

INDUSTRY *Today*

February 2024 edition



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Rocky apprentice wins big

By Breanna Lloyd

A Rockhampton Hastings Deering tradie, Aidan Rankin, took home the title of Apprentice of the Year after competing in the Hastings Deering annual Apprentice of the Year competition and is headed to the Indo-Pacific Caterpillar Competition held in Melbourne.

Held in late January, the four-day event required participants to assess component faults, pipe construction, electrical problem solving and customer service scenarios.

The 24-year-old competed against six of his top-performing trade-qualified peers, located throughout Queensland, the Northern Territory and Papua New Guinea.

“My success and drive to develop my trade skills was inspired by my father Andrew, an ex Diesel Fitter and current Apprenticeship Coordinator,” Aidan said.

“My father played a big role in shaping myself and my career, as I spent a lot of time in my childhood assisting him with mechanical work.

“After high school, I went straight into studying at university. It took me about two years, but I eventually realised it wasn't right for me.

“I had always been interested in mechanics and hands-on work, but it wasn't until dad suggested an apprenticeship that I went for it, and I'm so glad I did.”

Aidan said he is incredibly proud to have won the award.

“To everyone who has supported me on this journey so far, particularly the Hastings Deering training team, who do a fantastic job of training our people to be the best they can be,” he said.

Representing the dealership, Aidan will go head-to-head with the best Caterpillar apprentices from organisations across Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia in the final competition.

If Aidan wins the upcoming round in Melbourne, he will travel to the United States for specialist training.

Hastings Deering's chief executive Officer and managing director, Mark Scott, said that the annual inter-workshop competition is the culmination of the skills, dedication, and commitment to quality work that each member of Hastings Deering lives and breathes.

“Investing in our workforce of the future has never been more important,” Mr Scott said.

“This competition is one of the most anticipated events of the year because it not only celebrates a cohort of high-calibre and dedicated apprentices but also the trainers within our network who are bringing up the next generation of Hastings talent.

“I sincerely congratulate all participants in this year's event and wish Aidan good luck for the Australasian competition in February.”

Having run for over 45 years, Hastings Deering is one of the largest programs of its kind in Queensland and has over 140 apprentices currently completing their training.

The apprenticeship program is led by its award-winning learning and capability team who commit to providing cultivation of skills and practical knowledge and education for upcoming trainees and apprentices.



Rockhampton Hastings Deering Apprentice of the Year, Aidan Rankin. Pictures: CONTRIBUTED



AOTY 2024 cohort at the presentation ceremony.



The 2024 Apprentice of the Year intake.

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Hastings Deering CEO Mark Scott and AOTY Aidan Rankin.



AOTY Skills Station.



AOTY Aidan Rankin with his father Andrew.

New industry deal forged

Queensland Alumina Limited (QAL) and CQUniversity have signed an agreement that will see the two organisations work together on initiatives that will help grow the region's future skilled workforces.

Under the agreement QAL and CQUniversity will partner to identify opportunities for professional development for current QAL staff while also expanding opportunities for new apprentices and work-integrated learning for university students.

They will also work together to identify and test emerging technologies through research and development collaborations.

At the cornerstone of the agreement, QAL will also seek to deliver four new engineering cadetships to engineering students at CQUniversity, every year for the next five years.

It is hoped that the cadetship program will attract aspiring engineers to stay in the region to work and study and in turn help to overcome future workforce shortages in the field.

As part of the cadetships, students will be recruited to engineering cadetship roles at QAL while completing a Bachelor of Engineering at CQUniversity.

As part of the program, recruits will benefit from a structured and paid work-study program that allows them to gain valuable on the job experience while completing their degree studies.

QAL's Engineering Manager, Mark Lord said that the cadetship opportunities provided an exciting opportunity for existing staff to upskill and gain a qualification while also providing newcomers with a chance to gain relevant experience working for a well-



The QAL and CQU group.

known Gladstone industry leader.

"As part of this agreement we will place a strong focus on workforce development by developing and offering microcredentials and innovative professional development programs to existing staff, and we will also work towards offering new opportunities for apprentices and trainees.

"The provision of engineering cadetships will also see us take a proactive step in building our future workforce capacity by investing in a targeted skills development program that will grow our engineering workforce pipeline," said Mr Lord.



Trent from QAL and CQU representative.

CQUniversity's Associate Vice-President for the Gladstone Region, Mr Luke Sinclair said that cadetships are an innovative way for organisations and industries to not just grow but also future proof their future workforces.

"According to recent data there is predicted to be a shortage of up to 200,000 qualified engineers in Australia by 2040 unless new and additional measures are put in place to build and develop workforces.

"Combining this data with the fact that the Wide Bay and Central Queensland regions are two of the fastest growing regions

in Australia, it is essential for organisations to look at new and innovative ways to build their skills pipelines.

"Our new agreement with QAL is a great example of what can be achieved when industry and education providers work together," said Mr Sinclair.

Engineering cadetships run through CQUniversity Australia offer candidates real-world, paid experience with an employer during their studies and allow them to work alongside professional engineers on different types of projects, gaining valuable skills and work experience before graduation.

Worker killed in 'tragic' accident at coal mine

By Keira Jenkins in Brisbane/AAP

Operations at a Central Queensland coal mine have been shut down after a miner died on site.

The 27-year-old worker died in a vehicle-related incident at BHP Mitsubishi Alliance's (BMA) Saraji coal mine, near Dysart.

"Our deepest sympathies are with the person's family, friends and colleagues at this difficult time," BMA asset president Adam Lancey said in a statement on Tuesday.

Resources Safety and Health Queensland (RSHQ) is investigating the incident.

RSHQ chief executive Rob Djukic said two men were working in a fuel bay area of the mine on Monday when one became pinned between two vehicles and suffered "crush injuries".

"The worker was transported to hospital, but sadly he later passed away in the evening," Mr Djukic said.

Resources Minister Scott Stewart said safety needs to be a top priority across the industry.

"Our expectation as a government, as a community is that when workers go to work they come home the same way they leave, they come home safe and they come home as healthy as what they leave," he said.

