement a recent 1GW plus of solar (Upper Calliope Solar Farm in Central Queensland) towards repowering its operations in Central Queensland.

Similarly, Alpha HPA, who holds a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for renewable energy from CleanCo is breaking new ground in manufacturing high purity aluminium products, with recent advances

in technology to bolster battery safety, and the development of material exchanges with nearby Orica for the offtake of by-products.

BZE commissioned modelling "Safe-guarding our Future" further highlights the economic and emission reduction benefits of coordinating investment in infrastructure such as transmission and green hydrogen pipelines.

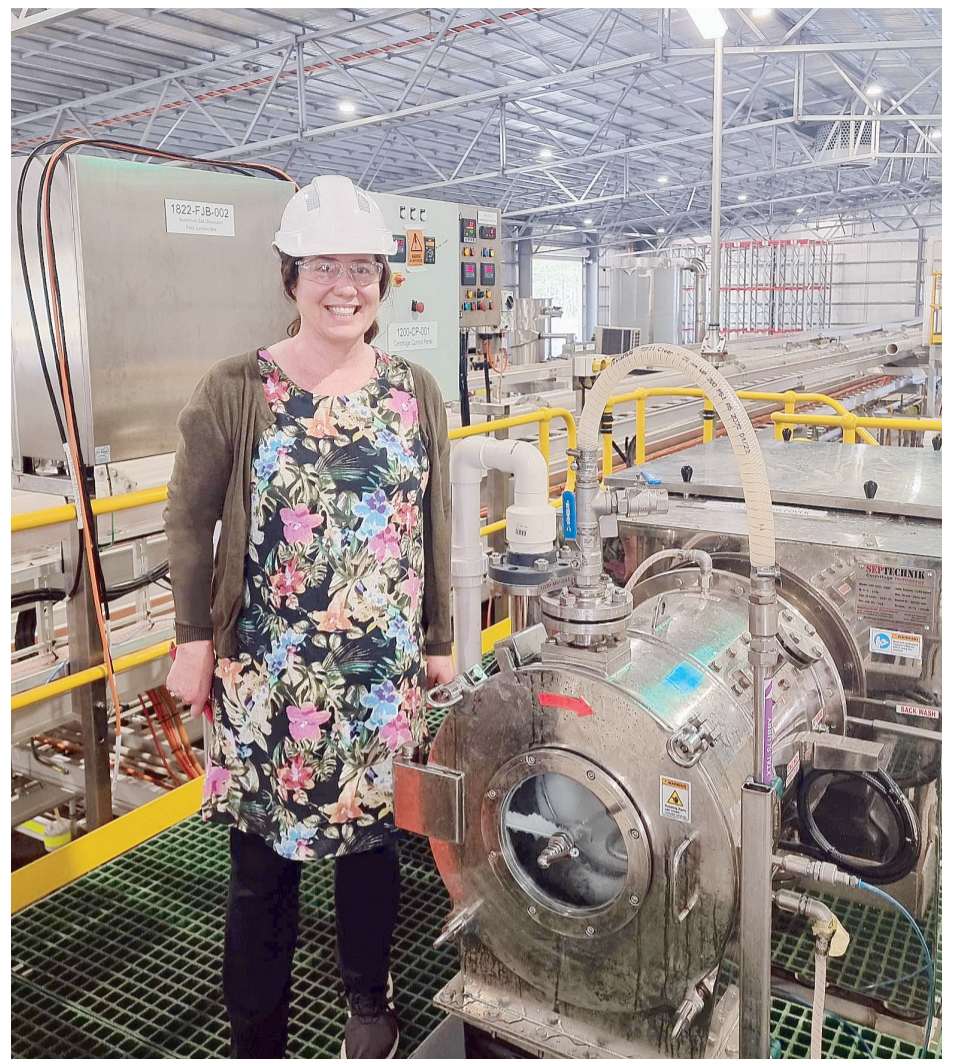
BZE welcomes efforts from industry, state, local and federal government towards effective and transparent coordination, including Renewable Energy Zone Readiness Assessments as part of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, and recent federal coordination through the Net Zero Economy Authority to prioritise project infrastructure including around Gladstone.

Good coordination and collaboration can also maximise community benefits, minimise impacts on farmland, and support a nature positive approach so that developments can avoid and minimise construction in areas of high biodiversity significance (rare habitats, critical habitats, significant sites).

A new guide in relation to this is the Better Practice Renewables and Biodiversity: Opportunities for Collaboration Guide, which BZE collaborated on.

Given that transparent and effective coordination of infrastructure and other elements remains critical, BZE is continuing to call for even greater transparency and coordination from the federal to the local level.

Our call for a National Clean Industry Infrastructure master plan aims to ensure a fast, fair and nature-positive transition to our shared net zero economy and future.



Queensland Projects, Beyond Zero Emissions senior project manager Heidi Edmonds.

Gladstone's renewable future is coming



Gladstone can be a leader in Australia becoming a renewable energy superpower. **Investing early** in renewables for **industry** and the **community** will protect manufacturing jobs, and in a cost of living crisis will lower household energy bills - with more people able to access reliable renewable energy sooner.

