INDUSTRY Today

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Asbestos at Clarke Creek

By Matthew Pearce

Squadron Energy's Clarke Creek Wind Farm is the latest Australian wind farm to confirm the presence of asbestos, but the company says there is no risk to the community.

Turbine manufacturer Goldwind Australia late last month alerted authorities that white asbestos had been found in the brake pads of internal service lifts used to access the top of the Clarke Creek Wind Farm's 207m-tall turbines.

A Squadron Energy spokesperson told CQ Today that Goldwind is remediating asbestos detected in a number of brake pads at the wind farm, which is located about 150km north-west of Rockhampton.

"This is an industry-wide issue stemming from a component that would fit in the palm of your hand," they said.

"There has been no detection of airborne asbestos and work is underway to resolve the issue.

"There is no risk to the community, and the health and safety of staff and community members remains our number one priority."

Turbine access at Clarke Creek is not regular and is usually limited to two to three times a year by maintenance staff.

Clarke Creek is the latest Australian wind farm to reveal the presence of asbestos in Chinese-produced wind turbines, with others including Vestas' Golden Plains Wind Farm in regional Victoria and Cattle Hill Wind Farm, developed and constructed by Goldwind Australia, in Tasmania.

Beijing Jingeng Energy International (Australia), which owns Gullen Range Wind Farm in Bannister, New South Wales, Biala Wind Farm in New South Wales, and is 51 per cent owner of Moorabool Wind Farm in Bungal, Victoria, told the ABC asbestos had been identified in spare brake pads used on some of the lifts in its turbines.

Clarke Creek Wind Farm has confirmed the presence of asbestos in the brake pads of lifts used to access the top of the Clarke Creek Wind Farm's 207m-tall turbines. (Supplied)

Claiming up to 50 workers could have been exposed to a part containing asbestos at Clarke Creek, Capricornia MP Michelle Landry called for an immediate pause on all turbine installations until the full extent of the risk is understood.

She also stressed the need for a comprehensive audit of all renewable energy and construction projects to ensure no asbestos is slipping through supply chains.

"The Minister has the power to act, and he must act immediately," she said.

"This is not about politics, this is about the health and safety of Australian workers. Any supply chains allowing asbestos into the country must be shut down. If that requires tough conversations with foreign governments, so be it."

Capricornia MP Michelle Landry has called for an immediate pause on all wind farm turbine installations until the full extent of the asbestos risk is understood. (File)

Ms Landry said asbestos had been banned in Australia for more than 20 years and the importation of asbestos-containing goods has been illegal since 2003.

"Yet asbestos has now been found in five per cent of wind turbines nationwide," she said.

A Goldwind Australia spokesperson said the company was conducting a comprehensive testing program following the proactive identification of asbestos in some small brake pads, which were supplied by a third-party industry supplier.

"Health risk has been assessed by independent occupational hygienists to be very low," they said.

"Goldwind continues to work closely with the relevant authorities and is committed to managing this issue responsibly, and a replacement program is underway where required."

Healthy turnout at Biloela community energy forum

By Di Stanley

A crowd of 170 landholders and community members packed the Biloela Civic Centre for the Queensland Community Energy Forum on Monday, 24 November.

With a $40 billion pipeline of renewable projects for the shire, banana Shire Mayor Nev Ferrier said the takeaway theme of the event was working with your neighbours.

"We had (former National Farmers Federation and Queensland AgForce president) Brent Finlay as one of speakers and his was a good presentation because he has wind farms on his properties and he spoke about what he's learned and how to go about it," Cr Ferrier said.

"Just working with each other, that's the biggest thing."

Cr Ferrier said dealing with the concerns of landholders and renewable proponents was a balance that had to be struck.

An agenda item that went before councillors at the Wednesday, 26 November, monthly meeting was to approve 0the formation of the Banana Shire Local Reference Group - with the stated aim of providing council with independent, representative advice on community priorities and needs.

"We've got to think of what's the best for our shire, that's what we're elected for, and you've got to leave your personal opinions at the front door when you come in to vote and make decisions for Banana Shire," he said.

"You're making them for what's best for the shire and what's best for the future for the generations ahead.

"That's the hardest thing to do for a lot of people, taking their personal opinion out of their vote."

Cr Ferrier said the shire's slate of renewable developments were moving slower than had been hoped but momentum was beginning to shift.

"Some of these have been going seven years, but they're all getting a go-on now, they know they've got to do it," he said.

"We're never going to reach the goals the Federal Government want and a lot of people don't want to reach some of those goals, but things are going ahead now."

Cr Ferrier he didn't believe in a shift to 100 per cent renewables and he remained committed to an energy mix that included coal.

"We were never going to have 100 per cent renewables, it was never going to happen and it was stupid to think it, but if we get to 70 per cent that would be enough most people think and I think they're right," he said.

"I believe 80 per cent or more of Banana Shire will still want coal being put into the power station here.

"It's certainly the cheapest. They're done a lot of work on the power station, a lot of money, a lot of maintenance that had been lacked for years beforehand because they always had the intention of closing some of it down soon, but different government, different ideas.

"I think most people are happy with keeping coal going for a while.

"That's what we are - agriculture, coal, power, herbs, grain, gold mine, meat works - we're the shire of opportunity and very lucky."

Also speaking at the forum were Coexistence Queensland chief executive officer Warwick Squire and Queensland Renewable Energy Council chief executive officer Katie-Anne Mulder.

The council will take expressions of interest for the Banana Shire Local Reference Group, shortlisting applications in January 2026, before approving its inaugural members for a 24-month term.

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Former National Farmers Federation and Queensland AgForce president Brent Finlay addressed the Queensland Community Energy Forum in Biloela on Monday, 24 November. Mr Finlay spoke candidly about what it's really like to host a large-scale wind farm on a working property – the questions, challenges, and opportunities. (Supplied)

Contract set for East End Pipeline design, construction

Gladstone Area Water Board (GAWB) has awarded the design and construction contract for its $57 million East End Pipeline Project to the McConnell Dowell BMD Joint Venture (MBJV).

The project is a major investment in the reliability and resilience of the region's treated water network and will replace the ageing 23-kilometre pipeline between the Boat Creek pump station and East End Reservoir, which has reached the end of its service life.

Detailed design and early works are underway, with major construction expected to begin in early 2026 and completion scheduled for late 2026.

GAWB chief executive officer Darren Barlow said awarding the contract marked a significant step forward in securing the region's long-term water supply.

Gladstone Area Water Board has awarded the design and construction contract for the East End Pipeline Project to McConnell Dowell BMD Joint Venture (MBJV). (Supplied)

"The East End Pipeline is critical to maintaining a safe and reliable water supply for Gladstone's industries and the Mt Larcom community," Mr Barlow said.

"Appointing MBJV as principal contractor allows us to move confidently into the next phase of delivery and ensures this essential infrastructure will continue to meet local needs for decades to come."

The new pipeline will improve operational efficiency, reduce maintenance needs and continue supplying treated water to Gladstone Regional Council — specifically the Mount Larcom township, which relies on the East End system — as well as several of GAWB's industrial customers.

The project also includes upgrades to the Boat Creek pump station to boost capacity and enhance system performance.

"This investment reinforces GAWB's commitment to providing safe, reliable, and sustainable water services that support local industry and community growth," Mr Barlow said.

GAWB and MBJV will work together to maximise local employment and supply chain opportunities throughout construction. Businesses and individuals seeking work or subcontracting roles are encouraged to contact MBJV directly.

The East End Pipeline Project forms part of GAWB's broader capital works program focused on maintaining and modernising essential water infrastructure across Central Queensland.

GAWB, a Queensland Government bulk water supply authority, delivers safe and reliable water services to support economic development and regional liveability.

It owns and operates Awoonga Dam, along with a network of pipelines, water treatment plants and other distribution infrastructure, and manages Aquaculture Gladstone at Lake Awoonga.

Net Zero is not to blame

By Di Stanley

Federal Industry and Innovation Minister Tim Ayres has fended off attacks on the production slowdown ahead for Rio Tinto's Yarwun alumina refinery being linked to Labor's net zero by 2050 policy.

In the Senate late last month, Liberal Senator Jess Collins claimed Rio "sacked" 180 workers and cut production at the refinery to align with its decarbonisation pathway.

"The Orica CEO also stated that the industry cannot decarbonise with any commercial technology that exists today," Sen Collins said.

"Minister, Gladstone industry is shutting down to align with your government's net zero agenda while telling you this transition is not possible.

"Why is your government pushing a policy that is leading to workers being sacked and industry shutting down?"

Senator Ayres said it was an "utterly dishonest" question.

"If you wanted to attribute the decision to Rio Tinto... made in any way to the energy questions that all of our industry face, that it utterly inappropriate and wrong - and knowingly wrong," he said.

"They are utterly disassociated from the reality of the decision that has been made, which is to redeploy 100 per cent of the workers involved.

"The decision is about investing in the future capability of that facility.

"That's what that is about, and it's utterly appalling to misrepresent it."

Rio Tinto announced last month it would cut production by 1.2 million tonnes a year, or 40 per cent, at its Yarwun Alumina Refinery from October 2026, to extend the operation's life until 2035 and allow time to explore further life-extension and modernisation options.

The planned slowdown of Rio Tinto's Yarwun alumina refinery was thrust into the Senate spotlight late last month. (File)

The Yarwun tailings facility was expected to reach capacity by 2031 at current production rates, giving the company another four years to explore and develop technical solutions that could further extend the refinery's life.

Rio Tinto aluminium pacific operations managing director Armando Torres said it was a "difficult but necessary" decision.

Minister Ayres again denied any net zero influence.

"The assurances I have been given are that those workers at that facility are being redeployed from some work to other work," he said.

"What it is the company is trying to achieve is to make sure that their waste discharge is stored appropriately and that they have a plan for the decades ahead to sustain their waste.

"It has nothing to do with their emissions and nothing to do with energy.

"My message to those workers is work with your unions, work with the local community, work with the business and work with the Federal Government, which backs you and future investment in your sector - not with the show that caused so much damage over the last decade."

Sen Collins used time under the Senate's questions without notice to again take on Minister Ayres.

She said the Yarwun refinery's situation was symptomatic of an industry struggling to decarbonise under net zero by 2050.

"Industry just can't do it with the current technology, and it is time... that this government again admits that it is wrong," she said.

"Remember, behind every job that is lost is a family that is suffering.

"What we see with the damaging Labor net zero agenda are higher bills, stagnating emissions and suffering families."

Orica chief executive officer Sanjeev Gandhi recently said industries were dependent on technologies that were not yet commercial.

"That is why, in the next decade, bills are only going to increase," he said.

"It's because of the scale of the cost of this transition."

Green light for expansion

More than 500 Central Queensland mining jobs have been secured with Peabody Energy's proposed $662 million Centurion North Development project declared a coordinated project by the State Government.

The proposed development would extend mining from the southern area into the adjoining northern area as part of the full Centurion Mine plan, which is projected to export premium hard coking coal to steelmaking customers through to 2055.

Deputy Premier and State Development, Infrastructure and Planning Minister Jarrod Bleijie said the declaration demonstrated the global demand for investing in Queensland's world-class coal resource, as well as industry's enthusiasm to partner with the Crisafulli Government to fast-track approvals.

"After Labor's decade of decline, the Crisafulli Government is supercharging job-creating economic development in our mining sector across regional Queensland," Deputy Premier Bleijie said.

"While Labor continues to attack Queensland coal jobs, we are partnering with industry to unlock more investment and jobs with faster approvals and investment certainty.

"Labor even voted against the energy roadmap in Parliament last week, showing regional Queenslanders they've rejected coal for longer.

"This coordinated project declaration of Peabody's Centurion Mine extension demonstrates Queensland's resources industry is well and truly open for business under the Crisafulli Government.

"This declaration will fast-track approvals by delivering a coordinated, whole-of-government streamlined assessment process to manage the project."

Peabody president and chief executive officer Jim Grech said the declaration was a significant milestone in the company's further development of Centurion Mine.

Peabody's proposed $662 million Centurion North Development project has been declared a coordinated project by the State Government. (Supplied)

"We thank the Crisafulli Government for recognising the strategic importance of this cornerstone steelmaking coal project, which builds on the planned February 2026 start-up of longwall production for Centurion's southern district," Mr Grech said.

"Steelmaking coal remains essential for producing the steel that underpins modern life, from homes and bridges to hospitals and renewable energy infrastructure.

"Centurion is also advancing our safety and sustainability commitments by extracting coal seam gas ahead of mining to improve safety and cut emissions, reusing the gas to power the operations and converting surplus into LNG to boost regional supply."

Natural Resources and Mines Minister Dale Last said the Centurion North Development project would support Queensland's long-term economic growth.