"This is just tragic, it tears families to pieces."

Queensland Resources Council acting chief executive Judy Bertram said the sector was committed to workplace safety and would support investigations into the incident.

"The industry's thoughts are with the

family dealing with an unimaginable loss, and the friends, work colleagues and first responders involved," she said.

The Mining and Energy Union said the whole mining community was shocked and saddened by the incident.

"This is the worst news we can ever receive," union district president Mitch Hughes said.

"We are devastated that a coal miner is not returning home at the end of their shift."

Union safety inspectors are investigating.

"We will ensure no stone is left unturned in understanding what has occurred and preventing future fatalities and injuries," he said.

Operations at the mine have been suspended.



A Central Queensland Coal Mine was shut down after a man tragically died on site.

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Support is taking flight

Australia's leading renewable energy company Squadron Energy has announced its support of the RACQ Capricorn Helicopter Rescue Service (CapRescue) and their vital air ambulance and rescue missions in Central Queensland.

CapRescue has been serving the Central Queensland community for nearly 30 years and completed more than 500 rescues last year alone, logging over 788 flight hours.

Spanning an area of 350,000 sq km, the CapRescue emergency helicopters protect more than 300,000 people, responding to serious accidents and medical incidents while providing a world-class aerial search and rescue service around the clock, every day of the year.

In January 2024, while working on her cattle property in Dalma, Narelle Hinz experienced a serious incident in the cattle yards, resulting in a severely lacerated lower right arm.

The swift response to the incident was a coordinated effort between the local Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) personnel and the RACQ CapRescue helicopter service.

Narelle recalls the professionalism of her transfer, expressing gratitude for the speed and precision with which she was safely moved into the helicopter to be flown to the Rockhampton Hospital for immediate care.

"The transition was very professional, and I felt at ease having such a fantastic team making decisions and completely taking care of me," she said.

While Narelle's journey to full recovery continues, she is grateful for CapRescue's rapid response and support.

"I still have recovery time ahead of me, but I am counting my blessings on how



Narelle Hinz with the RACQ CapRescue team members.

lucky I was to receive such a quick response from the amazing CapRescue Helicopter Team," she said.

Squadron Energy's CEO Jason Willoughby said he was proud to be supporting the vital service which has a long-standing history of serving the community in times of crisis.

"We are honoured to support the lifesaving work of CapRescue and by investing in emergency response infrastructure, we aim to make a positive and lasting impact on the wellbeing of the people who live and work in Central Queensland," he said.

CapRescue proudly covers an area that extends from the northern reaches of St Lawrence, as far west as Alpha and out to sea off the Capricorn Coast for approximately 110 nautical miles.

CapRescue's Operations Manager Kirsty Wooler welcomed the partnership with Squadron Energy.

"This partnership will undoubtedly save

lives and make a significant difference in our ability to respond effectively to emergencies," Kirsty said.

"The region we cover is full of beautiful but diverse terrain. Tourists flock to enjoy the beach lifestyle and hardworking locals live in remote areas and are the lifeblood of Queensland.

"People feel sad to see the chopper in the air, but they are always thankful the service exists."

When asked about her support for the service that came to her aid, Narelle and her family want to help raise awareness about the invaluable role played by RACQ CapRescue.

"The public needs to be aware of what an important service is provided," Narelle said.

Squadron Energy looks forward to a successful collaboration with RACQ CapRescue, reinforcing our shared commitment to the safety and well-being of our communities.



The vital Central Queensland service saves lives through rapid deployment of skilled medical and rescue teams.



The RACQ CapRescue team has an average of 1.4 rescues daily, with 24/7 availability.

Number of women in Qld mining jumps by 40 per cent

The number of women working in trade positions in Queensland's resources sector jumped by almost 40 per cent in the last financial year, now accounting for a record 13 per cent of all trade roles, the Queensland Resources Council (QRC) said on Monday 29 January.

New industry data also shows nine out of 10 women employed by resources companies now work in 'non-traditional' roles such as engineering, environmental science, data analysis, production supervision and management positions.

The information was released in conjunction with today's announcement of this year's finalists in the annual Resources Awards for Women, hosted by the QRC and Women In Mining and Resources Queensland (WIMARQ).

QRC acting chief executive officer Judy Bertram said there has never been a better

time for women to get a job in Queensland's resources sector.

"It was wonderful to see more women benefiting from the financial security of a well-paid job in the industry, especially at a time when the high cost of living was impacting every household," she said.

The latest ABS data shows mine employees are the highest average income earners in Australia, with the average full-time annual wage (excluding bonuses) just over \$148,000 compared to around \$96,000 across all industries.

Ms Bertram said research shows a more diverse workplace helps create a safer, more productive and more positive working environment for all employees.

"The resources sector is also experiencing a serious skilled worker shortage so there are plenty of practical reasons why companies are seeking to recruit more women for a

broad range of positions," she said.

This year, 18 women and three female students will compete for seven prestigious awards, with the winners to represent Queensland at the Women in Resources National Awards in Canberra later this year.

Finalists from Weipa, Bluff, Gladstone, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Ridgeland, Southport, Gold Coast and Brisbane will attend the awards presentation that will take place in Brisbane on March 8 at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Between them, finalists are general managers, engineers, governance experts, metallurgists, environmental advisors, trainers, production coordinators, mine technicians, workplace managers and asset innovation specialists.

This year a record nine finalists live in Brisbane, cementing the city's reputation as Queensland's biggest mining town.

WIMARQ co-chair Sally Rayner said the latest data shows Queensland's resources sector attracts a younger demographic of female employees compared to the national figure.

Thirty-eight per cent of the industry's female employees in Queensland are aged 34 years or under, compared to 28.4 per cent in this age group nationally.

"Resources companies are also more aware of the value to their business from having an inclusive environment which is open to new and different ways to identify and solve problems," she said.

"This year's outstanding field of award finalists clearly demonstrates the diverse and rewarding careers available across our sector, which we hope inspires a whole new generation of women to consider the opportunities available."