It is essential this work happens with **ongoing community input**, and taking **care to minimise impacts** on biodiversity and prime agricultural land.

Research commissioned by Beyond Zero Emissions, shows that establishing a Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct (REIP) for manufacturers in Gladstone would also create **11,000 new jobs**, attract **new capital investment of \$7.8 billion** and generate **\$2 billion in revenue per annum** by 2032.

Learn more and download the report at bze.org.au/gladstone

Image Credit: 5B

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QRIDA boosting business

Producers seeking financial support to boost their beef business will be able to explore their options with the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) at Beef Australia 2024.

For those with aspirations of launching their grazing venture, QRIDA's First Start Loan offers up to \$2 million to purchase land, carry out the family succession plan or enter a lease or share-farming arrangement.

Local Regional Area Manager for Capricornia John Metelli said this loan is a great financial stepping stone for beef producers looking for a pathway into the industry.

"Property prices have been a real challenge for producers wanting to make their break in the agriculture industry," he said.

"The First Start Loan is designed to financially support aspiring beef producers to enter the industry, get their foot on-farm and help them establish their beef business."

For those beef producers already in the industry, enhancing productivity and profitability will be front of mind.

QRIDA's Sustainability Loan offers up to \$1.3 million to help beef producers with the financial boost to improve the sustainability of their farming systems, natural resource management, and financial strategies.

"Our Sustainability Loans offer existing producers a suite of options to improve the productivity and profitability of their enterprise," he said.

"This loan can be used for improving land, adopting ag-tech, diversifying into other ag-related industries, enhancing water accessibility or infrastructure and even expanding producer's operations."

If improving the drought resilience of your beef enterprise is on your to-do list,



QRIDA regional area manager for Capricornia John Metelli.

Picture: SUPPLIED

QRIDA said it has drought support available. "With our drought grants and loans, we are encouraging beef producers to proactively plan for drought before it's too late.

For those currently experiencing drought, we're here to help your business navigate the financial challenges and build a more resilient beef business," John said.

Producers are encouraged to visit QRIDA at Beef Australia 2024 in the Robert Schwarten Pavilion to discover how their financial assistance can boost your beef business.



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Callide generator back

Unit C3 at Callide C Power Station is generating electricity following its return to service over the Easter long weekend.

CS Energy brought C3 back online on 1 April following a thorough commissioning process to test the unit and its new cooling tower over recent weeks.

Chief executive officer Darren Busine said employees and contractors had put in an enormous effort to reach this milestone.

"This is a significant milestone in returning our portfolio to full capacity," Mr Busine said.

"Getting to this point is thanks to the combined effort of the construction crews that built the new Callide C3 cooling tower and our operations team who have been methodical in their approach to re-commissioning the unit.

"The Callide team will closely monitor the unit as it undergoes further testing and commissioning works before gradually returning it to its full capacity."

Callide C's other generator – Unit C4 – will make a staged return to service beginning on 30 June (200 MW) before returning to full capacity (420 MW) on 31 July.

In mid-February, CS Energy released a report on the technical contributing factors to the Callide Unit C4 incident on 25 May 2021 and the actions it has taken to prevent a similar event from happening again.

The report, based on CS Energy's assessment of the incident, and work since the event with a range of experts including Aurecon and independent investigator Dr Sean Brady, is being released as part of CS Energy's commitment to transparency and sharing learnings with industry and the community.

"This was one of the most significant and



CS Energy brought C3 generator at Callide Power Station back online on 1 April.

Picture: SUPPLIED

complex process safety incidents in Australia and it has taken time to work through and understand the contributing factors to the event," Mr Busine said.

"The Callide Unit C4 incident was the result of the simultaneous failure of key elec-

trical equipment and system back-ups in a complex series of events that could not have been anticipated, with some of the contributing factors being traced back to the original design of the power station.

"As we have gained a better understand-

ing of the causes of the 2021 incident, we have not waited to act on what we have learned.

"We have progressively improved safety for our people and plant, both at Callide and our other assets across the state."



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Beef TV hosts Lyndsey Douglas (left) and Andrea Crothers will be broadcasting Beef Australia 2024 in Rockhampton from 6-10 May.

Picture: SUPPLIED

Beef Australia is set to go global

Beef Australia, the Southern Hemisphere's pre-eminent livestock exposition, will this year be broadcast to the world through its bespoke program and streaming service BeefTV.

Hosted by well-known journalist, Andrea Crothers, and Australian agricultural show identity, Lyndsey Douglas, Beef TV will deliver an insightful, educational and exciting eight-hour program airing 6-10 May, from the LAWD International Business Lounge.

Six channels will capture the action of the Nutrien Ag Solutions Stud Cattle Championship, in collaboration with livestream partner, Stocklive, while Beef TV's seventh channel will include rolling interviews, panel discussions and live crosses capturing industry insights, insider knowledge from Beef2024 stakeholders, market trends, market updates from international Trade Commissioners, success stories, as well as Beef2024 news updates.