"The Crisafulli Government is fast-tracking approvals, coordinating decision making and sending investors a clear message that Queensland is open for business," Mr Last said.

"This project is a major vote of confidence in our world-class coal industry that delivers certainty and security to more than 500 Queensland mining families.

"Our message to industry is clear: if you're willing to invest in Queensland and create regional jobs, we'll give you the certainty you need to get on with it."

Queensland's Coordinator-General Gerard Coggan highlighted the significance of the coordinated project process.

"This declaration will ensure a comprehensive assessment of the project's environmental, social, and economic impacts," Mr Coggan said.

"My office will work with Peabody to ensure all approvals required for this project are achieved on time."

The mine is expected to produce up to 7.1 million tonnes of run-of-mine coal annually and extract up to 10 petajoules of coal seam gas to safely manage underground methane levels, provide power to the mine and boost Queensland's gas supply.

Queensland Conservation Council campaigner Charlie Cox accused the State Government of "bending over backwards to pander to coal and gas billionaires".

"We've seen the Federal Coalition walk away from Net Zero, and now we're seeing that same fossil-fuel agenda mirrored here in Queensland," she said.

"Queenslanders are already living with more intense heat, cyclones, flooding, and habitat loss.

"The Centurion North project would exacerbate climate change by releasing huge amounts of pollution here and overseas.

"Fast-tracking this project under the guise of 'streamlining' is simply the Crisafulli Government prioritising fossil fuel profits over nature and communities.

"A responsible government should invest in clean industries, protect precious ecosystems, and build long-term resilience. Fast-tracking mega coal and gas projects does the opposite, giving fossil fuel corporations a faster, easier route to climate and nature destruction."

Yancoal sets sights on extending Yarrabee mine's life

By Di Stanley

Yancoal Australia's Yarrabee coal mine, 40km north-east of Blackwater, has flagged a possible 15 per cent increase in its workforce as it works through the approval process to extend the life of the open-cut operation out to 2070.

The draft terms of reference for an environmental impact statement for the mine's continuation project are open for public consultation.

The project, hoped to start in 2028, will continue and expand the existing mine operations to extract an additional 74 million tonnes of run-of-mine metallurgical coal and have a disturbance footprint of around 2296 hectares within Yarrabee's existing mining leases.

"Mining will continue to be undertaken using conventional truck, blasting and shovel mining methods," project documents stated.

"The open cut mining operational areas will generally include supporting infrastructure including haul roads, bunding, embankments, soil stockpiles, hardstands and water management structures.

"The project will increase the current personnel by up to 60 full-time equivalent to a total of 490 FTE.

"In accordance with the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act, the operational workforce currently is not, and will not be, a 100 per cent fly-in, fly-out workforce.

"The project will facilitate significant ongoing socio-economic and ecologically sustainable benefits in the local area, region, and State of Queensland."

Project documents said the mine continuation would continue to benefit Yancoal's existing relationships with local suppliers, businesses and community organisations.

The continuation project would require an amendment to an existing diversion of Twelve Mile Creek.

Relocation and-or new water management infrastructure, explosive magazines, powerlines and internal haul roads would be required, and tailings capacity reviewed.

There is not expected any additional demand on existing power supply.

In July, Yancoal predicted that high-cost mines would close and low-cost miners would reduce production in response to a weakening global economy.

"We are beginning to see supply-side response to the lower coal prices, which aligns with our view that coal indices are well below marginal cost on the global cost curve," Yancoal's acting chief executive Ning Yue said.

"We anticipate further supply-side reductions from higher-cost producers, contributing to a potential recovery in coal price indices, as was the case with past coal price cycles."

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation is inviting written comments until 16 January.

Approval is being sought under the Queensland Environmental Protection Act 1994 to amend the existing EA to expand the footprint of current operations.

Yancoal also intends to lodge a separate application under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 to determine whether the project is a controlled action.

Mining giant abandons project in coal royalties stoush

By Andrew Stafford, AAP

A mining giant has walked away from another major project in an escalating coal royalties spat despite receiving State Government approval.

Two months after mothballing a mine, BHP Mitsubishi Alliance has confirmed it will walk away from plans to develop the Saraji East project in the Bowen Basin.

It had received conditional environmental approval for the proposed mine which involved clearing 136 hectares of habitat used by endangered koalas and greater gliders, provoking condemnation by conservation groups.

But the BHP alliance opted to pull out, repeating its vow not to invest in any expansion of its Queensland operations under the "extreme" royalties scheme.

It had previously made the claim when it announced in September it would mothball its Saraji South mine, axing 750 jobs.

Fellow giant Anglo American and Queensland company QCoal soon followed in what was labelled a co-ordinated campaign that resulted in more than 1200 workers being lost.

"As previously announced by BHP, we are not committing to investing in any expansion of our operations in Queensland under the government's unsustainable royalty regime," a BHP spokesperson told AAP.

Queensland Premier David Crisafulli has stood firm in the face of persistent pressure from the mining industry over royalty rates.

The state's former Labor government introduced a tiered royalties system in 2022, in which higher revenues are generated during boom periods of high coal prices but less is taken when market conditions deteriorate.

It is on a sliding scale starting from seven per cent - when prices are below $100 per tonne - to a peak of 40 per cent at $300 per tonne.

The price of coal has plummeted since the scheme was introduced and is currently flat at around $168 per tonne.

The scheme has sparked an ongoing stoush with Mr Crisafulli taking aim at mining companies who invested in Queensland in good times, only to bail out when commodity prices softened, branding them "fairweather friends".

At its annual state of the sector lunch, Queensland Resources Council's chief executive officer Janette Hewson said the scheme continued to be an issue.

"We have seen a $5 billion drop in overall economic activity here in Queensland, and the coal sector is really struggling at the moment," she said.

The BHP alliance says it has returned just one per cent on capital investment in the financial year 2025, paying out $1.638 billion in royalties for a net profit after tax of $206 million.

The mining giant's decision was part of an ongoing campaign to bully the Queensland Government over royalties, conservation group Lock the Gate Alliance said.

"This sudden statement from BHP further demonstrates why the Albanese government must reject this dangerous polluting project at a federal level," Lock the Gate Alliance's Maggie McKeown said.

"Precious water, habitat for endangered species like the koala, and the climate must not be put at risk."

In response, Natural Resources Minister Dale Last said it was "no surprise" that an anti-coal activist group opposed the coal industry and the thousands of hardworking Queenslanders it supports.

"The Crisafulli Government backs Queensland's world-class coal industry, which operates under strict environmental conditions, and we're driving real investment to create new jobs including the landmark deal to secure the Broadlea, Carborough Downs and Ironbark coal mines and fast-tracking the Centurion mine extension in Central Queensland," he said.

Cook Colliery decision results in the loss of 70 jobs

QCoal has put Blackwater's Cook Colliery into care and maintenance mode, with the loss of another 70 jobs weeks before Christmas.

The decision to close the second underground unit came after another 80 jobs were cut in mid-September with the shutdown of the other production unit.

The mine was operated by Core Crew on behalf of QCoal and employed about 170 workers at full production.

"Unfortunately Cook Colliery has been adversely affected by high production costs and low coal prices, and its ongoing operation is unsustainable," a QCoal spokesman said.

"The current royalty regime in Queensland also makes it very difficult to justify the continued operation of loss-making mines."

The mine was purchased by QCoal in 2020 and reopened in 2022.

Cook Colliery contributed $25 million in royalties to the Queensland Government since that time, despite never making a profit in that time, the company said.

"Unfortunately Cook Colliery has been affected by high production costs, high taxes and royalties and low coal prices and its ongoing operation at its current levels is unsustainable," the spokesman said.

Curragh mine complex operator Coronado Global Resources has completed its financial support transaction with Stanwell Corporation to shore up its short and long-term financial viability.

Stanwell has opened up a $402 million loan, with an interest rate between nine and 12 per cent, that provides significant covenant flexibility.

Stanwell will have a first priority security over Coronado's working capital assets and a second priority security over all other fixed assets for the asset-based loan, as well as waiving the rebate repayments for the remaining term of the amended coal supply agreement.

Blackwater's Cook Colliery has been placed into care and maintenance by owner QCoal due to market conditions. (File)

Downturn hitting regions

By Di Stanley

Miners' royalties rage, depressed coal prices and cutbacks in direct spending with the supply chain were the perfect storm that bled $300 million from the Central Highlands economy in 2024-25.

The figures, released in the Queensland Resources Council Economic Contribution Report 2025, showed an overall 14.1 per cent drop in total direct spending in the Fitzroy region, the largest centres being Rockhampton, Gladstone and Emerald, to $5.1 billion, shaving $1.1b from the previous period.

Central Highlands Development Corporation chief executive officer Peter Dowling said business confidence was understandably shaken.

"It's a challenging time, no doubt about it, when you've got the confluence of global prices coming down for both metallurgical and thermal coal, and then you've got the regulatory environment that we operate in, in Queensland," Mr Dowling said.

"It's no doubt challenging for our operators, but what I would add is as an industry, it's still quite a strong report in the context of its output for Queensland and probably the sorts of numbers coming out (in the report) reflect that we've come off the highs of the last few years."

The report showed almost half of the $115.2 billion contributed by the state's largest industry was generated in the regions.

Queensland Resources Council chief executive officer Janette Hewson said nearly half of the 550,000 direct and indirect jobs the industry supports were in regional areas, as she signalled serious challenges were ahead for the industry that would flow down into regional communities.

"Regions make a significant contribution to the success of the resources sector, and the industry is proud of the strong partnerships developed with regional communities and stakeholders over many decades," Ms Hewson said.

In 2024-25, Queensland Resources Council member companies paid $1.7 billion in wages in the Fitzroy region, contributed $10.6b to the gross regional product and supported 56,909 jobs or 44 per cent of Fitzroy's total employment. (Whitehaven)

"But rising costs and the world's highest coal royalty rates are taking a toll on the industry and there are concerns some of our key resources regions will feel the impact over the coming year."

In the Mackay region, direct spending fell by about $2 billion to $7.352b.

Across Mackay, Fitzroy and the North West, the resources sector's contribution to local Gross Regional Product fell by a combined $3.44 billion.

"Across the three regions, the industry supports 133,380 direct and indirect local jobs so there is a lot at stake for these communities if the government continues with a royalty regime that works as a handbrake on industry confidence and investment," Ms Hewson said.

Mr Dowling said he believed a number of Central Highlands businesses had buffered against the downturn and were in a healthier position than some of their competitors.

"I think there is evidence that our local business fraternity that are related to the resources sector, and others, are reinvesting in themselves," he said.

"Last year, we caught up with one of the local property valuers and they indicated that some of our strongest growth is from in-house development and that was really pleasing to hear."

Mr Dowling said there was no sugar-coating the current business environment across the Bowen Basin.

"I think the resources sector is still a strong and dominant driver and will be for a number of years to come," he said.

"This is a challenging environment and our miners are feeling the pinch, and therefore our contractors, which are local businesses, will no doubt be feeling the pinch as well.

"We have seen this before and we'll see it again.

"I think the interesting thing is that there are still opportunities and we're still seeing development applications or opportunities with companies that are interested in developing new mines or extending on their existing mines to meet global demand and that's in the face of a very interesting policy environment."

Resource Industry Network general manager Dean Kirkwood said when the coal sector slowed, the ripple effects were felt across every corner of regional Queensland.

"Queensland's coal industry has powered our state for decades," he said.

"But right now, regional Queensland is at a tipping point.

"This isn't just about mining companies - it's about the thousands of small and medium Queensland-owned businesses that keep this industry running.

"These are manufacturers, engineers, workshops and service providers whose work underpins our mining operations and our communities."

"With companies facing significant cost pressures, they're forced to reduce spending wherever they can.

"That means less investment in our regions, fewer contracts for local suppliers and reduced contributions to community organisations."

RIN is calling on the Queensland Government to review the current royalty regime structure and work with industry to develop a more balanced approach, one that supported regional jobs, strengthened local supply chains and maintained the long-term competitiveness of the sector.

RIN members will go to the State Parliament in December to present the Regions Before Royalties petition and advocacy campaign to regional MPs.

Dumgree BESS approved

By Di Stanley

The Banana Shire Council has narrowly approved a $1.2 billion 450MW 10-hour battery energy storage system in the Lake Callide catchment at Dumgree, without adequate public consultation it was claimed.

The vote was three to two after councillors Adam Burling declared a prescribed conflict of interest and Ashley Jensen a declarable conflict of interest.

Deputy Mayor Terri Boyce tabled her comments as she proposed the matter lay on the table until January 2026.

"The community consultation previously conducted was not sufficient and should include all landholders that access the water from the dam and even the whole community," she stated.