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Acting QRC Chief Executive Officer Judy Bertram.

Picture: CONTRIBUTED

Bravus rides the range

By Breanna Lloyd

Return of the footy season has got Regional Queenslanders excited after the Bravus Mining and Resources Company supported the North Queensland Toyota Cowboys' annual community day in January.

Held on the Cowboys Training Field in South Townsville, hundreds of footy fans helped celebrate the new "blue and grey" line-up with their sporting heroes.

Bravus Mining and Resources Head of Community Kate Campbell said as a Cowboys Platinum Partner, the Bravus team was there in full voice to lend their support.

"We're passionate about supporting organisations, charities, and community groups that are important to our workers and to the communities in north and central Queensland we're a part of," Ms Campbell said.

"Our Carmichael mine near Clermont in central Queensland and our offices in Townsville and Rockhampton are all in the heart of "Cowboys Country" and our team members are some of the Cowboys' biggest fans.

"Like us, the Cowboys are about championing regional Queensland and regional Queenslanders, and that's why we're incredibly proud to have our logo on the sleeves of their jersey again in 2024.



Bravus Communications Lead Amy Wilson with Tom Dearden and Tanya Brown at the Cowboys Community Day. Picture: CONTRIBUTED

"We're equally proud of our work with the Cowboys off the field to use their star power to drive health and wellbeing and school attendance programs for local kids.

"It was wonderful to see the fans come out in force for the community day and join

us in cheering on the boys all the way from pre-season training to what we hope is a grand final appearance."

Located in Central Queensland's Galilee Basin, Bravus Mining and Resources exports coal nationally and internationally, supply-

ing orders of 10 million tonnes annually.

Bravus Mining and Resources first partnered with the Cowboys in 2019 as a sponsor of the Try for 5! program to boost school attendance rates and education outcomes.

Since 2020 the company has been the presenting partner of the club's flagship Adopt-A-School community program through which Cowboys players visit local schools to promote an 'Eat Well, Play Well, Stay Well' message.

North Queensland Toyota Cowboys Chief Executive Officer Jeff Reibel said he was proud of the benefits the club's partnership with Bravus Mining and Resources was creating in regional communities.

"Both organisations have championed once-in-a-generation projects which will drive investment and jobs in the North for years to come," Mr Reibel said.

"Through our five-year Platinum Partnership with Bravus, we've been able to unite and broaden our efforts to deliver life-changing outreach and education programs to remote and regional kids, through our Try for 5 and Adopt-a-School programs.

"These values and shared commitment to the North, mean we're proud the Bravus logo will be displayed prominently on the sleeve of the squad's jersey this coming season."

Rheem grant apprentices a helping hand again

By Shelby Gurney

The Rheem Apprentice Plumber Grants are now open, setting out to help those who need it most during their apprenticeship.

Since 2012, Rheem Australia have proudly awarded more than \$360,000 to apprentice plumbers around the country.

This year, to further support the education and training of Australia's plumbing community, they have doubled their contribution.

Rockhampton plumbing apprentice Brandon Pershouse, who was a 2023 grant recipient, said the effects were life-changing.

"It was quite humbling, there were thousands of applicants and to be named one of the top 10 was a really special moment in my life and trade," he said.

"The Rheem Grant has been really helpful in my life and I install Rheem's every day, so it's good to see the brand that I love and install actually help out apprentices like myself."

Mr Pershouse has had a lifelong passion for the industry, working in sales of plumbing supplies before embarking on his plumbing apprenticeship with Plumbplus.

He said the grant helped assist with tuition, accommodation and the purchase of special tools.

"It was honestly a bit of a lifesaver, especially during hard times," he said.

"It's definitely a great thing for future apprentices to apply for."

Rheem Australia managing director Chris Taylor said the program was established to reinforce the company's commitment to the next generation of Australian plumbers, beyond products and innovation.

The 20 grants this year are valued at \$3000, each grant includes \$2000 to go towards TAFE/RTO fees and textbooks and \$1000 tool voucher to help build a toolbox.

Grant applications opened Thursday 1 February and close 11.59pm Sunday 28 April.

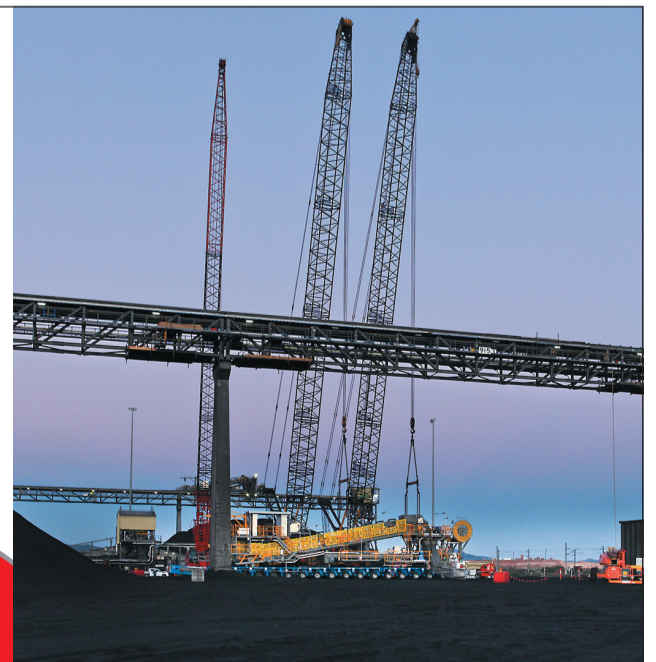


Plumb Plus apprentice Brandon Pershouse. Picture: SUPPLIED



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Renewable power kick-off

By Breanna Lloyd

The 480MWp Aldoga Solar Farm owned by ACCIONA Energia officially opened its community hub on Thursday 1 February on Goondoon Street Gladstone.

As a lead-up to the start of construction for the farm, the hub will house the project team as well as a resource for jobseekers and community members wanting to learn more about the project.

Director of engineering and construction Andrew Tshai kiwsky said they are thrilled to open their doors to the wider community around Gladstone.