Beef Australia chief executive officer Simon Irwin said Beef TV would deliver ex-

traordinary access to Beef2024 to international and domestic audiences who could not make it to Rockhampton.

"Since inception in 1988, Beef Australia has grown to become one of the most significant global events of its type so, in 2024, we've taken steps to develop a platform that allows us to extend its reach to a rich and diverse pool of stakeholders," Mr Irwin said.

"Australia produces some of the highest quality, most safe and nutritious beef in the world and its important the event is leveraged to be not just a phenomenal in-person experience in Rockhampton but as a platform that can be used to engage those who are invested in what we are doing here, wherever they may be across the country or the world.

"We've brought together two highly respected and experienced presenters to lead Beef TV and are looking forward to presenting a dynamic and comprehensive program of viewing that connects, informs and entertains – showcasing how Australia is helping

to lead the world in innovative and sustainable beef production."

Tourism Minister Michael Healy said Beef TV would take Beef2024 to a global audience.

"Beef TV is a great addition to the Beef Australia 2024 program to connect viewers to all the live action across the event," Mr Healy said.

"Rockhampton is the beef capital of Australia - and accommodation, hospitality and tourism operators will reap the benefits of thousands of visitors to the region.

"The Miles Labor Government has invested \$2.25 million in Beef Australia 2024 and we support this event as a catalyst for economic growth and the regional tourism industry."

To subscribe to the Beef TV mailing list and be across the latest updates and program teasers go to our Beef TV website - <https://www.beef.tv.com.au/>.

Cattle Championship one of highlights

The Nutrien Ag Solutions Commercial Cattle Championship is one of the highlights of Beef Australia.

Beef Australia chief executive officer Simon Irwin said every three years, commercial cattlemen and women from across Australia get the chance to put their cattle to the test for the chance to be named the best in the country.

"Given the challenging seasonal and market conditions producers faced in 2023, the competition is on track to present a solid line up of both grain and grass finished cattle to showcase to the public," he said.

Queensland Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities Mark Furner backed Queensland beef to punch above its weight in the competition.

"We are going to see the best beef in Australia on show at Beef 2024 and I know Queensland cattle producers are going to be front and centre when it comes to the prestigious places on the podium," Mr Furner said.

"It is a tribute to Queensland's cattle industry that it produces the goods year in, year out and takes its rightful place in the global beef market while supporting tens of thousands of good jobs for Queenslanders."

Beef Australia Commercial Cattle Championship committee chair Angus Creedon said the championship is a chance for producers to receive comprehensive feedback from knowledgeable judges.

"Beef Australia has selected judges that have knowledge on current market specifications, relevant to market drivers and mod-

ern production parameters, for the Nutrien Ag Solutions Commercial Cattle Championship," Mr Creedon said.

"All cattle entered into the Championship will then be offered for sale at the Nutrien Ag Solutions Championship Sale, which will be held on Monday, 6 May at the Central Queensland Livestock Exchange (CQLX)."

"The Championship then ends with the Nutrien Ag Solutions Awards Dinner where producers, breeders, and industry stakeholders can come together and celebrate the achievements and innovations within Australia's cattle industry."

The Nutrien Ag Solutions Commercial Cattle Championship will take place on Sunday, 5 May, with the Sale of Champions taking place on Monday, 6 May at CQLX before the awards dinner later this night.

Fine panel of judges

Beef Australia, the premier beef industry event, has announced the distinguished panel of judges who will preside over the highly-anticipated evokeAG Pitch In the Paddock event at Beef2024.

This event, slated to take place on Wednesday, 8 May 2024 promises to showcase groundbreaking innovations and ideas in the beef industry, providing a platform for forward-thinking entrepreneurs and industry leaders.

The esteemed panel of judges comprises a diverse group of experts, each bringing a wealth of experience and knowledge to the evaluation process and highly competitive competition.

The judges for the evokeAG Pitch In the Paddock Event at Beef2024 are:

- Julia Spicer OAM, Queensland Chief Entrepreneur
- Robert Bell, Co-founder and Chief Technical Officer, ProAgni
- Harriet Mellish, General Manager of Global Innovation Networks, AgriFutures Australia
- Duncan Ferguson, Head of Venture Growth and Investment, Farmers-2Founders
- Mark Allison, Non-Executive Director, Elders Limited Beef Australia chief executive officer Simon Irwin said it was an honour to have such a fine panel of judges.

"The judges' collective expertise and industry insights will ensure a fair and comprehensive evaluation of the innovative pitches that will be presented by our eight finalists at Beef2024," Mr Irwin said.

"The evokeAG Pitch In the Paddock event is a unique opportunity for entrepreneurs, startups, and innovators to showcase their groundbreaking ideas, products, and technologies that have the potential to shape the future of the beef industry.

"The eight finalists, announced in January 2024, will have the chance to pitch their innovations to the panel of judges, receive valuable feedback, and compete for a \$10,000 cash prize.

"Beef2024 is set to be a landmark event, bringing together industry leaders, stakeholders, and innovators from around the globe.