"The reference to the unlikely occurrence of a one-in-one-hundred-year rain event is insignificant as rare rain events are occurring across the country on a regular basis in recent times."

Cr Kerrith Bailey expressed her concerns as she formally objected to the agenda item.

"I have serious concerns about this project, principally its location in the catchment area of the Callide dam," she stated.

"This is problematic for me as the dam is the primary water source for the town of Biloela and a popular recreational and tourist area.

"Moreover, the Biloela community is effectively excluded from this decision as both Division 1 and Division 2 councillors are absent from the debate.

"I know that the batteries proposed for this project are not the usual Lithium-ion batteries, with all the potential hazards this entails, but I would still like more information about the components of this new technology proposed."

Cr Bailey's motion that the application lay on the table until the February 2026, meeting was lost.

Released Energy's $1.2 billion BESS at Dumgree, in the Lake Callide catchment area, was approved by the Banana Shire Council at its Wednesday, 26 November, meeting despite objections from Deputy Mayor Terri Boyce and Cr Kerrith Bailey. (File)

"Given the sensitivity of this location, I feel it would be a mistake to grant approval without any community input," she stated.

"It seems from information provided by the proponent that consultation undertaken to date has not included the wider Biloela community to any great degree."

Mayor Nev Ferrier and councillors Brooke Leo and Phillip Casey voted to approve Released Energy's BESS at 372 Coal Road, Dumgree, on Wednesday 26 November.

Crs Boyce and Bailey voted against it.

The development was assessed against the Banana Shire Council Planning Scheme 2021, State planning policy and Central Queensland Regional Plan 2013.

The site is located in the rural zone and surrounded by grazing properties to the north and west.

Immediately to the south and east is Lake Callide and Callide Creek.

Council documents stated the major electricity infrastructure was compatible with a rural zone as its purpose was to facilitate development for non-rural uses where it could be demonstrated that real and potential impacts could be mitigated and managed.

"It is noted that significant upgrades to the road in the vicinity of the proposed access are required to ensure safety and functionality of the road are not compromised, given the significant volume of heavy vehicle traffic that will be required to access the site during construction," council documents stated.

"The development site is burdened by an easement in favour of Powerlink for high voltage powerlines.

"The proposed development has been designed and sited on the premises so as to not impact the ongoing operations and maintenance access to the easement.

"An existing dwelling house is on the premises, approximately 500 metres west of the proposed major electricity infrastructure.

"The submitted application material and plans demonstrate the development has considered the context and constraints of the site and has designed and located the proposed BESS to minimise potential impacts.

"On balance, the proposed development is considered to generally comply with the applicable rural zone code performance outcomes."

The BESS comprises five 12m-high sheds with a total of 19,993sqm gross floor area, housing 1132 battery modules utilising sodium sulphur (NaS) battery technology.

Potential environmental sustainability impacts on Callide Lake as a drinking water supply, risk assessment, fire management, impact to stock route and environmental management plan have resulted in conditions being imposed on the development, including that a firefighting water supply was needed.

Edify Energy's Smoky Creek currency period extended

By Di Stanley

Despite 16 submissions pleading with the Banana Shire Council to deny Edify Energy an extension of time for its now expanded $1.4 billion renewable project in the district, the approval was granted with a vote four to three in favour at the Wednesday, 26 November, general meeting.

The contentious Smoky Creek project was granted a 10-month extended currency period until 24 December 2028, for a material change of use for a public facility incorporating the solar farm, facility switchyard and electrical transmission line and reconfiguring a lot for subdivision by agreement.

The request to extend the currency period for a separate reconfiguring a lot component was refused by the council at its 29 October meeting.

The public gallery was packed for the November meeting, where one ratepayer said there was a level of disgust among those present at the council decision.

Edify Energy has been granted a 10-month extension of its currency period for the Smoky Creek renewable project in the Banana Shire. (File)

"We went in there fully expecting to be disappointed," they told Gladstone Today.

"But three of the councillors, and it was good, spoke up.

"Cr Adam Burling spoke for probably 15 minutes, Cr Kerrith Bailey for another 15 and then (deputy mayor) Terri Boyce who ran through why the development application wasn't legal anymore because it's under the 2005 planning scheme and how, if Edify was to be ethical, they would be happy to redo a development application with the new state codes.

"She also said none of the councillors knew in 2019 they were going to add these two big battery energy storage systems.

"They just all spoke so brilliantly and so articulately that we got our hopes up and thought maybe they were going to vote against the assessing officer's recommendation.

"Then Mayor Nev Ferrier urged the councillors to pass the extension, the reason being to 'save our council going to court' and that if they wanted to protect council, there was no way around it.

"His final comment was 'we're here to protect council.'"

The ratepayer, who asked to remain anonymous, said locals who were at the meeting had farms that were going to be massively impacted by Edify's solar and BESS proposal.

They said anger stemmed from Edify's original plans for a 450MW solar farm only evolving to include a capacity output of 600MW-plus with the addition of the BESS at Guthrie's Gap and another possible BESS at Ronald's Ridge forming stage three of the project.

The original application was lodged with the Banana council in 2019.

The currency period was due to expire on 24 February 2028 after it was automatically extended by ministerial declarations during Covid.

Edify Energy has signed two solar and battery hybrid services agreements with Rio Tinto to power its Gladstone operations.

Under the agreements, Rio will purchase 90 per cent of the power and battery storage capacity generated over a 20-year period.

A crew from a mainstream national current affairs television are in the Banana Shire today to interview locals and discuss the community's ongoing opposition to the Smoky Creek project.

Banana Shire Council reference group for renewables

By Di Stanley

The Banana Shire Council is forging ahead with the creation of a local reference group for community and stakeholder advice on renewable energy projects' community benefit agreements.

The council is soon to launch and promote expressions of interest for 24-month terms of membership of the LRG.

In his report to the November meeting, chief executive officer Tom Upton said the Banana Shire was given $5 million in seed funding from the State Government in 2024 to ensure the long-term benefits of renewable energy development were shared with local communities.

Mr Upton said the desire was to support lasting social and economic change.

The LRG was one of the outcomes from the inaugural Biloela Community Leaders Council held in March.

The event drew together more than 100 representatives from agriculture, mining, energy, Traditional Owners, small business, community organisations and government.

"Initial scoping discussions following the CLC were held with council officers, Queensland Treasury, the Office of the Coordinator-General, Powerlink, the Net Zero Economic Authority and Coexistence Queensland," Mr Upton said.

"These confirmed strong support for the LRG model as the most effective mechanism to strengthen engagement and ensure council decisions are informed by broad, balanced and well-evidenced community advice.

"Coexistence Queensland, as an independent statutory body with a mandate to support coexistence between landholders, communities and energy industries, will co-chair the LRG alongside Banana Shire Council.

"Building on its successful collaboration with council through the CLC, Coexistence Queensland will help ensure the group operates transparently and independently, with advice grounded in community perspectives and aligned with state and regional priorities."

After its formation, the LRG is expected to hold quarterly meetings, giving advice on the 10-year legacy plan and community legacy fund.

Mr Upton's report stated there would be transparent publication of membership and meeting outcomes.

The Banana Shire Council will soon be calling for expressions of interest to be part of a local reference group dealing with creating legacy

Region's solar specialists

ADVERTORIAL

Solar Power Gladstone is an expert in their field helping homeowners in the Gladstone region harness Queensland's abundant sunshine.

By fitting rooftop solar PV systems — and increasing battery storage — the business supports households to generate their own electricity, reduce reliance on the grid, and lock in long-term savings.

For many Gladstone residents, this translates into lower electricity bills, and potential energy independence, and a smaller carbon footprint.

Solar Power Gladstone can demonstrate why now is a good time to go solar and battery. (Supplied)

THE BENEFITS OF SOLAR POWER FOR CONSUMERS

- Harvest summer sunshine and abundant daylight: Queensland's high solar exposure means a rooftop solar system in Gladstone can generate plenty of power — especially in summer — to cover daytime use, run air-conditioners, pool pumps, appliances, and more.
- Significant reduction in electricity bills: By using self-generated solar power rather than buying electricity from the grid, households can dramatically cut their electricity bills. Over time, these savings will justify the initial cost of installation and will provide a very good return on Investment (ROI).
- Long-term energy security and independence: Solar helps buffer households against rising electricity prices. Once installed, a solar system continues producing (with minimal maintenance), giving predictable, often lower energy costs.
- Supporting Queensland's clean energy future: By choosing solar, Gladstone homeowners help reduce reliance on fossil-fuel-based generation. That contributes toward state and national clean energy goals and reduces greenhouse gas emissions — benefiting the broader community and environment.

THE BOOST FROM HOME BATTERY SYSTEMS AND GOVERNMENT REBATES

One of the biggest recent developments making solar even more attractive is the new nationwide Cheaper Home Batteries Program, which started on 1 July 2025 and applies across Queensland — including Gladstone.

Through this program, eligible home batteries get a point-of-sale discount of roughly 30 per cent, making battery storage much more affordable.

Federal Register of Legislation+2Solar Match AU+2.

Here's how this changes the picture for homeowners:

- The rebate applies to batteries with usable capacity between 5kWh and 50 kWh (though some systems go up to 100 kWh).
- For example, a 10kWh battery may get a discount of up to around $3500 — a substantial upfront saving. A 20 kWh Battery – up to $7000!!
- Because battery storage lets you store surplus solar energy produced during the day, you can use it at night or during overcast periods — reducing or even eliminating the need to draw power from the grid. This can further slash energy bills, improve household energy resilience and increase the value of your solar investment, and get Back Up when the Grid goes down.

In Gladstone, combining a solar system with a battery under this rebate program makes for a very cost-effective, future-proof energy setup with a very good ROI.

WHY NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO GO SOLAR + BATTERY

- The federal battery rebate is newly active — if you act soon, you can take advantage of roughly 30 per cent off costs while the rebates remain generous. Actually the bigger the battery – the better the discount.
- As bills and energy prices rise, locking in lower energy costs makes long-term financial sense.
- Using solar plus batteries supports a cleaner, more sustainable energy future for Queensland, contributing to national efforts toward decarbonisation.

Many people are taking advantage of the rebates to become Independent of the Grid and using the grid only as a back-up. YES, IT IS POSSIBLE.

Solar Power Gladstone is about more than just solar panels — it's an opportunity to invest in long-term energy savings, reduce or even eliminate electricity bills, and take part in Queensland's transition to clean energy.

With the Cheaper Home Batteries Program offering up to a 30 per cent discount on battery storage systems, now is arguably one of the most advantageous times to go solar — and to add a battery for energy storage and resilience.

Crisafulli navigates headwinds during mining lunch

By Andrew Stafford, AAP

Queensland Premier David Crisafulli was the keynote speaker at last month's Queensland Resources Council's Annual State of the Sector lunch in Brisbane.

Mr Crisafulli drew applause when he said "I'll never trade your industry off for votes in the inner city or anywhere in between, because this is an industry that employs a hell of a lot of Queenslanders.

"They should be proud to be able to work in the mining industry, go home and buy a house in the town they grew up in, and maybe work in the same mine that their father or mother did for generations before you and I," he said.

The Queensland government said 1000 jobs would be secured by a deal between Japanese and European investors in three Bowen Basin coal operations: Carborough Downs, Broadleigh and Ironbark No. 1.

It follows the announcement of an extension to the Peabody's Centurion coalmine in Central Queensland, and the announcement of new copper mine in northwest Queensland the following day.

But while Mr Crisafulli continued to stare down calls from the sector for a cut in the state's royalty rates, he found himself under pressure from all sides.

Queensland Resources Council chief executive officer Janette Hewson warned that the coal industry faced global headwinds, with rising costs, lower prices, global uncertainty and what she described as "challenging" royalty regimes.

She said profits were down $5 billion from $120.2 billion in 2024.

Ms Hewson said the resources sector contributed $115 billion to the state's economy, helping to fund schools, hospitals, roads and regional development.

But environmental campaigners said the new investments exposed the hypocrisy of the industry's complaints.

The Queensland Conservation Council said the deal showed the government was "more focused on keeping the coal industry on side than investing in regional futures".

The council said it locked the state into long-term coal production while ignoring new clean energy job opportunities and put at risk 77,000 jobs that relied on the ongoing health of the Great Barrier Reef.

"Every year of extra coal production puts more pressure on those jobs while asking coal workers to shoulder the risk as global markets shift away," campaigner Charlie Cox said.

Queensland Premier David Crisafulli. (File)

Value of resources sector

Queensland's resources sector has reinforced its status as the state's economic engine, contributing $115.2 billion and supporting almost 555,000 jobs in 2024–25, according to new industry figures.