“There are lots of opportunities for locals to get involved or for those looking for work. We want to see the project be as successful as possible,” Andrew said.

“Big projects like Aldoga create lots of opportunities in the local economy.

“A project of this scale will create lots of indirect employment as well as drive local spending with local businesses.

“What we’ll see with Aldoga and similarly with other projects in the Central Queensland Renewable Energy Zone will be a whole economy of services and skills spring up around these major pieces of infrastructure.”

Set to create over 350 construction jobs over an 18-month construction period, the Aldoga Solar Farm plans to kick off Gladstone’s renewable energy industry with a 100 per cent output provided to Stanwell Corporation for the Central Queensland Hydrogen Project.

This project is planned to create new jobs, skills and opportunities in the green hydrogen sector.

Construction on the site is scheduled to begin in March with the first 25 containers of equipment arriving at the Port of Gladstone this month.

In total, the Aldoga Solar Farm will move 2500 container loads through the Port of Gladstone, creating additional employment opportunities at the port and along the supply chain.

Gladstone Regional Council Mayor Matt Burnett said the Aldoga Solar Farm is an exciting opportunity for the region to get ahead of the game as the focal point for Central Queensland’s renewable energy economy.

“Off the back of Powerlink’s SuperGrid Training Centre and Transmission Hub that was opened last year this is another project on our doorstep for job seekers or those looking for a career change,” Mr Burnett said.

“The 350 construction jobs are great in the short term, however more importantly this project will help secure a renewable energy supply for Gladstone’s new and existing industries supporting thousands of jobs in the long term.

“It’s all part of our 10-year Gladstone Re-



Gladstone Regional Council Mayor Matt Burnett, Gladstone Chamber of Commerce president Samantha Devers, Gladstone Ports Corporation team members and ACCIONA Energia project team.



Aldoga Solar Farm project director Pieter Burhmann, Gladstone Regional Council Mayor Matt Burnett, Gladstone Ports Corporation chief executive officer Craig Haymes. Pictures: CONTRIBUTED

gion Economic Transition Roadmap and it’s all coming together.”

Port of Gladstone CEO Craig Haymes said as a Queensland-owned port, GPC is proud to be supporting the global transition to clean energy and strengthening Australia’s economic growth and sustainability.

“We are proud to support regional trade in Central Queensland thanks to our strong partnership with global shipping line ANL – providing industries with container services that can connect their produce with markets around the world,” Mr Haymes said.

“ANL has a strong foundation of expertise

in Australia, spanning more than six decades.

“As a shipping line with a diverse product offering, they understand the importance of direct connections into key regional ports.

“We welcome the benefits the Aldoga Solar Farm will bring to our community, region and State.”

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Wind farm snub anger

Boulder Creek Wind Farm project developer, Aula Energy, has snubbed Australian wind turbine manufacturers for Asian-produced products.

Up to 60 wind turbines are expected at the Boulder Creek site.

At a community forum held at the Frenchville Sports Club on Wednesday 31 January, it was revealed that up to 60 wind turbines would be sourced from China and not Australian manufacturers.

Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing and Federal Member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, stated this is another clear indication that renewable energy companies have no regard for the Australian community.

"Not only are regional communities feeling the wrath of irresponsible renewable energy developments, but now Australian manufacturers are also being left in the dust for developers to import overseas produced turbines," Ms Landry said.

"Victorian-based manufacturer of wind turbines, Keppel Prince, reported in September last year that despite having the full capability to produce wind towers for projects, its factory, which has the potential to employ 150 hard-working Australians, was sitting empty.

"It's outrageous that once again, Labor is willing to sell out Australians to meet their renewable energy ideologies and is costing Aussies jobs in manufacturing."

Federal Member for Flynn, Colin Boyce said importing renewable energy components is posing a serious risk to Australia's national and energy security.

"With high energy prices and global insecurity, now is the time to ensure that Australia can do what it can to keep critical manufacturing here in Australia," Mr Boyce said.

"Labor's rush to renewables will cause blackouts, further increase the cost-of-living



Colin Boyce, Glen Kelly, Michelle Landry, and David Littleproud at the Moah Creek Wind Farm.

Picture: CONTRIBUTED

and will destroy Australian manufacturing and cost Australians their job.

"Australia needs to maintain reliable baseload power."

Senator Canavan said the jobs claims of green energy investors are just empty words.

"Most of the people working on these projects will be from interstate, they do not

source much Australian-made equipment and there are almost no long-term jobs from wind or solar factories," Mr Canavan said.

AER takes court action over Callide power outage

The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) has instituted proceedings in the Federal Court against Callide Power Trading Pty Ltd (Callide Power Trading) for failing to comply with its performance standards for the Callide C power station.

On the afternoon of 25 May 2021, an incident occurred involving the trip of multiple generators and high voltage transmission lines in Queensland following an initial event at the Callide C power station. This resulted in the loss of approximately 3045mW of generation and 2300mW of customer load being disconnected from the power system resulting in widespread blackouts to households and businesses

across Queensland.

After conducting a thorough investigation, the AER alleges that Callide Power Trading, the Registered Participant for Callide C, breached rule 4.15(a)(1) and clause 5.2.5(a)(1) of the National Electricity Rules in respect of the Callide C4 generating unit by failing to ensure its plant met or exceeded applicable performance standards, and by failing to plan and design its facilities and ensure they were operated to comply with those performance standards.

The failure of Callide C4's protection systems to disconnect the generating unit from the power system resulted in the trip of multiple generators.

Callide C4 has been offline since the incident.

AER Board Member Mr Justin Oliver said compliance with generator performance standards is critical to the safe and secure operation of the power system, and is one of the AER's compliance and enforcement priorities.

"Performance standards describe how a generating unit should perform and how it should respond to adverse events.

These standards are agreed between the Registered Participant and the Australian Energy Market Operator."

"Failure to comply with these stan-

dards can risk power system security, see consumers disconnected from power supply and cause wholesale energy prices to increase during and beyond these events."