"The evokeAG Pitch In the Paddock Event is just one of the many highlights that demonstrates Beef Australia's commitment to fostering innovation and driving positive change in the beef industry, and we thank our judges for their time and expertise in helping us achieve this."

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Murray Watt said Pitch in the Paddock would deliver fresh ideas.

"Beef is well-known for being a great day out for a lot of families, but of course it's also an important event that provides major opportunities for people in the industry to drive it forward," Mr Watt said.

"Pitch in the Paddock is the perfect place for start-ups, developers, innovators and inventors to showcase their talent to a panel of industry experts.

"Innovation is key to ensuring our agriculture industries remain sustainable and competitive now and into the future.

"I look forward to seeing the panel at work and the eight Pitch In The Paddock finalists as they go head-to-head in May."

The evokeAG Pitch In The Paddock event will take place at Beef2024 on Wednesday, 8 May from 1pm-3pm.

Tickets can be purchased at tickets.beefaustralia.com.au/event/evokeag-pitch-in-the-paddock/



World-famous horseman and entertainer, Guy McLean.



Picture: MICHAEL STYLIANOS Queensland Chamber Orchestra's Camerata.

Picture: SUPPLIED

Full of entertainment

Beef Australia has unveiled a massive entertainment program for Beef2024 with a daily line-up that offers something for everyone, from Dorothy the Dinosaur and Friends to Australia's favourite horseman and legends of country music to the acclaimed Queensland Chamber Orchestra, Camerata.

Three stages will buzz with free daily entertainment while the evening program means the party can continue into the night, making for an unforgettable experience.

Beef Australia chief executive Simon Irwin said whatever your choice of entertainment Beef2024 had you covered.

"We have put together such a rich and deep entertainment program there is truly something for all ages and tastes," Mr Irwin said.

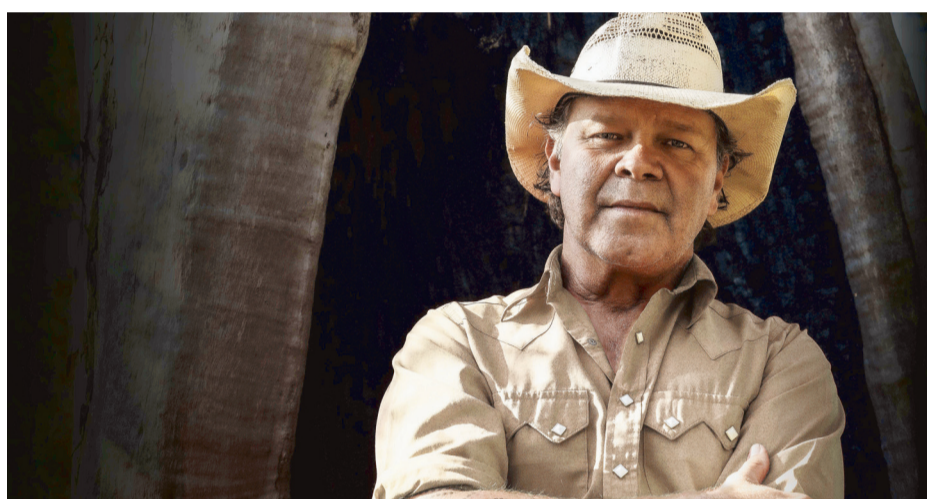
"Go behind the scenes of your favourite podcasts with live recordings in the heart of M'Eat Street, watch the incredible horsemanship of Guy McLean in the Demo Yards, or catch our headliners on the Ergon Network Stage like the legendary Troy Cassar-Daley, the foot-stomping Wolfe Brothers, Kaylee Bell and Rockhampton's very own Australian Idol finalist Denvah.

"We also have fantastic events like the Blue Hill PR Great Debate, featuring a star-studded panel including Sam Thaiday, The Makani Australian Butchers Team Sausage Competition, the 'ball to beat them all', the RB Sellars Hats n Heels event with DJ Pia Pressure taking to the stage."

Beef2024 Entertainment Program

▪ Kids' Zone

The dedicated Kids' Zone is free for anyone under 16 with daily educational and



Troy Cassar-Daley, winner of 40 Golden Guitars, five ARIA Awards and four CMMA Entertainer of the Year titles. Picture: SUPPLIED



Australian Idol finalist and Rockhampton singer-songwriter, Denvah. Picture: SUPPLIED

cultural shows by Darumbal and a Magic and Circus Show.

- Ergon Network Stage
- Troy Cassar-Daley (a performance supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland)
- Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra
- Kaylee Bell
- The Wolfe Brothers
- Dorothy the Dinosaur and Friends
- World Butchers' Challenge – sausage-tasting competition
- SkyKelpie – Live Muster
- The Blue Hill PR Great Debate

- RB Sellars Hats n Heels
- The Starmaker Story
- M'Eat Street
- Bush Poetry with Bob Pacey
- What's Your Beef – Live Podcast
- Larren Bean
- The Mad Mariachi
- Lewis McKee
- West Texas Crude
- There's an Elephant in my Paddock! – Live Podcast
- Chris Bax
- George & Noriko
- RawAg – Live Podcast
- Rachael Dee

- Baby et Lulu
- Munsterbucks
- The Lawn
- Mo' Swagger
- Denvah
- Tyla Rodrigues
- Anna Farquhar
- Celeste
- Col Finley
- The Dandys
- Wade Forster
- Demo Yards
- Guy McLean
- Feathered Friends
- Dave Graham & The Muttley Crew

Tech and innovation to take centre stage at Beef

Technology and its potential to optimise the cattle industry will be one of the most impactful points of discussion at Beef2024 through the NBN Tech and Innovation Talks Program, featuring tech providers and thought leaders from across the country.