The Queensland Resources Council (QRC) released its 16th Economic Contribution Report at the organisation's Annual State of the Sector Lunch in Brisbane late last month, attended by almost 900 industry and government representatives.

Queensland Premier David Crisafulli delivered the keynote address.

Prepared by independent consultants, the report outlines the total value of the sector to the state's economy and its flow-on benefits to regional communities.

QRC chief executive officer Janette Hewson said the sector had remained resilient despite a challenging operating environment.

"Queensland's resources sector was resilient in the face of strong headwinds this year and yet kept its place as a significant contributor to the state's economy," Ms Hewson said.

Key findings include:

- Total contribution: $115.2 billion – equal to one in every four dollars generated in Queensland
- More than 71,000 direct jobs and 549,519 direct and indirect jobs
- $35.8 billion spent with local businesses and community organisations
- $7.9 billion in royalties paid to help fund schools, hospitals, roads and regional development.

Ms Hewson said the figures were impressive given the ongoing pressures facing the industry, particularly in the coal sector.

The sector's overall contribution fell from the previous year, driven largely by a $7 billion drop in coal contributions following lower prices, rising operational costs and what the QRC maintains are the world's highest royalty rates.

"Despite the challenges, the amount resources companies spent with local businesses and community groups overall remained steady and the number of organisations supported increased, reflecting industry's strong commitment to support the communities where they operate," she said.

Looking specifically at the Fitzroy region (Banana Shire, Central Highlands, Gladstone and Rockhampton), the industry drives $1.7 billion in wages and supports 16,998 jobs.

The resources sector accounts for 43 per cent of Fitzroy's Gross Regional Product of $10.6 billion, with $3.4 billion spent across more than 2500 local businesses during the 2024-25 period.

But Ms Hewson has warned tougher conditions might be looming and could impact regional communities such as those in Central Queensland.

"We can see a decrease in direct spending in some key resources regions, and this could be a signal for tougher times ahead in the coal sector," she said.

Since the start of the 2025–26 financial year, more than 1000 Queensland coal sector jobs have been lost.

"Producers are navigating increasing costs and regulation in Queensland," she said.

Even so, Ms Hewson said recent announcements — including a new copper mine investment decision and progress on a major mine extension — showed the benefits of industry and government working together.

The QRC has also launched a new public campaign, A Little Bit of Queensland, aimed at highlighting the sector's economic importance and its relatively small land footprint.

The campaign emphasises that the industry uses just 0.1 per cent of Queensland's land to generate billions in economic activity.

"A Little Bit of Queensland addresses some of the misconceptions about the mining and resources sector," Ms Hewson said.

"We should all be proud of our resources sector and the people who make it what it is today, using 0.1 per cent of our state's land to support billions of dollars in contributions and hundreds of thousands of jobs."

Queensland's resources sector has reinforced its status as the state's economic engine, contributing $115.2 billion and supporting almost 555,000 jobs in 2024–25, according to new industry figures.

Queensland Resources Council chief executive officer Janette Hewson said the resources sector remained resilient despite a challenging operating environment. (File)

Opportunity does knock

By Di Stanley

Panelists at the QMCA event were Adam Pennicott, Sheree Taylor, Ben Hughes and GEA board president Patrice Brown. (Supplied)

The Queensland Major Contractors Association (QMCA) launched its 2025-26 Major Projects Pipeline Report with $10 billion in high-value funded pipeline activity slated for the Fitzroy region.

The report, launched at a Gladstone Engineering Alliance sponsored networking breakfast in Gladstone on Thursday, 20 November, highlighted the five-year outlook for significant investment and supply chain opportunities across Gladstone and Central Queensland.

The Fitzroy region has the largest estimated labour demand, needing about 5400 construction workers on average, with around 44 per cent of this demand linked to funded projects.

The report said workforce pressures across the state would intensify with most occupations in high demand across regional and metropolitan areas including concreters, machinery operators, other construction and mining labourers, electricians and carpenters.

GEA board president Patrice Brown said forum attendees were looking for positive news after a year of closure of facilities and downturns in the local workforce - and they got it.

"To capitalise on the key projects listed for Central Queensland, and across the state, our businesses need to ensure they are informed, resourced and ready to deliver," she said.

"Gladstone has an agile workforce - which has proven itself time and time again to pivot, mobilise and deliver.

"To maximise opportunities in the QMCA report, our local businesses need to collaborate more and look outside our region for work opportunities, as others are doing coming into our region with new proponents.

"Businesses also need to continue to invest in training staff to adopt new skills to service new industries, for example BESS projects and biofuels."

Ms Brown said there was discussion at the forum on the urgent need to increase productivity and work smarter.

"GEA will be reinforcing this message with our members and actively listening to their ideas and concerns regarding their ability to respond to the pipeline of projects," she said.

"We stand ready and we encourage project proponents and government to engage early and regularly with GEA to collaboratively optimise our local skills and workforce and deliver on the pipeline."

Connecting Industry director Kieran Moran said the report confirmed the Fitzroy region was entering a major period of growth.

"With a $2.9 billion uplift in total activity and a $6.5 billion rise in funded works, the region is being driven forward by major road upgrades, energy-transition initiatives, and resource-related developments," Mr Moran said.

"At the same time, more than half of Fitzroy's pipeline remains unfunded, reflecting a high concentration of large mining and industrial proposals still awaiting approvals.

"This creates both opportunity and urgency across government and industry to accelerate certainty, secure investment, and prepare for significant procurement once projects move forward."

Mr Moran said statewide, Queensland's outlook was equally strong, with roads and bridges showing the largest uplift of any sector supported heavily by new Bruce Highway investment and sustained growth across transport, energy, and industrial infrastructure.

"The five-year pipeline now exceeds $127 billion, highlighting the scale of delivery ahead and the increasing demand on suppliers, contractors, and labour markets," he said.

"As major programs advance, early engagement, capability development, and a well-coordinated supply chain will be essential to ensure Queensland meets the demands of this next major wave of infrastructure and project delivery."

Key funded projects identified in the Fitzroy region included the Raglan Solar Farm, Bruce Highway safety upgrade, Calvale-Calliope River transmission line, Alpha HPA and Capricorn Energy pumped hydro.

Alpha HPA is a key project.

The five-year outlook for significant investment and supply chain opportunities across Gladstone and Central Queensland was highlighted at the event. (File)

The Bruce Highway and announced upgrades was among the topics on the agenda. (File)

Unfunded projects included the Wiggins expansion, Mt Hopeful Wind Farm, Banana Range Wind Farm, Moah Creek renewable energy project and Big G pumped hydro.

Mick Mannion Fabrications manager Matthew Mannion said the report was extremely encouraging.

"The surge in funded road, energy, and infrastructure projects signals a steady flow of upcoming work and a clear need for reliable local fabrication and construction support," Mr Mannion said.

"The mix of active, planned, and emerging proposals across the region shows strong long-term confidence in Central Queensland's growth.

"For businesses like ours, this reinforces the importance of staying ready, maintaining capability, and positioning early so we can support Tier 1s, civil contractors, and project owners as procurement ramps up."

Statewide, Queensland's major project pipeline reached record levels, with $127.5 billion in engineering construction planned over the next five years.

In its 14th edition, the report revealed a 22.7 per cent increase in total pipeline value compared to 2024, driven by significant new infrastructure investment and the inclusion of projects related to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

QMCA chief executive officer Andrew Chapman said the report underscored both the opportunity and the urgency for industry and government to work together to deliver this unprecedented wave of infrastructure.

"Queensland's engineering construction sector has entered one of the most significant periods in its history," Mr Chapman said.

"The size and duration of the current pipeline represent a sustained decade of opportunity for our state, but it also brings real challenges around productivity, skills, and delivery capacity. Unless we address these now, the full economic potential of this investment will not be realised."

The report warned that rising costs and declining productivity posed the greatest risks to delivery.

Construction costs are forecast to rise by 7.1 per cent in 2025, with sustained annual increases above 6 per cent through to 2028.

Glencore has received certification for 402.1 hectares of rehabilitated land at its Newlands operation. The certified areas include both grazing pasture and native ecosystems. (Supplied)

Glencore hits milestones

Glencore has reached two significant milestones in its rehabilitation program, with the Queensland Government certifying a combined 725 hectares of mined land across its Rolleston Open Cut and Newlands Coal operations.

At Rolleston Open Cut, 323.5 hectares of land were certified - the site's fifth and largest certification to date. With this latest approval, more than 1100 hectares, or around a quarter of the mine's total footprint, have now been certified.

Glencore's Newlands Coal operation, which ceased active mining in 2023 and has since transitioned fully into rehabilitation and closure, also received certification for 402.1 hectares of land. The certified areas include both grazing pasture and native ecosystems, demonstrating the site's future potential as productive post-mining land.

Glencore Coal Environment and Community director John Watson said the outcomes highlighted Glencore's ongoing commitment to progressive rehabilitation across its operations.

"These results are a clear demonstration of the investment and effort our teams put into rehabilitation throughout the life of our mines," Mr Watson said.

"More than 1765 hectares have now been certified across Rolleston and Newlands alone, giving confidence that once-mined land can be rehabilitated to meet strict criteria and returned to agreed post-mining uses."

For the teams involved, the certifications reflect years of planning, commitment and delivery.

"This certification is our biggest yet and it shows the consistent quality of work being done to progressively transition mined land into productive post-mining use," Rolleston Open Cut Environment and Community manager Ken Dixon said.

"It's important for us and for our community to see this progress - it gives confidence that the land is being responsibly managed and will continue to deliver value into the future."

At Newlands, Environment and Community manager Craig Bushell said the certification was particularly meaningful given the site's transition out of active mining.

"Newlands has entered a new chapter, with mining now complete and rehabilitation the sole focus," he said.

"This certification shows what's possible — mined land can be successfully rehabilitated to meet all agreed criteria and provide productive outcomes for the community long after mining has finished."

Since 2017, Glencore has had 18 rehabilitation areas across Queensland and New South Wales certified by government.

CleanCo, Aurizon link-up

Queensland's steelmaking coal export sector is set to benefit from a new agreement between State Government Owned Corporation CleanCo and rail freight operator Aurizon, aimed at boosting the sustainability and competitiveness of the state's supply chain.

Aurizon, which operates Australia's largest electrified rail freight network through the Central Queensland Coal Network, will secure renewable energy from CleanCo to help power its operations.

The move is expected to support the ongoing operation of critical export infrastructure while reducing emissions.

Under the deal, CleanCo will supply renewable energy generated from the MacIntyre Wind Farm in the Western Downs, the Kaban Wind Farm in Far North Queensland, and the Woolooga Solar Farm north of Brisbane.

Treasurer and Energy Minister David Janetzki said the agreement demonstrated how Queensland's publicly owned energy companies were directly supporting regional export industries.

"Regional Queensland is at the heart of our economy, and partnerships like this show how reliable, sustainable energy is keeping those industries strong," he said.

"With major employers like Aurizon and its customers committed to sustainable energy, it sends a powerful signal across the supply chain, giving regional businesses the certainty they need to invest, create jobs and grow.

"And importantly, it shows CleanCo is delivering outcomes that matter – supporting jobs, communities and our export competitiveness."

CleanCo chief executive officer Tom Metcalfe said the agreement underscored the role of CleanCo's renewable energy portfolio in helping Queensland industries meet global expectations.

"Queensland's exporters are under increasing pressure to demonstrate lower-emission supply chains, and this partnership shows how CleanCo can help deliver that," Mr Metcalfe said.

"By utilising Queensland's abundant solar and wind to support Queensland businesses, we are unlocking regional jobs and investment across the State."

Aurizon managing director and chief executive officer Andrew Harding said the partnership aligned with the company's long-term emissions strategy.

"Aurizon is committed to a target of net-zero operational emissions by 2050, with a roadmap of initiatives to decarbonise our trains, our rail infrastructure and our facilities," Mr Harding said.

"This partnership with CleanCo is a great example of how we can work together to deliver lower-emission supply chains."

CleanCo is also working with Dalrymple Bay Infrastructure and Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal, embedding sustainable, lower-emission energy solutions across the Mackay region's coal supply chain, from rail freight through to port operations.

Aurizon operates Australia's largest electrified rail freight system, Central Queensland Coal Network, and by securing renewable energy from CleanCo it can continue operating this critical infrastructure for export industries and local communities, while lowering emissions. (Aurizon)

Partnership strengthened

Stanwell has secured exclusive rights to negotiate over Quinbrook's proposed Gladstone State Development Area (GSDA) Energy Hub Project, after the two companies signed a new Memorandum of Understanding.

The agreement deepens the partnership between the energy businesses, following their recent commitment to trial the first-ever eight-hour EnerQB Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) at Stanwell Power Station.