"It's vital that Registered Participants and Generators are aware of their performance standards and comply with them at all times so that the market and consumers aren't wrongly exposed to the consequences of adverse events," Mr Oliver said.

The AER is seeking pecuniary penalties, declarations, orders for remedying the breach or preventing the recurrence of the breach, and costs.

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A sweet collaboration

The Australian Sugar Milling Council (ASMC) has released its Federal Pre-Budget submission outlining an ambitious agenda for Industry and Government collaboration to realise the full economic and environmental potential of the sugar industry.

ASMC chair Jannik Olejas said sugar is an export-oriented industry that is already worth \$4 billion p.a. and provides 20,000 jobs in Queensland and beyond.

“Government and industry must work together to capture the game-changing economic opportunities provided by the industry’s capabilities in sustainable energy,” he said.

The ASMC Pre-budget submission, released on Friday 2 February, outlines actions the Australian Government can take over the next four years to assist the industry with programs to diversify industry revenue streams beyond raw sugar and within the circular economy, achieve mills’ net zero emissions by 2050, stabilise and grow the supply of quality sugarcane to mills and address mills’ skills and labour shortages.

To realise the emerging opportunities, as outlined in the sugar industry’s 2040 vision Sugar Plus, of converting co-products like bagasse, molasses, sugarcane tops and trash into renewable electricity, bio-fuels like sustainable aviation fuels, green hydrogen and bio-methane for example, ASMC seeks assistance for a feasibility assessment to increase cogeneration supply from 440 MW to 1,000 MW’s (\$6 million), support for ambitious reforms to create a vibrant domestic bio-fuels sector and assistance for the sector to develop new methods under the Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) scheme (\$1.5 million) which will support further decarbonisation of the sector.

“Australia has an opportunity to substantially expand and grow the types of sustainable energy it produces, however, government and industry must urgently work together to capture these opportunities given the investments already being made by governments around the world,” Mr Olejas said.

“In ten years, Australia shouldn’t look back on this as a missed opportunity when there is a clear pathway now to stake Australia’s global role in the production of sustainable energy.”

To de-carbonise the sector and help achieve the Government’s ambitious Paris targets, the ASMC seeks \$32 million to identify and commence projects that achieve the least cost carbon abatement within the mills. These projects could include transitioning mill-owned cane transport operations from diesel locomotives to electric and hybrid options and abating the emissions from factories.

To address the sector’s structural skills and labour shortages, the ASMC is seeking



A Federal Pre-Budget submission has been released by the Australian Milling Council, outlining a collaboration between the industry and the government.

\$500,000 to develop options.

These options include labour attraction, new training approaches and schools-to-mill programs, implementation of the agreed reforms under the Migration Strategy to how temporary skilled migration visas are administered and encourage workers to migrate to and stay in sugar regions, through better co-ordination at all levels of government to improve the liveability of those towns and cities that service the sugar industry, with an emphasis on additional housing availability and affordability.

“While other countries actively subsidise their sugar industry, we are effectively placing new taxes and red tape on our sector, at a time when we need to be encouraging greater investment in the sector to capture nascent opportunities in areas such as sustainable energy,” Mr Olejas said.

“Without cane to process enough skilled workers in our supply chains, we simply cannot tap into the new opportunities that hydrogen, electricity cogeneration, and sustainable aviation fuel provides for our sector and the Australian economy.”



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Power bills down for some

Energy bills will now be even lower thanks to another Miles Government initiative aimed at tackling cost-of-living pressures.

The Battery Booster program, officially launched on Monday 12 February, offers rebates of up to \$4000 to about 2,000 eligible households to install a solar battery system.

Households who purchase a battery system will be able to store power for when the sun isn't shining, further cutting power bills and emissions, and reducing load on the grid.

The \$10 million program will allow homes with a new or existing solar PV system of at least five kilowatts a rebate of between \$3,000 and \$4,000 to purchase a solar battery system of six-kilowatt hours (kWh) or more.

Rebates are means-tested, and \$3000 cashback is available to eligible households with a combined annual household taxable income of \$180,000 or less.

Queenslanders with an annual income of less than \$66,667 may be eligible for a higher rebate of \$4000.

To qualify, homeowners must use an approved installer and an approved battery system.

The Battery Booster program gives Queenslanders access to cleaner, reliable and affordable electricity.

The key aim of the Miles Government's Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, enshrines 80 per cent renewable energy by 2035.

Energy Minister Mick de Brenni said with about 150 rooftop solar installations every day, Queensland has the highest rate of rooftop solar installations in the nation, and it's clear that Queenslanders are keen to embrace renewable energy and the economic and environmental benefits that come



The Miles Government has planned to tackle the cost of living pressures, starting with its Battery Booster Program.

along with it.

"The new Battery Booster initiative invites eligible Queenslanders to make the most of Queensland's mighty sunshine, to help keep household bills down," Mr Brenni said.

"We know that all Queenslanders are passionate about taking action on climate and lowering their energy costs, and that's why we've targeted this program specifically at those households who may not have previously considered purchasing a solar battery.

"Because of our ongoing partnerships with industry and advocates, including the

Smart Energy Council and the Power Together Coalition, the Miles Government will always work hard to help ease the cost of living pressures and deliver cleaner, cheaper and more reliable power to Queenslanders."

Smart Energy Council chief executive John Grimes said Queensland is the Sunshine State and the Solar State, and the Battery Booster program will make it the Solar Battery State, leading the nation in the uptake of household batteries.

"The Battery Booster program will help Queensland families save money on their

power bills, whilst building a stronger, more resilient energy grid," Mr Grimes said.

"The great news is that the more solar and batteries that are in the energy grid, the cheaper electricity is for everyone.

"The Smart Energy Council welcomes the strong commitment from the Queensland Government to quality and safety in the Battery Booster program.

"The focus on qualified people, quality products and quality services will deliver a program with safety and integrity at its core."



Gladstone Ports Corporation would like to extend a warm welcome to our new **Apprentice and Trainee cohort for 2024.**

Engineering diversity

Engineers Australia welcomes the Pathway to Diversity in STEM Final Report and is urging the Australian Government to adopt the panel's recommendations and its Diversity in STEM Program Strategy.