Almost 50 sessions over five days will include addresses, panel discussions and demonstrations touching on key topics relevant to innovation in beef production and land management, housed in the architecturally designed, inflatable Air-beam Dome.

Beef Australia chief executive officer Simon Irwin said there would be a particular focus on carbon through the dedicated "Carbon Conversations" series each morning.

"With the support of NBN, we've developed a program that will deliver one of the most comprehensive discussions on technology and the benefits and challenges to agricultural production in Australia," Mr Irwin said.

"Topics covered will range from region-



The example of inside the inflatable Air-Beam Dome, which will feature at Beef 2024. Picture: SUPPLIED

al communications and first aid to remote water monitoring, assessing land and plant condition and environmental stewardship, with a deep dive on carbon.

"The beauty of these sessions is how they are highlighting the practical ways the industry is working on bringing the benefits of technology to the farm level."

The daily one-hour Carbon Conver-

sations sessions will delve deep into the latest methods and trends in measuring, mitigating and sequestering carbon on beef cattle enterprises as the industry continues to make strides towards its target of being carbon neutral by 2030 (CN30).

Carbon Conversations will feature a different expert each morning and begin with the basics of how to start calculating emissions.

The following days will canvass developments in methane inhibitors, reveal how large commercial ranches in the United States are addressing climate and environmental challenges, explain Australian Carbon Credit Units, and break down the critical differences between inseting and offsetting emissions.

Mr Irwin said putting tech and innovation at the heart of the Beef2024 program was a conscious focus for this year's event.

"Beef Australia exists for the advancement of the Australian beef community and provides a platform to showcase the very best of our industry," he said.

"Innovation is one of the four pillars

that underpins our approach to Beef2024 because our industry has a long and proud history of embracing innovation and adapting new technologies to our unique environment and production systems."

NBN Health and Agriculture executive manager Robert Hardie said technology and innovation were essential to the future of Australian agriculture.

"Australian farmers have always been at the forefront of technological adoption, and the Tech Yards gives them a one-stop shop to see the latest innovations that will help to boost agricultural productivity," Mr Hardie said.

"nbn is delighted to once again be supporting the Tech Yards and Tech Talks at Beef 2024."

The NBN Tech and Innovation Talks will run from Monday, 6 May to Friday, 10 May at the NBN Tech and Innovation Talks Stage.

For the full Tech Talks program go to <https://beefaustralia.com.au/beef2024/tech-and-innovation/tech-innovation-talks/>

\$20m to drive innovation

Australia's national science agency, CSIRO, has announced a \$20 million investment to provide small to medium enterprises (SMEs) with greater access to vital research and development opportunities to accelerate their growth.

The funding will allow CSIRO's SME Connect team to support up to 750 SMEs through a range of programs and initiatives that provide facilitation, training, dollar-matched funding and support to start-ups and SMEs seeking to engage in company-led research projects.

One of the programs being supported is SME Connect's flagship program, CSIRO Kick-Start.

Since its inception in 2017, the Kick-Start program has facilitated over 280 company-led R&D projects, with alumni companies collectively holding a market value exceeding \$2 billion.

CSIRO chief executive officer Dr Doug Hilton emphasised the significance of this investment and the transformative impact it would have for Australia's critical SME sector.

"SMEs are crucial drivers of Australia's future and so often the engine room of new, innovative thinking and solutions to many of the challenges our society faces," Dr Hilton said.

"CSIRO's fundamental role as the national science agency is to create benefits for Australia and that includes helping to drive SME's productivity, sustainability and growth through greater access to R&D opportunities and conducting research to support a more resilient and diverse economy.

"CSIRO is committed to its role within the innovation ecosystem of supporting SMEs in embracing research and providing access



CSIRO Kick-Start alumni company, Goterra, harness the power of insects and robotics to regeneratively recycle food waste. Picture: SUPPLIED

to the resources, knowledge, and support they need to flourish."

CSIRO's SME Connect team has supported start-ups and SMEs across a broad range of industry sectors including technology, manufacturing, agriculture, mining, energy and health and biosecurity.

SME Connect director Simon Hanson said the investment helps boost Australian innovation by providing practical pathways for SMEs to leverage the expertise and facilities of the national science agency.

"Our research has shown that strong collaboration between industry and the research sector is crucial for the longevity and success of Australian SMEs," Mr Hanson

said.

"This funding injection enables us to encourage and support initiatives aimed at bridging this gap, fostering meaningful collaborations between businesses and academia, we aim to facilitate innovation and growth within the SME ecosystem.