The battery trial is set to play a key role in Quinbrook's wider plans for the GSDA Energy Hub, which aims to deliver a multi-technology firming and grid-resilience solution for Queensland.

Under the proposal, Quinbrook and its development affiliate Private Energy Partners plan to build up to 1080 MW of open-cycle gas turbines with integrated synchronous condenser capabilities, alongside 780 MW of eight-hour BESS.

Together, the technologies would provide major dispatchable capacity and essential grid services during peak demand, outages or periods of low renewable generation. It would be the first project of its kind in the Australian National Electricity Market.

Stanwell chief executive officer Michael O'Rourke said the project would play a crucial role in meeting Queensland's growing energy needs.

GSDA Energy Hub Project. (Supplied)

"As Queensland's electricity demand increases, our collaboration with Quinbrook positions Stanwell to deliver to Queenslanders affordable and reliable energy for years to come," he said.

"The proposed GSDA Energy Hub Project will combine gas power generation and eight-hour battery storage through a novel configuration in a strategic location that supports Queensland's critical heavy industries."

Quinbrook chief executive officer Brian Restall said the partnership reflected strong investor confidence in Queensland's energy transition.

"Quinbrook retains high conviction that Queensland remains a very attractive place to invest in the energy transition, especially with innovative projects that directly support decarbonisation of the grid," he said.

"Our pioneering EnerQB long duration storage solution... marks another pioneering development by Quinbrook which is a truly innovative contribution directly supporting Queensland's energy transition and the Queensland Government's Energy Plan."

The companies will now move into commercial negotiations as planning for the multi-stage Energy Hub continues.

Key grants for local clubs

By Di Stanley

Thirteen projects across the Gladstone and Banana local government areas will get their share of almost $50,000 from Powerlink's community grants program.

This year's program attracted more than 180 applications from across 18 local government areas.

The Gladstone South Swimming Club was awarded $5000 to convert two of the existing mercury vapour floodlights to LED in order to drastically reduce the "overbearing, ongoing" power cost to the club and increase long-term sustainability.

The Tannum Sands QCWA branch got $4500 to extend a Country Kitchens projects to the wider community in an effort to improve food and nutrition literacy and influence behaviour change in adopting healthier lifestyles.

The Gladstone Thistle Pipe Band has $4150 to assist with the purchase of new junior musical equipment as part of its commitment to teach bagpipes and drums to people of all ages.

The Gladstone Men's Shed was awarded $2489 for purchase a 3D scanner, while Roseberry Qld has $3904.45 to provide monthly free barbecues and to install a shed at the Dignity Hub to address space issues.

Gladstone Softball has $2000 to buy a Point of Sale system to streamline canteen operations for its volunteers.

The money will also go toward the purchase of a defibrillator to ensure the well-being of players, officials and spectators.

The Mt Larcom and District Show Society was awarded $3000 to upgrade wall-mounted fans, floor matting and stools for its canteen.

Powerlink Community Relations Advisor Ben Galvin was pleased to see the response to this year's program.

The Gladstone South Swimming Club was awarded a $5000 Powerlink grant to convert two of the existing mercury vapour floodlights to LED in order to drastically reduce the "overbearing, ongoing" power cost to the club and increase long-term sustainability. (Supplied)

"Infrastructure and wellbeing support programs were the most dominant recipients of a grant this year, closely followed by training and equipment needs," Mr Galvin said.

"This indicated that organisations are focused on making physical spaces safer, more functional and welcoming for members of the community.

"It has also shown to us there is a keen interest in boosting capability and operational capacity of volunteer organisations across the state.

"It's pleasing to see social inclusion projects also appearing frequently, highlighting the ongoing efforts of community groups to reduce isolation and strengthen connections."

The Dawson Valley Drovers Rugby Union Club has $4000 for improvements to its canteen, particularly repairs to electricals and plumbing.

Callide Valley Touch Football also got $4000 for facility and technology upgrades, including the installation of a hot water system in the bathroom block.

Theodore Community Link was awarded $5000 for new laptops and computer screens for its office staff and volunteer committee.

The Barfield Road Producer Group has $4500 to create a user-friendly website to improve communication, connection and knowledge sharing in the Banana Shire.

Powerlink gave $5000 to the Theodore Early Childhood Centre Association for its renovation and extension fit-out phase.

The project will strengthen the centre's role as the only childcare and kindy provider in a 50km radius;

Banana and District Community Association has $2500 to build a history shed to house history and photos of Banana from the early 1800s.

Community groups were eligible for up to $5,000 in funding, capped at $25,000 per local government area, with programs to be rolled out in 2026.

This is Powerlink's third annual community grants program.

"Our commitment to Queensland communities is unwavering," Mr Galvin said.

"We are committed to ongoing engagement with them through the life cycle of our work, as well as investing in legacy projects that provide benefits long after we leave."

GPA's container ambition

Gladstone Ports Corporation (GPC) has launched an investment opportunity for the development of a new container terminal at the Port of Gladstone, opening the door for private sector involvement in a project expected to play a major role in Australia's growing container trade.

Experienced investors and operators are being invited to submit a Registration of Interest (ROI) via VendorPanel Public Tenders to develop and operate the new terminal on GPC's behalf.

The proposal forms a landmark early market opportunity aimed at strengthening Queensland's freight and logistics network.

The development of the Port Central locality through private investment is identified as a key step in supporting the state's freight future.

GPC chief executive officer Andrew Johnson said the ROI marked an important milestone in the corporation's 2025 port development strategy.

"GPC has been delivering prosperity for the region for more than 110 years and remains focussed on ensuring continuity, jobs and stability for our operations while exploring new opportunities for the future," Dr Johnson said.

"Strategic plans for the growth of the Port of Gladstone identified Port Central as an ideal locality for a new container terminal to meet growing industry and market demand.

"Through this ROI market engagement, future Port Central proponents are invited to submit scalable development concepts aligned with their operational and commercial strategies for an opportunity to shape how key marine and landside infrastructure are delivered and operated."

The proposed terminal would centre around the existing Auckland Point 4 berth and the future Auckland Point 5 and 6 berths.

The area between Barney Point and Auckland Point is earmarked for development of a container terminal by the Gladstone Ports Corporation. (Supplied)

Supporting documents state:

"Coupled with the intermodal connections to rail, port access roads and warehouse and distribution facilities, there is significant opportunity for a major investor to engage early and play a key role in developing the architecture of a world-class container terminal.

"On Australia's east coast, the average number of twenty-eight foot equivalent units (TEUs) is projected to experience the second largest growth in TEUs behind the Port of Fremantle, growing by 100.6 per cent to 2032-33.

"At a time when most other Australian ports are landlocked in heavily congested urban environments, Gladstone offers easy access and faster sailing times to the growing Asian market.

"Additionally, development will ease the burden on other ports and we have the space, capacity, skillset and commitment to grow containerised freight trade for Australia."

A high-capacity container terminal at the Port of Gladstone is expected to boost supply chain efficiencies and expand market reach for agricultural, mining, manufacturing and industrial producers across Queensland.

GPC says the opportunity also supports regional development, future investment prospects and job creation.

The Port of Gladstone is formally recognised as a Priority Port under the Sustainable Ports Development Act 2015.

RBA keeps rates on hold

Mortgage holders should not expect any relief for the foreseeable future, Reserve Bank governor Michele Bullock says, after leaving interest rates on hold.

In a widely-anticipated, unanimous decision, the central bank's monetary policy board kept the cash rate steady at 3.6 per cent for a third-straight meeting on Tuesday.

The return of inflation in the second half of 2025 scuppered hopes of more cuts, following 75 basis points of easing since February.

In its accompanying statement, the board reiterated it would maintain its cautious approach, with recent data suggesting the risks to inflation had tilted to the upside.

While Ms Bullock said there was no discussion in the meeting of a cut, the board did talk about what circumstances could cause it to hike rates in 2026.

As expected, the private sector was taking over from the public sector as the driving force of the economy, while the labour market remained a little tight in the RBA's estimation, she told reporters after the meeting.

Given the RBA had not raised interest rates as high as central banks in peer economies, it meant it couldn't lower them very far before they would start pushing up inflation again.

"I don't think there are interest rate cuts in the horizon for the foreseeable future," Ms Bullock said.

"The question is: is it just an extended hold from here, or is it a possibility of a rate rise?

"I couldn't put a probability on those, but I think they're the two things that the board will be looking closely at coming into the new year."

If inflationary pressures continue to build, some analysts say the bank could be forced to raise interest rates as soon as February.

"Should inflation numbers published in January show a continued rise, the possibility of an interest rate hike at the February meeting remains on the table to ensure inflation returns to target in a reasonable time frame," economist at Monash University Isaac Gross said.

The outlook for households and businesses has soured markedly from a few months ago, when bonds traders were pricing in one or two more cuts.

Business confidence plummeted to its lowest level since April, according to NAB's monthly business survey on Tuesday.

Weaker profitability and trading caused business conditions to retreat three index points but, despite the fall in activity, capacity utilisation climbed to its highest level in 18 months.

How much excess capacity there is in the economy is a key question the RBA will have to answer before its next rates meeting.

Unless the supply capacity of the economy picks up, for instance through a jump in productivity, there won't be room for the economy to grow more strongly without pushing up inflation, Ms Bullock said.

Recent inflation data showed the consumer price index rose to 3.8 per cent in the 12 months to October, while underlying inflation climbed to 3.3 per cent - both above the RBA's two to three per cent target range.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers latched onto the RBA's comments about the private sector driving the economic recovery.

"From time to time you'll hear some absolute rubbish from our political opponents who say that the bank is focused on public spending," he told reporters.

"The Reserve Bank hasn't actually said that public spending has been a factor in their decisions throughout this whole year."

Shadow treasurer Ted O'Brien said the lack of further rate relief was a direct consequence of Dr Chalmers' "spending spree" and failure to grow the economic pie.

McCosker's telling contribution to men's health hub

Flynn MP Colin Boyce has lauded the philanthropic work of Gladstone's Bob McCosker OAM in Federal Parliament.

On Wednesday, 26 November, Mr Boyce paid tribute to the opening of Bob's Garage, a men's health initiative he said "wouldn't have happened without Bob".

"He's an entrepreneur, a businessman, a philanthropist and a speedway driver and has even established a turtle rehabilitation on Quoin Island," he said.

"Bob identified that services for me in Gladstone were needed and has founded Bob's Garage.

"Bob's Garage exists to support the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of the working-class men in the Gladstone community.

"The space is designed by blokes, for blokes, breaking down stigma, encouraging connection and offering practical, professional help close to home.

"The purpose-built centre brings together local service providers and community groups that deliver real, on-the-ground support for those who need it."

Mr Boyce said Bob's Garage was building a vital network of care to create a stronger, healthier Gladstone by supporting men with their health, wellbeing and positive behaviours.

"I encourage any bloke that might need a helping hand to contact the friendly team and drop in at Bob's Garage at 10 William Street," he said.

"Thank you to every organisation and individual that contributed to making the service a reality."

Flynn MP Colin Boyce paid tribute to the efforts of Bob McCosker in establishing Bob's Garage in Federal Parliament. (File)

Bob's Garage now open

On Wednesday, 19 November, coinciding with International Men's Day, the Gladstone community came together to celebrate the grand opening of Bob's Garage — a purpose-built facility designed to support men's health and wellbeing through connection, conversation, and care.

Hosted by the Rotary Club of Gladstone and held at the GPC Marina Main Stage, the event welcomed more than 300 attendees from across industry, community, and government. The morning provided an opportunity for guests to learn about the vision behind the facility, connect with others, and share personal stories.

Bob's Garage founder and McCosker Contracting managing director Bob McCosker shared his vision for creating a safe and welcoming space for men in the Gladstone community. Originally conceived as a facility to support domestic violence prevention and suicide awareness, the vision evolved after extensive consultation with professionals working in the mental health and wellbeing space.

It became clear that these issues often stem from a range of underlying factors — including health, work, family, relationships, stress, and financial pressures.

Recognising this, Bob reimagined the concept into a one-stop men's health and wellbeing hub — a place where every day working men can drop in, seek support, and be connected to the right services to help them make positive change.

"Bob's Garage is a welcoming space where men can access support without stigma — a place built on connection over correction," Bob said.

Men and Co Services chief executive officer Stacey Ross spoke about the partnership between their organisation and McCosker Contracting, outlining how Men and Co will operate Bob's Garage as the facility's operational partner.

She explained that Men and Co will help Bob's Garage deliver a wide range of support programs and services through the facility — designed to help men take that first step toward improving their health and wellbeing.

These include walk and talk groups, men's circles, fitness and wellness sessions, counselling and psychology services, financial, employment and skills support, and practical workshops focused on relationships, communication, and personal growth.