The report makes eleven recommendations to increase the diversity of Australia's STEM system, from promoting equity and diversity throughout the educational journey and STEM careers to addressing stereotypes and eliminating workplace bullying, harassment, racism, and discrimination.

Engineers Australia CEO Romilly Madew AO endorsed the report, calling for the Government and employers to act with urgency, citing the engineering profession as a glaring example of why we need to shift the dial.

"In Australia, we are suffering a severe lack of diversity in engineering, just 14 per cent of working engineers in Australia are women," Ms Madew said.

"If we look down the pipeline, things do not improve – of our engineering graduates, just 19 per cent are women.

"This is at a time when there is a huge demand for engineers in the labour market.

"Addressing the lack of diversity in STEM occupations is critical to lessening current and future skills shortages.

The decline in uptake of maths and science subjects in school, and declining commencements in engineering studies in the past decade, are concerning signs for Australia's engineering workforce pipeline."

The accompanying research report into STEM career pathways also released today shows the varying diversity outcomes across STEM disciplines, with Ms Madew emphasising the importance of developing policies and programs that consider the unique aspects of different STEM fields.

"We need to elevate the 'e' in STEM because engineering has a unique place in the national agenda," she said.

"It is critical that the panel's recommended advisory council includes an engineering perspective and that strategies are tailored to meet the unique challenges across all STEM fields, moving away from a generic, one-size-fits-all STEM approach."

Engineers Australia is calling on the Government to adopt the report's recommendation for future program development to support STEM-qualified migrants in obtaining local employment.

"We are pleased to see Engineers Australia's Global Engineering Talent (GET) program highlighted in the report and we would like to see a national rollout of this innovative program which provides migrant engineers with local experience, references and networks," she said.

"This program has the potential to meet the skilled workforce needs of Australian businesses, support infrastructure and energy transition efforts, and assist migrant engineers in finding roles commensurate with their skills."

Engineers Australia commits to working with the Australian Government and other stakeholders to implement the panel's recommendations, aiming to build a more inclusive, diverse, and innovative STEM community that utilises the talents of all Australians, including those from migrant backgrounds and underrepresented groups.

"To achieve the richness of thought that diversity will bring, we need to work together to remove the roadblocks that stop Australians from entering, or remaining in, STEM professions," she said.



Engineers Australia CEO Romilly Madew.

Picture: CONTRIBUTED



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'High value' in STEM work

The STEM Career Pathways report and Pathways to Diversity in STEM Review highlight the crucial task of continuing to break down barriers to a diverse STEM workforce and providing greater opportunity and career certainty to researchers.

The STEM Career Pathways report surveyed nearly 3,500 people working in STEM.

It was conducted and written by Science and Technology Australia on behalf of the Prime Minister's National Science and Technology Council.

It found there is an increasing need for STEM skills from employers, this need will only increase in years to come, and STEM qualifications are highly valued by employers.

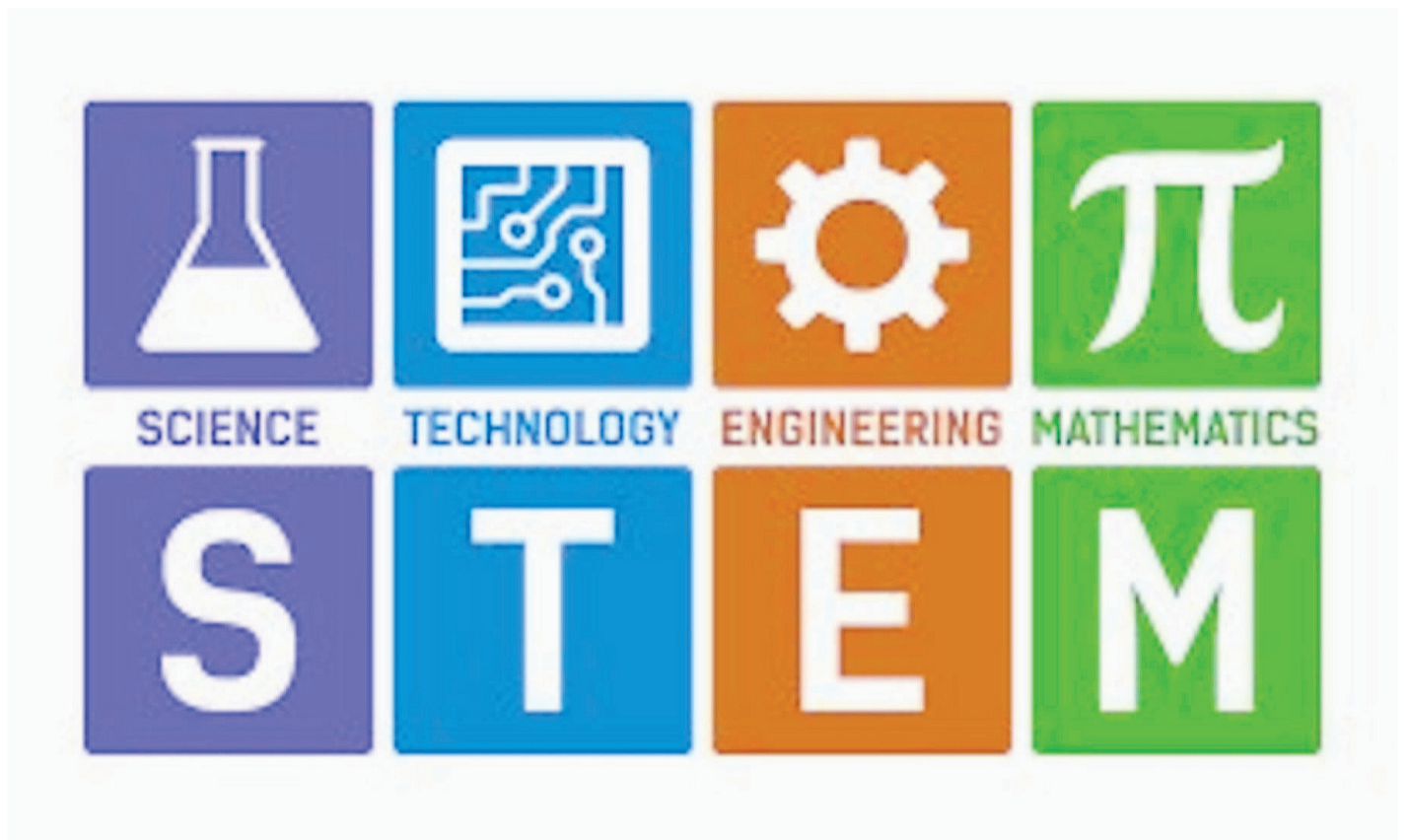
But while STEM workers are committed to their careers, barriers include long hours, job insecurity and unclear career pathways.

The Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review final recommendations – also released today – charts a path to powerfully boosting diversity including by learning from best practices, such as STA's game-changing Superstars of STEM program.

STA acting CEO Sandra Gardam said science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills and workers play a crucial role in the country's workforce, and this is only going to increase.

"Together, these two reports provide essential insights on what Australia needs to do to support a growing STEM workforce," she said.

"The Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review tells us how to get more people into STEM jobs and careers, and the STEM Career Pathways report reveals how to make workplaces ready and retain talented STEM workers."



STA submitted the Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review on behalf of its members.

"STA is a champion of diversity and our Superstars of STEM program has had a powerful effect on the public visibility of diverse scientists," she said.

"We are pleased to see the program recognised as a model of best practice in the

Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review.

"The expert panel also accepted our recommendations for a whole-of-government strategy to increase diversity and inclusion in STEM, the establishment of a dedicated advisory council, a government communications strategy to increase awareness about the importance of diversity in STEM, and

acknowledged how important it is to give greater certainty to researchers through longer research grants.

"We congratulate the Review panel, including Sally-Ann Williams, Mikaela Jade and Associate Professor Parwinder Kaur, for their work."

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OPINION

Get 'beef capital' moving



WITH WARREN ACUTT

2024 should be a year of vision.

A local government election next month and a state election in the latter half of the year would usually bring out the big vision statements.

But as I listen to Brian Eno's 'Passengers Original Soundtracks 1,' I am reminded that one's vision might not be everyone's cup of tea, it may even be another's nightmare.

(My wife is not a fan of the record).

2024 is also the year Beef Australia is being held in Rockhampton (show grounds).

Arguably the southern hemisphere's biggest beef industry exposition.

At the risk of giving some nightmares, I like to outline a vision that affects Rockhampton, Beef Australia, the Rockhampton High School and the CQ University.

Move Rockhampton High School to the current CQU Canning Street Campus (the former TAFE College) and use the high school land as part of a bigger show grounds/sporting complex, and include accommodation.

CQ University is moving its Canning Street Campus across the river to its Yaamba Road Campus.

Therefore, I assume the Canning Street site will be vacant and possibly on the market.

Beef Australia could do with more space. It has already outgrown the Showgrounds complex.

Rockhampton needs more accommodation alternatives, when major events are being hosted, clearly evident with Rocky Nat's and Beef Australia.

Football and netball are at least two sports in Rockhampton that need significant funds spent to provide more modern, suitable facilities. And for a city that is advertised as the skin cancer capital of Australia, it has little undercover sporting facilities. Facilities that could possibly be also used for hosting conferences.

Another resource, Rockhampton could



Brittany Lauga, Mayor Tony Williams, Bryce Camm, Barry O'Rourke and Minister Murray Watt.

do with more, especially able to hold 1500 or more people.

Add this to the existing, and proposed, infrastructure in the Victoria Park precinct, that borders the showgrounds and high school, and I feel you have the makings of a powerful vision to sell to those who can make this happen.

(The concept could also be sold as a training facility for international teams in preparing for Queensland's Olympic Games in 2032.

Importantly giving the project a deadline to be completed by.)

The benefits are the economic impact of the extra, and variety of, events Rockhampton could host, along with securing Beef Australia, in the long term.

Back in 2005, the Beef Australia board expressed concerns about Rockhampton being able to host the event.

This year I believe around \$20 million will be spent by the board to host Beef Australia.

A significant part of this is to bring in and erect the required infrastructure, then pull it down and take it away.



Beef Australia aerial view.

Then, there is the lack of accommodation in the city.

Council and its citizens cannot just assume Beef Australia will always be held in Rockhampton, because it started here.

The investment must be made to improve facilities.

Visions, like the one I have outlined, (if judged to have merit), need to be

discussed now.

Next year is too late.

Could someone possibly get the Rockhampton Council, Beef Australia, CQ University and state education department in a room, to get the ball rolling?

Or, are we happy to just plod along with what we have?

Game-changing solutions to diversity in STEM fields

The Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) welcomes the release of the Diversity in STEM review, in particular the focus on proactive inclusion, equity, fairness and safety, and a place at the STEM research and development table for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The report's recommendations present an actionable roadmap for enhancing diversity and inclusion within STEM fields.

There is an urgent need for committed efforts across government, industry, academia, community, and education sectors to move the needle on boosting diversity in STEM.

ATSE welcomes the recommendation for expanding ATSE's Elevate Boosting Women in STEM program to more diverse cohorts of STEM scholars.

ATSE is proud to deliver Elevate, the Australian Government's flagship STEM undergraduate and post-graduate scholarship program enabling diverse people to thrive in STEM.

ATSE also welcomes the recommendation for Learned Academies to take a lead position in working with Australia's first scientists and engineers to weave Traditional Knowledge into science and research systems.

ATSE CEO, Kylie Walker, says that these recommendations, if implemented, will help build a better, fairer, and more resilient STEM future for Australia.

"ATSE agrees with the recommendation to develop a national whole-of-government strategy and an advisory council for diversity in STEM.

To make significant and lasting change,

these efforts need to be more deliberate and cross-sectoral. It will be critical for this Council to be backed by a whole-of-government approach and have adequate resourcing to effect systemic change.