"We are dedicated to proactively supporting SMEs nationwide by leveraging CSIRO's extensive research capabilities and expertise, empowering them to commercialise and integrate cutting-edge innovations into their operations."

Goterra, an award-winning start-up based in Canberra, is a shining example of the success stories emerging from CSIRO's

SME Connect programs.

Founder Olympia Yarger said the company has developed an innovative waste management system that utilises insects to process food waste, resulting in a 97 per cent reduction of greenhouse gases.

"CSIRO's Kick-Start program connected us with leading scientists who not only provided world class research capabilities to some of our most complex problems but were also pivotal in supporting our exploration of business opportunities, alternative technological advancements and industry connections," Ms Yarger said.



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Need for agility, foresight

The latest Internet Vacancy Index report, published by Jobs and Skills Australia, was released recently on 20 March.

The report sheds light on the shifting dynamics of the Australian labour market, impacting regions like ours here in Central Queensland.

As the period of record growth in on-line job advertisements following the COVID-19 pandemic has now finished, Central Queensland grapples with its own set of challenges and opportunities.

Despite a national decrease in online job advertisements by 2.3 per cent in February 2024, Central Queensland remains relatively robust, reflecting the broader trend of high vacancy numbers compared to pre-pandemic levels. Presently, the region boasts around 50 per cent more advertisements in the labour market compared to the monthly average for 2019.

However, this positive outlook is tinged with caution as vacancy numbers have decreased in five of the past six months nationally, signalling a potential slowdown in recruitment activity.

The downward trend in recruitment activity extends across all states and territories, with Central Queensland experiencing its own nuances.

While the region may not have encountered the steepest declines seen in regions in the Northern Territory or the Australian Capital Territory, it's not immune to the broader economic shifts.

Notably, metropolitan areas continue to dominate recruitment activity, with Central Queensland following this trend.

In terms of occupational demand, Central Queensland follows the national trend, albeit with some deviations.



WITH WENDY HANNAN

There is a slight increase in vacancies for Managers, indicating ongoing demand for leadership roles. However, in particular, the "Community and Personal Service Workers" category experiences a noticeable decrease, aligning with broader national patterns.

One striking aspect of the Central Queensland employment landscape is its resilience in the face of broader national trends.

While metropolitan areas have experienced a more significant decline in job advertisements over the last 12 months, Central Queensland has managed to maintain relatively steady employment opportunities.

This continues to underscore the region's diversified economy, with sectors like mining, renewable energy, and tourism contributing to its resilience.

Unlocking Potential within Economic Realities

The Queensland Resources Council (QRC) recently released a report highlighting both the immense potential and the challenges faced by Queensland's resources sector.

As the world undergoes a transition towards low-emission technologies, Queensland's abundance of resources positions it to play a pivotal role in driving future economic growth and job creation.

However, the report also underscores significant hurdles such as uncompetitive government policies and regulatory uncertain-

ties that threaten to impede investment and hinder employment opportunities.

According to the QRC's State of the Sector report for the December 2023 quarter, two-thirds of member CEOs anticipate an increase in demand for commodities like coal over the next three years.

Key export commodities such as steel-making coal, gas, and thermal coal are expected to maintain their prominence, with additional growth potential identified in copper, silver, lead, zinc, gold, aluminium, and bauxite. Despite these promising prospects, Queensland's resources sector faces challenges stemming from policy and regulatory environments.

The report highlights concerns over the impact of uncompetitive government policies, including the imposition of high coal royalty tax rates in mid-2022.

Such policies have contributed to a significant slowdown in investment and expansion plans within the sector, with only 17 per cent of mining and energy companies planning to expand their operations in Queensland in the coming year, down from 35 per cent in the previous year.

Janette Hewson, CEO of the QRC, emphasised the urgent need for collaboration between the resources sector and the State Government to address these challenges and ensure Queensland remains an attractive investment destination.

Hewson stressed the importance of creating a stable and internationally competitive policy environment to restore confidence among investors and stimulate long-term growth and employment opportunities in the state.

While the report highlights concerns regarding policy uncertainty, rising costs,

and skilled worker shortages, it also offers a glimmer of hope.

Seventy-two per cent of resources companies surveyed expressed their intention to increase procurement from local and Indigenous businesses over the next 12 months.

This commitment not only reinforces the sector's contribution to regional economies but also underscores its potential to foster local economic development and job creation.

Ultimately, the resources sector remains a cornerstone of Queensland's economy, contributing nearly \$117 billion and supporting over 530,000 jobs directly or indirectly.

However, to fully realise its potential and navigate the challenges ahead, concerted efforts are needed to address policy uncertainties, reduce regulatory burdens, and foster a supportive environment for long-term investment and growth in Queensland's resources sector.

Outlook

Looking ahead, Central Queensland must navigate the evolving employment market with agility and foresight.

Adapting to technological disruptions, addressing skill gaps, and fostering regional development will be critical in sustaining the region's prosperity.

Collaborative efforts between government, industry, and educational institutions are essential to ensure Central Queensland remains a vibrant hub for employment and economic growth in the months and years to come.