Stacey emphasised that Bob's Garage will not replace existing local services but instead work alongside them to create stronger pathways and better outcomes for men and their families with the community.

"Our goal is to meet men where they are — whether that's through a casual chat, a group walk, or a professional counselling session," Stacey said.

"It's about connection, early intervention, and providing men with the right support, at the right time, in a place that feels comfortable."

She added that this partnership represents a shared commitment to reducing stigma, encouraging conversation, and building a healthier, more connected community in Gladstone.

Mark Brooks, Founder of Ride 4 Lives and a passionate advocate for men's mental health, shared his personal journey and the challenges he faced in finding support when he needed it most.

Mark reflected on how the services now available through Bob's Garage — such as walk groups, men's circles, counselling, and psychology — are exactly the types of supports that helped him rebuild his own wellbeing yet were difficult to access in years past.

He spoke about the importance of having a dedicated, accessible space where men — particularly the everyday working man — can reach out without judgement and be connected to real help.

"Back then, it was hard to know where to go or who to talk to," Mark said.

"Now, with Bob's Garage, men have a place to start that conversation — a place where help is easy to find and connection comes first."

Bob's Garage is now open to the public, operating Monday to Thursday, 8am–4pm and Friday, 8am–1pm.

Outside of these hours, support remains available via the after-hours phone line 0472 657 991.

The community can also explore resources, partner services, and referral pathways via the website - bobsgarage.org.au.

The facility was made possible through the vision of Bob McCosker and the funding provided by McCosker Contracting, who, along with many local businesses who have donated to the project, have built and donated the facility to the Gladstone community.

To ensure ongoing operations, Bob's Garage now seeks continued support from community members, local industry, and government funding.

"If our community gets behind this, Bob's Garage will remain a sustainable facility for years to come — supporting the men in our lives, and in turn, their families, children, friends, colleagues, and workplaces," Bob said.

To get involved, support, or donate, visit bobsgarage.org.au or email info@bobsgarage.org.au. Donations can also be made directly via givenow.com.au/bobs-garage.

Bob's Garage founder and McCosker Contracting managing director Bob McCosker (right) with (from left) McCosker Contracting community investment manager Richard Gilmour, Men and Co Services chief operating officer Rebecca Maurer, Men and Co Services director of innovation Nicola Wormell, Men and Co Services chief executive officer Stacey Ross and McCosker Contracting community administrator Jade Pennisi. (Supplied)

Rotary Club of Gladstone members at the International Men's Day event at the GPC Marina Main Stage which also served to launch Bob's Garage.

It was a special day for Bob McCosker.

Five CQ next-gen leaders

Five Central Queensland students are among the next generation of resource industry leaders, gathering in Brisbane earlier this month as 2026 Student Ambassadors for the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy (QMEA).

Stevi Cameron (Gladstone State High School), Regan Bonne (Marist College, Emerald), Mitchell Salmon (Redeemer Lutheran College, Biloela), Ethan Clothier (Moranbah State High School), and Giselle Dickson (Moura State High School) featured among the 18-strong ambassador cohort representing towns across the state.

Over four days, the ambassadors explored Queensland's resources sector, delving into mining, minerals, energy, STEM and trade careers, with support from Queensland Resources Council (QRC) members and the University of Queensland.

QRC chief executive officer Janette Hewson said the ambassadors were already making a strong impression.

"Every one of these students wants to know more about Queensland's resources sector and how they can be a part of its future," Ms Hewson said.

"They're passionate about STEM and trades and excited by the prospect of building a career in a dynamic industry which is a big player in the future of our local and global economy. Their energy is inspiring and exactly what our future workforce needs."

The ambassadors were formally inducted at a ceremony featuring Callide MP and Assistant Minister for Regional Development, Resources and Critical Minerals Bryson Head.

In 2025, QMEA delivered more than 260 workshops and camps, engaging more than 7000 students across Queensland and helping steer more students towards engineering, technology and industry apprenticeships.

The 2026 QMEA Student Ambassadors cohort features five Central Queenslanders. (Supplied)

Super RoboCup triumph

Central Queensland students have returned home as national champions after standout performances at the RoboCup Junior Australia Nationals in Canberra.

Among the 800 competitors at the University of Canberra, two local teams claimed Australian titles, showcasing exceptional STEM and robotics skills.

Lighthouse Christian School seniors Emily Scofield, Madeleine Van Mello and Allira Fleming won the Open Onstage category, while Farnborough State School students Maddison and Desi triumphed in the Novice Onstage division.

Their victories were the culmination of years of classroom learning and months of preparation. Working in small teams, students planned, designed, built and performed robotic creations incorporating artificial intelligence, coding and animatronics.

Lighthouse Christian School impressed judges with a Jurassic Park–themed performance featuring a robotic tour vehicle, dinosaurs and animated scenery. Farnborough State School's winning entry centred on a rodeo, complete with a bucking bull and rodeo-themed animatronics.

Keppel MP Nigel Hutton praised the students, teachers and families for their dedication.

"Opportunities such as the RoboCup Junior Australia challenge highlight the ways robotics is changing education, and providing our students with exposure to the new ways it can help in the modern workplace," Mr Hutton said.

"The months of dedication, which included practices, rehearsals and after-school teamwork, has definitely paid off. It is a huge team effort to go so far, and that commitment does not go unnoticed."

The national success follows strong showings at the regional competition held at CQUniversity Rockhampton — where teams topped a field of 118 schools from Bundaberg to Longreach — and impressive results at the statewide finals in Brisbane featuring 200 teams.

The Lighthouse Christian School team will now take their talents to the world stage, set to represent Australia at the 2026 RoboCup Junior World Championships in South Korea.

Farnborough State School students Madison and Desi brought home gold in the novice onstage category.

Bilo students ready for a future in resources sector

Biloela students have been getting a hands-on look at future careers in the resources sector, with recent workshops delivered by the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy (QMEA).

Year 9 students from Biloela State High School and Redeemer Lutheran College participated in a Trades and Traineeships workshop at Batchfire Resources' Callide mine site last month, following a successful physics workshop for Years 7 to 9.

The workshops were run in partnership with Batchfire, with members of their Callide team sharing expertise, skills, and career stories with the students.

Biloela SHS principal Natasha Bunn said the workshops provided students with a valuable insight into the industry.

"The trades workshop this week at the Callide mine was a real eye-opener for the students," Ms Bunn said.

"They have gained a new perspective on the important role trades play in exploration, equipment maintenance and the processing of resources in a mining operation like Callide. Following a site tour, the Year 9 students were able to talk with the Batchfire team about traineeships and apprenticeship pathways, which is valuable information as they are starting to make decisions about their future direction."

QRC Skills, Education and Diversity policy director Katrina-Lee Jones said the partnership between QMEA and Batchfire was a big win for local students.

The Biloela State High School students in the Trades and Traineeships workshop. (Supplied)

"The Batchfire team are keen to engage Biloela students in their operations and the resources industry as a whole," Ms Jones said.

"By partnering with us to deliver STEM and trade workshops and taking students on site to get a better understanding of resource operations, they are making a big impression on young people who may one day become a part of the resources workforce."

For 20 years, the QMEA, the education arm of the Queensland Resources Council, has been connecting students with the resources sector through hands-on workshops and career experiences.

Eleven long-time employees of GAWB celebrated

Gladstone Area Water Board (GAWB) has celebrated 115 years of collective employee service, recognising 11 long-serving staff members at a recent presentation.

Employees marking milestones from five to 20 years were acknowledged during the event, which was led by GAWB chief executive officer Darren Barlow.

"From small beginnings with just ten employees back in 1973, GAWB now has a diverse team working across a variety of portfolios and locations," Mr Barlow said.

"From network operations and dam safety engineering to fingerling production and maintaining our recreational areas, along with a multitude of support services, there are so many technical skills and specialists required to safely and reliably deliver bulk water services for our customers.

"Each person plays big a part in our success, and we're honoured that many of these people choose to stay at GAWB long term.

"We're fortunate to have a significant number of employees who have made long-term commitments to working at GAWB, including water quality and environment technical officer Lisa Wright, who is celebrating 15 years with us.

"Lisa has worked across various roles at GAWB and there's not much about GAWB that she doesn't know.

"The knowledge, experience and mentoring provided by our long serving employees is vital for our growth and stability as the region's bulk water supplier.

"It's a really exciting time to be at GAWB, as we work to secure Gladstone water's future with the Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline ready for completion next year."

Established in 1973, GAWB remains an intrinsic part of the Gladstone region, with employees not only working locally but also calling the area home.

The organisation's small but dedicated team continues to deliver safe, secure and reliable water to customers. Its diverse portfolio of assets and responsibilities provides career opportunities across engineering, science and environment, policy and planning, project management, trades, dam and water treatment operations, land management and corporate services.

GAWB chief executive officer Darren Barlow and GAWB water quality and environment technical officer Lisa Wright. (Supplied)

Yaraka, an outback beacon

aspireCQ

WITH WARREN ACUTT

St Anne's Anglican Church, Yaraka. (Anne-Maree Lloyd)

Imagine you are travelling alone in the Queensland outback on Christmas Eve, and you have taken the wrong turn, only realising many kilometres down the road.

Your fuel tank determines it is best to go on to the nearest town, even though it takes you further from your ultimate Christmas Day destination, and the sun is getting lower in the sky. The encroaching darkness heightens your awareness of kangaroos, as your peer intently stares out your bug-smeared windscreen. A small highway signpost has a 'Y' with '20' under it. You relax a little, but then start thinking, will the service station be open, and what about accommodation, as you quickly glance again at the no service message on your mobile phone.

Just as you think you see a dull glow on the horizon, a ping sound sends a jolt of adrenaline through your body, subsiding as you realise it is your phone indicating missed incoming calls. The jolt, though, leaves you more alert, as this time a kangaroo jumps right across your lighted path. You are sweating, even though the airconditioning has maintained a cool 23 degrees. The glow on the horizon gets gratefully brighter. You pass a signpost, Welcome to Yaraka, the end of the line.

The passing homes are spread well apart, one building, set back on the right, more brightly lit than the others, its beacon having already attracted several vehicles. Perhaps it is the hotel; you turn to follow the light. As you get closer and see the shape of the building, you realise you have arrived at a Church.

In past columns, I have written about the importance of a hotel to a small community. Baralaba, Toompine, and even Yaraka come to mind.

A meeting place, for people not just within town to congregate, but those from out of town, on the surrounding properties, whose longest conversation, till coming to town, may have been with their dog.

St Anne's Church, Yaraka, came to my attention earlier this year when Nu-Tank, in Rockhampton, approached their dealer network to nominate a local cause they would like to support. Local cricket, bowls, clay target, swimming clubs, domestic violence assistance organisation, school chaplain service, Blaze-Aid, men's mental health group, school fete, and regional health centre were all nominated and received funding under Nu-Tank's community cash-back initiative. As did St Anne's Anglican Church in Yaraka. The money is going towards new steps for the 67-year-old church. The only Church in town. A town with a resident population of around 20.

To me, the nomination of a church, in what is classified as a vanishing town (though do not tell the locals that), from any worthy organisation in the Barcoo region, stood out from the other nominees. And stoked my curiosity, why nominate a building, not even a heritage listed one, why St Anne's Anglican Church, Yaraka.

Being the only Church in Yaraka, it at times holds services for other denominations. The infrequent services are attracting more people than those held in the larger centres of Blackall and Tambo.

The 1950s were Yaraka's peak years, being a rail terminus, with its branch line connecting to the Central railway line to Rockhampton. Enabling livestock to be transported to Rockhampton. And goods are transported back to Yaraka.

It was in the 1950s that the community decided to rebuild the new, much grander St Anne's. The original St Anne's (a tin shed) was blown off its blocks in 1932. Completing it in 1957, debt-free, thanks to regular fundraising by the community, including quoits nights, as the information board outside the church records. The first church service was held on 24 May 1958.

Every town, I believe, needs a centre of worship to give thanks, reflect, and offer prayers. A church is a physical depiction, reminding many of us, even if we do not attend, that there is a way we should live; to respect each other, help each other when needed, plus there is a place where we are all welcome and treated equally.

To not continually repair the only church in town, and risk it, one day, becoming unusable, would not only be a shame, dishonouring those who fundraised to rebuild the Church, but it would also leave a gaping hole in the community. Not just physically, yes, spiritually, but the isolation of the outback and regular challenges Mother Nature provides, I believe, mentally as well.

Just a simply constructed building, but, as I learnt, a building holistically linked to the residents of that region. Residents (who, as Rev. Beth describes, as being one big family) that will not allow their church to vanish, nor their town.

Which will be much appreciated by lonely travellers, one who may arrive on Christmas Eve, off course, grateful to have had their wits when that roo jumped in front of the car, and now silently relishes being around people who welcome him/her.

PS: Banjo Paterson's, A Bush Christening, immortalises Maggee's Shanty. The remains of which are located on the outskirts of Yaraka. I thought that was worth mentioning. And that St Anne's Church was nominated as the beneficiary of the Nu-Tank Community Cash-back initiative by Mary and Andy from Outback Aqua. Have a happy Christmas.

A 'tight' CQ labour market

The $983 million Fitzroy-to-Gladstone Pipeline has officially reached construction completion and is expected to become operational by mid-2026.

Central Queensland's labour market remained tight through November, with continued demand across resources, construction, transport and health. While large projects are still driving strong hiring activity, several industry headwinds, particularly in mining and processing, are starting to create pockets of localised softening. Businesses continue to report challenges in sourcing skilled workers, especially for technical and trade roles.

Rio Tinto Yarwun job cuts

Rio Tinto has announced a 40 per cent reduction in alumina production at the Yarwun Alumina Refinery in Gladstone to extend the life of its tailings facility by an estimated four years. The cut in output will result in around 180 job losses across the site. This development represents another major shift in Gladstone's industrial landscape and may create flow-on impacts for local suppliers and service providers.

QCoal closure of Cook Colliery

QCoal's Cook Colliery has now ceased operations of its second production unit, following the closure of its first production unit in September, which resulted in 80 job losses. The shutdown of the final production unit has triggered a further 70 redundancies, with the underground mine moving into care and maintenance. Ongoing challenges, including high production costs and shifting market conditions, contributed to the decision. The closure adds to growing uncertainty for small-to-mid-tier coal operations across the Bowen Basin.

Major investment deal secures coal jobs in the Bowen Basin

A landmark investment deal has been finalised by Queensland Premier David Crisafulli to support and extend the life of several coal operations in Central Queensland. The agreement safeguards more than a thousand jobs and reinforces CQ's position as a critical contributor to Queensland's export economy. This announcement provides welcome stability after several months of job-loss headlines across the sector.

Fitzroy to Gladstone pipeline completion

The $983 million Fitzroy-to-Gladstone Pipeline has officially reached construction completion and is expected to become operational by mid-2026. The project provides long-term water security for Gladstone's industry and community, helping underpin future investment attraction and job creation across the region.

$500 million Beef Roads Program begins

The federal government has launched the $500 million "Beef Roads" program, targeting upgrades across critical cattle supply routes in Queensland. Improvements will focus on safety, flood resilience and freight efficiency, benefiting farmers, transport operators and regional supply chains across CQ.

QCoal's Cook Colliery has now ceased operations of its second production unit, following the closure of its first production unit in September, which resulted in 80 job losses.

Rockhampton Regional Council community event funding

Rockhampton Regional Council has committed $140,000 over two years to support new and existing community events. The funding aims to boost local tourism, community engagement and economic activity, creating opportunities for event organisers, vendors and hospitality businesses.

Small Business Apprenticeship Pilot Program

Applications are open for Queensland's Small Business Apprenticeship Pilot Program, offering financial incentives for small businesses that take on new apprentices or trainees. The initiative aims to boost workforce development, address skills shortages and support small employers to grow their teams sustainably.

Queensland Procurement Policy 2026

The Queensland Procurement Policy 2026 has been released, outlining updated rules for government purchasing. The new policy places stronger emphasis on regional spending, supplier fairness, transparency and value-for-money outcomes. Local businesses in CQ will benefit from clearer pathways to government procurement and greater opportunities to compete for state-funded work.

Potential payroll tax reform

Queensland's new government continues to signal payroll tax reform, with a review underway to reduce complexity and ease cost pressures for businesses. Although no final model has been released, the prospect of changes has generated significant discussion among employers about potential savings and future workforce planning implications.

Secure Communities Partnership Program

The Queensland Government has rolled out funding under the Secure Communities Partnership Program, aimed at supporting regional safety upgrades. Eligible organisations can now apply for grants to implement infrastructure that deters crime, including lighting, CCTV and security enhancements. This initiative may create small-scale procurement opportunities for local contractors and security providers.

Conclusion

Overall, November has been a month of mixed conditions across Central Queensland, with major infrastructure progress and long-term investment balancing out ongoing challenges in the resources sector. Workforce demand remains steady, but recent job cuts and mine closures highlight the need for continued economic diversification and support for affected workers. At the same time, new government programs, procurement reforms and regional funding initiatives are creating opportunities for local businesses to adapt, grow and position themselves for 2026. As the year draws to a close, CQ's outlook remains cautiously optimistic, anchored by sustained project activity and strong community resilience.

Jobs in Central Queensland are your regional recruitment partners. We help you build the right team in regional locations through a personalised Recruitment Partnership with our experienced specialists, or an advertising campaign on our online job board. For more information about local job opportunities and recruitment support, visit JobsinCentralQueensland.au.

Training program expanded

Gladstone's construction workforce is set to benefit from an expanded range of industry training opportunities, with Harness Energy now delivering Construction Skills Queensland funded short courses across both the building and construction and civil construction sectors.

Delivered from Harness Energy's Gladstone training facility, the new suite of subsidised courses is supported by Construction Skills Queensland (CSQ) - providing eligible workers, apprentices, and jobseekers access to heavily funded training designed to build capability and improve safety across Central Queensland's worksites.

"Our Gladstone facility has become a key hub for construction training in Central Queensland," Central Queensland account manager Samantha Butt said.

"We're proud to offer CSQ-funded options that make it easier for workers to stay qualified, confident, and ready for the opportunities ahead."

Harness Energy, a national and state award winning registered training organisation, provides workforce solutions, specialised training and labour hire requirements.

Through CSQ funding, participants can access subsidies covering a proportion of course costs, with all training delivered locally by Harness Energy's qualified trainers in hands-on, practical courses aligned with real-world construction needs.

For more information about CSQ funding eligibility and upcoming courses in Gladstone, visit harnessenergy.com.au/csq.

Relationships are the key

CONNECTING INDUSTRY
WITH KIERAN MORAN

Connecting Industry director Kieran Moran writes that while most businesses talk about the importance of relationships, very few take a strategic approach to building them. (Supplied)

Most businesses talk about the importance of relationships, however, very few take a strategic approach to building them.

Imagine if companies treated relationships with the same effort they apply to budgets or project pipelines.

Instead of letting connection-building happen by accident, they would deliberately map the people who influence their goals, define what value looks like on both sides, and develop a quarterly plan that guides meaningful engagement.

This is not a soft skill, this is long-term business infrastructure.

Part of the problem is that many businesses still view relationships as something organic that "just happens" rather than a capability that can be developed.

But the most successful leaders understand that relationships follow a lifecycle: awareness, familiarity, trust, collaboration, and advocacy.

Each stage requires different inputs, i.e. visibility, credibility, consistency, and value creation.

When organisations recognise this progression, they can work out where a relationship sits and what it needs next.

Without that awareness, most relationship efforts remain reactive instead of deliberate.

We see this play out constantly at our events.

A contractor may attend one luncheon, meet a project proponent, reconnect at a later pre-networking event, and by the third or fourth interaction a genuine conversation about capability and future procurement begins.

That progression doesn't happen by luck, it happens because businesses show up consistently, bring value, and build trust over time.

Many of the supply-chain success stories we witness aren't overnight wins, they are the result of small, repeated deposits into the relationship bank that eventually compound into real opportunities.

The challenge, of course, is capacity.

If the average person can support 100 to 150 relationships, the real question becomes which relationships matter most right now?

Not every connection carries equal weight and treating them as though they do dilutes your impact.

The most effective professionals identify which relationships align with their strategic goals or priorities, and then invest intentionally - consistent communication, value exchanges, and well-timed touchpoints that build momentum instead of relying on chance encounters.

Ultimately, relationship-building is not about collecting contacts; it is about trust.

When approached as an investment, relationships become powerful, opening doors to opportunities, partnerships and influence that cannot be replicated through marketing or networking alone.

If organisations are willing to adopt a more disciplined approach to relationship strategy, they will discover what high-performing individuals already know: in business, relationships are not just part of the work - they are the work.

Magic milestone

Rockhampton's JBS processing facility is marking six decades of operation in 2025, celebrating a milestone that reflects its enduring contribution to the local economy and global beef markets earlier this month.

Established in 1965, the Rockhampton plant has grown into a world-class processing hub employing around 565 people and processing up to 700 head of cattle per day.

The facility produces a range of beef programs, from grain-fed brands such as AMH White and Royal to grass-fed options including Acres Organic, Right to Roam, and heritage brand AMH.

JBS Australia chief executive officer Brent Eastwood said the plant had become a cornerstone of the company's Northern Division.

"Rockhampton is an iconic part of JBS Australia's history and future," he said.

"For 60 years, this facility has been a cornerstone of our Northern Division and a vital contributor to the local economy and global beef markets."

"The dedication of our team, the trust of our producer partners, and the support of the Rockhampton community have been key to this success. We're committed to continuing this legacy of quality, innovation and sustainability for decades to come."

The anniversary celebration included a barbecue for staff, with long-serving team members recognised, including Donna Shultz (30 years) and the Marsh brothers – Tony, Robert, and Paul (40 years each) – who collectively have more than 150 years of service.

JBS Northern chief operating officer Brendan Tatt congratulated the Rockhampton team on the impressive milestone.

"After six decades of building a strong reputation in the industry and community, our Rockhampton plant is recognised as a cornerstone of JBS Australia's Northern Division," he said.

"Over 60 years we've grown into a facility that stands at the forefront of innovation, sustainability and supply-chain partnerships."

"This is a milestone that honours past generations and energises our ambition for the next decade."

JBS Rockhampton Plant manager Anthony Milzewski said the anniversary highlighted the hard work and dedication of every team member, past and present, as well as the trust built between the company and farmers across the region.

"It's humbling to reflect on everything we've achieved in 60 years and how much the industry has changed and grown," he said.

"We're proud to operate in the heart of the Aussie Beef Capital and make a positive contribution – through employment, community support, and by putting quality beef on people's dinner tables each night."

The event was attended by Rockhampton MP Donna Kirkland and Rockhampton Region Mayor Tony Williams.

JBS Northern chief operating officer Brendan Tatt, Rockhampton MP Donna Kirkland, JBS Rockhampton Plant manager Anthony Milzewski and Rockhampton Region Mayor Tony Williams cut the cake to celebrate 60 years of JBS in the Beef Capital. (Supplied)

JBS Australia celebrated 60 years of operation in Rockhampton earlier this month.

Ms Kirkland said it was terrific to see the milestone achieved.

"This anniversary solidifies JBS's position as a world-class processing hub in the heart of Australia's Beef Capital," she said.

"The Rockhampton plant's enduring success is a testament to its commitment to employing approximately 565 people, processing up to 700 head of cattle daily, and fostering long-standing partnerships with producers and the local community.

"JBS plays an integral part in our primary industries prosperity and industry economy both locally and across the State. On behalf of the Crisafulli State Government I congratulate JBS; and look forward to seeing what is achieved in another 60 years to come!"

Cr Williams reflected on his own professional journey in paying tribute to JBS.

"As someone who once worked in a meatworks myself, I know firsthand the dedication and hard work that goes into this industry," he said.

"On behalf of the Rockhampton Regional Council, I congratulate JBS on this remarkable milestone and thank the team for their continued investment in our region's future.

"JBS Rockhampton has been an integral part of our community for 60 years, supporting hundreds of local jobs, partnering with producers and helping showcase the strength and quality of our regional beef industry on the global stage.

"This anniversary is not just a celebration for the company, but for all the people who have contributed to its success over six decades and kept Rockhampton at the heart of Australia's beef industry."

Emerald State High drives ag innovation

Emerald State High School will be driving innovation in agriculture after being named one of 15 schools to join the 2026 Agribusiness Gateway to Industry Schools Program.

Gregory MP and Assistant Minister for Primary Industry Development, Water and Western Queensland Sean Dillon said ESHS was well-placed to create a pipeline of skilled workers to the agricultural industry.

The program links students and teachers with farmers, agri-tech innovators and industry leaders delivering hands-on experience and opening pathways to rewarding careers in the primary industries sector.

Stream 1 schools will also receive $2500 from CQUniversity and industry partners to support the creation of new resources, networks, opportunities and tech for agribusiness education.

"Emerald State High School has been chosen from a field of 41 applications for Stream 1 of GISP," Mr Dillon said.

"The program will give them access to CQUniversity's Agri-tech Education and Extension team for 12 months to grow connections, events and activities with the agricultural industry.

"This is an opportunity to boost student aspirations for an agribusiness career, with the Gregory electorate boasting a robust and diverse agriculture sector, with many opportunities.