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What's happening? Plenty

CAPRICORNIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE UPDATE

PRESIDENT JASON FOSS



Well, it seems as if half the year has slipped away already.

Of course that's not strictly correct, but it is a reminder that time does slip away quicker than we'd like.

And with that in mind, the Chamber would like to highlight a few events that are of high interest to business.

The first is the State Budget, scheduled for mid-year.

While submissions have closed, it is a core role for Chambers of Commerce to identify upcoming and future needs.

The Capricornia Chamber took the opportunity to meet with state treasurer Cameron Dick MP at the recent Community Cabinet in Rockhampton.

While future infrastructure needs were high on our agenda, we never miss any opportunity to remind the government that the best level of payroll tax is zero.

Later in the year we have the State election and in relation to this, we are in constant contact with other Chambers around the State to agree on and align with the most pressing issues facing business, and small business in particular.

High on this agenda is the cost of all sources of energy, but particularly electricity and gas.

The promised reductions in the cost of these vital business inputs have yet to materialise.



The Capricorn Chamber of Commerce recently met with state treasurer Cameron Dick in Rockhampton where the price of petrol and diesel was among the topics discussed. Picture: FILE

terialise.

While Federal policies are a significant factor, regional users do not have the option of competition among suppliers.

As with domestic supply, there is some choice between tariffs but being limited to a single supplier is less than ideal.

Petrol and diesel prices are also significant costs especially for those with extensive fleets.

As this advocacy agenda progresses, we will be looking for your views on the most

urgent issues or those that have most impact on your operations.

Although we are keen for this input at any time!

Finally, sometime after the State Election but scheduled for next year is the Federal Election.

Top of the agenda here is the second tranche of the raft of IR legislative changes commenced last year.

The Chamber will be holding a session on this subject in the near future.

Stay tuned for that and for several other informative events we have in planning at the moment.

And don't forget our monthly coffee catchups, sponsored by our growing list of Gold Members.

These are an ideal way to meet other businesses in a relaxed atmosphere with minimal formalities.

Every last Wednesday of the month – put those in your diaries now.

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School's 50th is a real Central Queensland tale

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WITH WARREN ACUTT

Valkyrie, what an intriguing name on the map of Central Queensland, of the locality, a property and school.

Predominantly cattle grazing country, Valkyrie is a rural locality, not a town, lightly populated, currently by approximately 122 people, over 2500 sq km, in north-western Central Queensland.

According to Google, Valkyrie comes from Norse mythology (as well, a Marvel Superheroine). Marvel fans and Viking followers possibly aware that a Valkyrie is one of a host of female figures who guide souls of the dead to the god Odin's hall, Valhalla.

How did a small piece of Central Queensland get to be called after a Norse soul guide? I wonder if the Archers, who in the 1850s had pastoral runs in the Peak Downs region, gave it the name, having lived in Norway before coming to Australia.

They being the first European settlers of Gracemere (originally named by them as Farris, after a Norwegian lake) in Central Queensland.

This year, on 22 June, Valkyrie State School, on the Fitzroy Development Road, about 300km from Rockhampton, celebrates its 50th anniversary.

The school's beginnings were under the shade of the Coolibah trees, on the banks of Lake Plattaway (if only Banjo Patterson were alive to put this all to verse). In 1974 a good number, of the then Valkyrie population, met there with a determination to better the educational opportunities for their children.

With this determination the seeds for Valkyrie State School were planted. Funny enough, not in its originally intended position, wet weather determined where the first school building was dropped off at, and then assembled. The school, being the hub (only landmark) of the community, has, along with hosting working bees, weddings, and christenings, had some significant achievements and adversities over its 50 years, just like the surrounding land holders. Drought being the big challenge, with the school, at times, running out of water (not enough to even flush a toilet), and having to send the students home early.

The school oval so dry and unforgiving that students were banned from playing on it, after one had broken his arm. This was all highlighted in state media, 'it would never happen at a Brisbane school' being the common declaration. No, it would most likely would not, but isolated schools must be resourceful, and the Valkyrie SS Parents and Citizens Association have certainly proved to be, particularly during the drought years.

Despite the state government strangely blocking the school from accepting charitable donations of bottled water ('you got to buy it'), and no funding in the 2021 state budget to access alternative supplies of water, the P&C found an innovative way to create and store drinkable water.

In 2022, they had 15 hydropanels installed, panels that make drinkable water from sunshine and air (by capturing humidity). The project was made possible with the support of Rural Aid, technology partner SOURCE Global, mining company Stanmore Resources, and the Central Queensland Mining Rehabilitation Group, along with passionate local backing.

Non-potable water is donated, now approved by the Department of Education, to



Valkyrie State School plays an important role in the community.

Pictures: SUPPLIED



The school's logo.



Valkyrie State School students of 2016.

the school by Pembroke Resources. But the oval still relies solely on rain for grass coverage. Water, the lack of ready access to enough of it, still the ongoing challenge for Valkyrie SS (as is for many isolated schools).

Adversity can be viewed as an insurmountable, or series of, hurdle(s), OR one of life's greatest teachers, building character, a stepping stone to greatness. The school motto is 'strive to achieve.' Valkyrie SS, with currently 11 students, certainly lives by its motto.

Congratulations to those who had the vision for a school to be built, those who made that vision a reality and those who persist in their determination to make better the educational opportunities for their children.

Congratulations on 50 years. I am sure the 50-year book will be a great read, a story of determination, resourcefulness, and achievement.

A real Central Queensland story.



Detail from a magnificent painting of the school marking its 50th anniversary.

Learning project lessons



SUPPORTING REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

Continuing its work to help boost local capability for major projects, the Central Queensland Industry Collaborative (CQIC), with support from the Capricornia Chamber of Commerce, held a “Lessons Learned” feedback session in Rockhampton on 18 March 2024.

The event was an opportunity for local subcontractors and suppliers on that project to provide feedback to representatives from Laing O’Rourke, who was the Principal Contractor for the \$1B Australian Singapore Military Training Initiative (ASMTI) project at the Shoalwater Bay Training Area (SWB-TA).

Laing O’Rourke was represented by acting general manager of health and safety James Foreman, and project technical leader Matthew Goodall.

Representatives from the business community included CQG Consulting founder Patrice Brown, SMW Group chair Jack Tremanan and JRT Civil’s Jason

Thomasson, who also acted as Masters of Ceremonies.

In addition to the business owners and subcontractors, the audience was made up of people from existing industries in the region such as Stanwell Corporation as well as representatives from Transport and Main Roads, McConnell Dowell BMD as principal contractors on the Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline Project and representatives from three of the proposed wind farm projects in the region.

Advance Rockhampton and Michelle Landry’s office also had representatives in attendance.

The session started with a presentation by Laing O’Rourke covering the inception of the project, the scale of works in three precincts and, most importantly, reflections on the tender process.

This component was of most interest to the local subcontractors as tendering for



An aerial view of the \$1 billion Australian Singapore Military Training Initiative project at the Shoalwater Bay Training Area.

Picture: LAING O’ROURKE

such projects can be a large investment to businesses and is time and content intensive. For this reason, smaller local contractors often struggle with the complexity and detail of the documentation and may even be dissuaded from applying.

A key takeaway from the presentation, which was appreciated by the local businesses, was a decision by Laing O’Rourke to engage with potential suppliers individually rather than through an industry portal.

That said, heading into the question and answer section of the morning, it became evident that even a high level of engagement with potential and actual suppliers did not always result in clear communication and understanding.

A particular example involved a local supplier who in fact did not win that contract, but supplied to another local business who had been successful.

However, this commercial arrangement was not visible to Laing O’Rourke and resulted in the actual supplier losing money on the work.

A critical issue that always arises on projects such as this is the definition of “local”. In the case of the ASMTI project, Laing O’Rourke developed a concentric set of areas starting with Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast and moving outwards.

Accurate identification of supposedly local suppliers can be difficult when out of town companies set up a temporary local office.

The role of State and Federal purchasing policies is also critical.

The Queensland Procurement Policy 2023 describes local supplier as “a supplier of goods and/or services that maintains a workforce whose usual place of residency (i.e. where they normally live, sleep and eat) is located within a 125 kilometre radius of where the ‘goods and/or service’ is to be supplied”.

If a capable ‘local supplier’ does not exist within the 125km radius, the radius should be extended progressively to the local region, then Queensland, then outside of Queensland, until a suitable ‘supplier’ is identified.”

However, scope remains for a prime contractor to manipulate interpretation of this clause, without full disclosure, to include or exclude local suppliers without fair and transparent consultation.

This can enable suppliers to be brought in from well outside the region. CQIC will pursue this issue with regulators and policymakers.

The session also provided some suggestions on process improvement, to address problems that can occur due to failures of communication. In particular, where variations to scope occur, an independent Project Management and Contract Administration (PMCA) office could overcome misunderstandings and also provide assurance, on publicly funded projects, that value for money had been achieved.

CQIC will pursue this proposal with government representatives.

The message from the businesses at the session was a strong one, we have the capacity and capability and we will hold all proponents and principal contractors to account to ensure they maximise their procurement of goods and services from the Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast region.

Laing O’Rourke was proud to report an 80

per cent spend in the local region, meeting their targets as committed to in their tender process, along with achieving a sound safety record and exceeding targets for spend on Indigenous businesses.

On conclusion, it was evident that Laing O’Rourke’s willingness to again engage with local suppliers was greatly appreciated by those in the audience.

For their part, Laing O’Rourke took away some useful lessons in working with local suppliers for implementation in future projects.

Specifically, for any large organisation such as Laing O’Rourke, it is critical for all levels of management to share the same understanding of the local business environment and agree on consistent policies for how local suppliers will be handled.

More sessions will be held with other principal contractors and proponents delivering major projects in the region to enable genuine engagement on local content and spend.

The session was funded by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning.



The Central Queensland Industry Collaborative, supported by the Capricornia Chamber of Commerce, held a feedback session at Cocobrew in March. Picture: SUPPLIED

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