"I'm excited to see the work that will be done by Emerald State High School as they introduce students to the many careers available in Queensland's agricultural industry."

The Agribusiness Gateway to Industry Schools Project is managed by CQUniversity and funded by the Queensland Government through the Department of Trade, Employment and Training.

It is delivered in partnership with AgriFutures Australia, the Queensland Agriculture Teachers Association and AgForce School to Industry Partnership Program.

Gregory MP Sean Dillon has welcomed Emerald State High School being named one of 15 schools to join the 2026 Agribusiness Gateway to Industry Schools Program. (Supplied)

CQU set to welcome 15

Fifteen schools across Queensland have been chosen to join CQUniversity's Agribusiness Gateway to Industry Schools Project in 2026, aiming to inspire the next generation of workers for the state's vital primary industries.

The successful schools, selected from 41 applicants, are Charters Towers State High School, Clifton State High School, Cloncurry State School P-12, Columba Catholic College, Concordia Lutheran College, Eidsvold State School, Emerald State High School, Goomeri P-10 State School, Hervey Bay State High School, Ingham State High School, Rosedale State School, Rosewood State High School, St Joseph's School Stanthorpe, Sunnybank State High School and Tamborine Mountain State High School.

Each school will receive $2500 from CQU and industry partners to develop resources, networks and technology for agribusiness education, with support from the CQU team for 12 months.

It's just the second time the Agribusiness program has been offered by CQUniversity's Agri-Tech Education and Extension team.

In the first cohort, secondary students and teachers were connected with farmers, agri-tech professionals and industry leaders, to create real-world learning experiences and showcase pathways into agriculture careers.

CQU senior lecturer in agriculture Dr Jaime Manning said the strong interest highlighted the growing demand to build skills and career pathways in agriculture.

"The quality of applications from new locations across Queensland really showed the widespread demand for support to develop agricultural interest, skills and a future workforce in our schools," Dr Manning said.

"We are excited to support our successful schools for their journey into agriculture, discovering agri-tech, and developing programs to empower future farm innovators."

"All schools across Queensland still have lots of opportunities to participate through Stream 2 of our program which includes professional development, resources and webinars offered throughout the year."

Employment and Training Minister Ros Bates said the program would connect students with industry and encourage young Queenslanders to pursue rewarding careers.

"Agriculture has always been a cornerstone industry in Queensland, trading in best practice and providing quality products to Australia and the world," she said.

"As the sector continues to evolve – embracing science, technology and sustainability – our agriculture workforce will evolve along with it."

"I'm excited to see CQU grow the Agribusiness Gateway by reaching into new schools, connecting students with industry, and encouraging even more young Queenslanders to pursue rewarding, skilled ag careers."

Primary Industries Minister Tony Perrett said the State Government had delivered a fresh start for the sector.

"An appropriately skilled workforce is fundamental to meeting our ambitious target to increase the value of primary industries to $30 billion by 2030, and this initiative will contribute to the effort," Mr Perrett said.

The project is funded by the State Government through the Department of Trade, Employment and Training and delivered in partnership with AgriFutures Australia, the Queensland Agriculture Teachers Association and AgForce School to Industry Partnership Program.

Beef over ‘vague’ new act

By Sophie Mossman

New changes to the EPBC Act means bad news for farmers (William Edge/Shutterstock)

Primary producers are once again in the firing line as the Federal Government passes new laws and changes to the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Since its earliest days, Australia has prided itself on producing world-class food and fibre.

However, now more than ever, farmers are fearing for their livelihoods because they could potentially be breaking the law due to a lack of information surrounding the new legislation.

Under the new laws, farmers will no longer be able to clear regrowth — land that they have always cleared.

Federal Environment and Water Minister Murray Watt said these new changes are designed to “bring farmers in line with other industries”.

Senator Watt was also the former Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

“Farmers are currently able to clear agricultural land, even if it has a significant impact on threatened species or other protected matters, without needing any assessment or approval under the EPBC Act,” he said.

“If mining companies, if renewable companies, if housing developers want to clear land in a way that’s going to have a significant impact on the environment, they need to get an EPBC assessment and approval.”

Capricornia MP Michelle Landry described the changes to the act as “rushed”.

“Our farmers are the true custodians of the land — they know how to manage it responsibly by protecting soil, controlling weeds and preventing bushfires,” Ms Landry said.

“Yet Labor’s changes, including reduced regrowth thresholds for the long-standing ‘continuing use’ provisions, threaten routine land management and productivity.”

This is nothing new — the number of farms and farmers in Australia has been in decline for decades due to increasing red and green tape, rising costs and a lack of financial support during difficult times.

Flynn MP Colin Boyce echoed Ms Landry’s assessment, saying the Federal Government had rushed to pass the new laws and had provided little to no information to assist farmers in decision-making.

“Despite the federal laws being passed, there has been no industry consultation and there is no mapping for farmers to ensure they know what rules apply to their property,” Mr Boyce said.

“I have written to the Federal Environment Minister seeking clarity on what the new legislation means, particularly for landholders in Central Queensland.

Central Queensland-based Senator Matt Canavan said the new laws within the EPBC Act are “seriously bad news for our farmers”.

“During the negotiations the government was always a bad faith actor, threatening that if the Coalition wouldn’t agree to its industry-destroying legislation, farmers would be punished,” Sen Canavan said.

“Labor is no longer the party of Western Queensland shearers — they are the party that sacks graziers and forestry workers, and strips away property rights to appease the inner-city Greens.”

Hornery family turns loss into lasting legacy

Central Queensland’s beef and transport pioneers, the Hornery family, have continued their legacy of support for families impacted by cancer, donating a specially fitted-out shuttle bus to assist regional families travelling to Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital for life-saving treatment.

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Comet grazier Quentin ‘Que’ Hornery said helping others was a fitting tribute to brother Lachlan, a beloved father of five and former RBWH cancer patient, who sadly passed away in 2008.

“Lachy was just a true family man. He always gave to others to make sure they felt comfortable. So now, we support cancer care families and the RBWH family,” Que said.

“We’ve met a lot of people impacted by cancer and not all of them have support – some people don’t have anyone.

“If we can help ease some of that burden for people, then that’s what we want to do - whether that’s buses or planes or whatever it takes but we have to start somewhere.”

The Cancer Council Queensland Transport to Treatment Metro North shuttle has been described as a lifeline’ for patients living with a 25km radius of Caboolture Hospital and travelling to RBWH for cancer treatment.

RBWH Foundation chief executive officer Simone Garske said the incredible gift was not only a fitting tribute to Lachlan, but a powerful reminder of what’s possible when heartfelt giving meets real community need.

“The RBWH Foundation is indebted to the Hornery Family for their selfless commitment to easing the difficulties of cancer treatment, especially for patients from regional and remote parts of Queensland,” Ms Garske said.

“The new shuttle service will remove anxieties surrounding the logistics of travel, such as peak hour traffic, parking costs, and fatigue.”

Catherine was one of the first patients to use the new service and is grateful that transport is taken care of to RBWH.

“There is a lot to get your head around when you are diagnosed with cancer. Thanks to the shuttle service, transport to and from my appointments is no longer one of them,” Catherine said.

“If not for this option, I would have had to rely on friends and family to get to and from my appointments.

“It’s such a blessing that my husband Bill can use the service too and be by my side to lend support.”

The return service between Caboolture Library and RBWH runs four times a day on weekdays.

“We are deeply thankful for the generous financial contributions from the Hornery Family, Cancer Council Queensland and the Cancer Care Trust,” RBWH Cancer Care Services acting director Dr Melissa Eastgate said.

“Their support has been instrumental in making this vital shuttle service a reality, easing the journey for countless patients and their families.”

The Hornery family continues to fundraise through proceeds from their signature pink water trucks, 4U2 Concert, bottled water and various other activities.

“It’s important to say that you don’t have to give a bus to make a difference,” Que said.

“If everybody does a little bit – gives a little bit – we can help each other through. We can’t expect the same people to come through every time; we all have to be prepared to contribute.

“A lot of hands make easier work, especially when we’re taking on big goals. No matter how small, it all counts.”

Modernising Queensland’s livestock laws

The State Government is moving to modernise Queensland’s century-old livestock laws, promising a fresh start for beef producers.

Primary Industries Minister Tony Perrett convened a roundtable with livestock experts last month to discuss updates to branding and earmarking requirements for cattle and pigs under the Brands Act 1915, which has seen little change for decades.

“It’s vital that we take the time to consult with Queensland’s livestock industry to ensure any changes reflect the modern needs of today’s producers,” Mr Perrett said.

“The livestock industry plays a critical role in Queensland’s economy, and we will work with them to ensure branding and earmarking requirements suit producers and rural communities.

“Primary producers deserve legislation that keeps pace with a modern industry.”

The review is part of the government’s 25-year blueprint, Primary Industries Prosper 2050, aimed at strengthening Queensland’s livestock sector and boosting long-term growth.

A Year of Thanks: The Many Hands Keeping Rescue300 In The Air

Across Central Queensland, support for CapRescue has arrived in countless forms - carried by the sound of country music, the energy of campdraft crowds, the efforts of local workplaces and the generosity of people who simply wanted to give back. Reflecting on this year's Thankful Thursdays, it becomes clear just how many individuals, businesses and communities have helped keep Rescue300 mission-ready.

The year began in familiar and heart-warming fashion at the Yeppoon Town Hall, where the Country Music Group once again filled an afternoon with singing, dancing and generosity. Their decade-long commitment to CapRescue has now raised more than $100,000 - a remarkable milestone achieved through talent, dedication and community spirit. From there, momentum built quickly.

Throughout March and April, dog trials, tennis clubs, mountain challenges, agricultural field days, local cafés and more all chose to support the rescue helicopter. These events raised essential funds and highlighted the importance of rapid-response care in a region where medical services are often far away.

That message resonated strongly with families living on large properties, people working along remote highways and island residents who know the challenges of isolation. On Facing Island, residents helped create a Thankful Thursday for the crew with heartfelt messages of gratitude.

"Thank you to the helicopter rescue crew - often a thankless job, but we are so grateful," one message read. Another added, "You help so many people and we could not be without you."

Rural communities rallied behind the service through donations, auctions and other events across the region. Campdrafts dominated fundraising in 2025, contributing more than $80,000 - an extraordinary effort from incredible committees at events like Mostly Hills, Clarke Creek, Marlborough, Ridgelands, Paradise Lagoons, Comet River and Palmgrove Pintpot.

Support flowed from workplaces too, with businesses lending equipment, offering matched-giving programs, donating prizes and holding internal fundraisers across Central Queensland and even in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast. CapRescue's own fundraising events across the region also brought out incredible generosity from golfers, prize donors, colour run participants, degustation attendees and business sponsors who continue to show up year after year.

Some moments throughout the year were light-hearted - like the mining conference where a few attendees accidentally thought they were being asked to donate to "cat rescue" - while others were personal and meaningful. We welcomed supporters who had once been our patients, returning with donations or words of appreciation that meant as much to the crew as any contribution.

In addition to community fundraising, major grants and vital in-kind support - such as the waiving of airport landing fees by Rockhampton Regional Council - also financially strengthened CapRescue's operational capability.

And then there were the many quiet acts of generosity - the businesses that gave without seeking acknowledgement, the people who donated anonymously, the community members whose stories never made it online but whose support still helped fuel missions across Central Queensland. Every gesture, big or small, has helped Rescue300 continue reaching towns, islands, highways, properties and communities when they need it most.

As the service looks back on this year's Thankful Thursdays, the message is unmistakable: this region cares about keeping its rescue helicopter in the air. To everyone who contributed, shared a story, hosted an event, donated a prize, or simply offered words of thanks - CapRescue is truly grateful. Your kindness keeps this service strong, responsive and ready to help, wherever and whenever it's needed.

Weekend Rescues

CapRescue's Rescue300 helicopter completed a series of significant missions over the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd of November.

On Saturday, the crew departed Emerald for an inter-hospital transfer before being diverted mid-flight to Lowmead, where a man in his 30s had fallen from a motorbike. He was flown to Bundaberg Hospital with suspected leg and pelvic injuries. Later that night, the team returned to Emerald for a second inter-hospital transfer.

Sunday began with a serious two-vehicle crash near Dingo. Sadly, one person was confirmed deceased at the scene, while two others were airlifted to Rockhampton Hospital using a dual-stretcher configuration. Later that morning, a man injured in a light aircraft crash was flown to Bundaberg and transferred to Rescue533 for ongoing care in Brisbane.

That evening, Rescue300 responded to Yeppoon, airlifting a man in his 60s found unconscious in a pool. He remained in a serious but stable condition.

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