"We are proud to implement the Government's largest single diversity in STEM investment – the Elevate: Boosting women in STEM scholarship program."

This review gives ample backing for the program to expand and embrace more diverse cohorts and shape a more diverse STEM sector in the long term.

"We are also pleased to see recognition that Learned Academies have an integral role in working with Traditional Knowledge holders to help weave their 60,000 plus years of scientific and engineering achievement into western science and technology. A partnership based on mutual respect and awareness is essential for

producing new innovations," said Kylie Walker.

Many of the review's recommendations echo ATSE's submissions to the review, including developing a centralised strategy for diversity in STEM, using government grant criteria to encourage the uptake of diversity initiatives, and basing programs on evidence and best practice.

ATSE commends the Review panel, led by Dr Sally-Ann Williams FTSE. ATSE looks forward to working with the government to implement these recommendations in full and stands ready to utilise its best practice programs – from STELR which is supporting diverse learning in over 900 schools, through to making the Elevate scholarship program available to even more aspiring diverse scientists, technologists and engineers.

OPINION

CQ poised for bright year



As the new year started, Central Queensland found itself in the midst of a bustling job market, gearing up for what is typically one of its busiest seasonal periods, from February to May.

The region continues to witness growth and resilience despite challenges, as reflected in recent labor force data released by the Queensland government.

The latest data

According to the latest figures, employment in Central Queensland has seen an uplift of 1.3 per cent compared to the same period last year.

However, it's important to note that the region's unemployment rate has climbed to 4.9 per cent, marking a 1.5 per cent annual increase, and stands over 20 per cent higher than the state average.

Despite this, there's a silver lining in the form of a rising participation rate, currently at 69.5 per cent, indicating more people are actively engaging in the workforce.

The January release of the Internet Vacancy Index provides further insight into the job market dynamics.

Although there has been a slight decrease of 2.0 per cent in job advertisements nationally, Central Queensland appears to fare better with only a 0.4 per cent decline in Queensland.

This data, sourced from platforms such as Seek, CareerOne, and Workforce Australia, paints a picture of robust demand despite the marginal downturn.

A closer look at local data tells a story of its own.

The Jobs in Central Queensland platform experienced a notable 28 per cent surge in job listings from December to January, as businesses resumed operations post the summer break.

What's truly remarkable is the staggering 75 per cent increase in job advertisements compared to January 2023, underscoring both heightened workforce demand and the growing preference for locally targeted job advertising channels.



Central Queensland is poised for a year of growth and prosperity in industries such as mining writes Wendy Hannan.

So, what does all this mean for Central Queensland's job market?

Firstly, it's evident that despite the challenges posed by the shift to renewable energy sources and other economic uncertainties, the region continues to exhibit resilience and adaptability. The steady rise in employment figures reflects the underlying strength of key sectors and industries driving the local economy.

When it comes to sectors, Central Queensland boasts a diverse landscape with significant contributions from resources, agriculture, tourism, and healthcare.

The mining and resources sector, in particular, remains a powerhouse, driving employment and economic growth in areas like Gladstone and Mackay.

With ongoing projects and investments, this sector continues to offer promising opportunities for job seekers with the right skills and expertise.

In addition to resources, agriculture plays a vital role, especially in areas like Rockhampton, known as the 'beef capital' of Australia.

The agricultural sector not only provides employment but also contributes to the re-

gion's rich cultural heritage and identity.

Tourism, another cornerstone of Central Queensland's economy, has been gradually rebounding as domestic travel picks up momentum.

With the pristine beaches of the Capricorn Coast, the tourism sector offers a plethora of job opportunities, particularly in hospitality and service industries.

Furthermore, healthcare and allied services continue to be in high demand, driven by an ageing population and increasing health awareness.

From hospitals to aged care facilities, there's a growing need for skilled professionals to cater to the healthcare needs of Central Queensland's residents.

As we navigate through the first quarter of 2024, it's imperative for job seekers to stay abreast of market trends and emerging opportunities.

Upskilling and reskilling remain crucial in an ever-evolving job market, with emphasis on digital literacy and transferable skills.

The Wider Economic Outlook

A recent economic report from BOQ (Bank of Queensland) indicates that the Aussie economy is likely to end the year in a better

state than it started.

Reports indicate that the government is considering additional aid to address the cost of living.

Household disposable income is expected to see a positive upturn in the latter part of this year.

There remains a significant amount of construction and engineering projects in progress, including infrastructure development for transportation and environmental initiatives.

The robust utilisation of capacity is supporting capital expenditure, and while El Nino's impact hasn't been as severe as anticipated, certain regions have experienced significant flooding, which has partly offset these positive developments.

What are the potential economic risks for the year ahead?

There's a chance that despite forecasts, consumer spending could surpass expectations due to increased wealth, a robust job market, and pent-up demand.

This likelihood could further materialise if interest rates are lowered sooner than anticipated, or if fiscal policies become more accommodating.

However, a major concern stems from the global economic landscape.

The European economy teeters on the brink of recession, while indications suggest that US consumers are beginning to feel economic strain.

Despite significant economic stimulus from the Chinese government in 2023, there hasn't been a substantial uptick in economic activity, leading to expectations of further fiscal and monetary interventions in the coming year.

Arguably, the most significant risk lies in the event that fiscal and monetary policy support falls short of expectations.

This could be primarily driven by the inflation outlook for 2024, which, although experiencing a rapid decline, is projected to stabilise at a slower rate than previously anticipated.

In conclusion

Central Queensland stands poised for growth and prosperity in the year ahead, buoyed by resilient industries, a dynamic job market, and a resilient workforce.

For more information and insights about local job opportunities and recruitment support visit JobsinCentralQueensland.au

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CQ Power backs QLD plan



Key players in the renewable energy sector, CQ Power, addressed the Transport and Resources Committee Parliamentary Inquiry at a public hearing in Rockhampton.

Central Queensland Power (CQP), a key player in the renewable energy sector, has addressed the Transport and Resources Committee Parliamentary Inquiry at a public hearing in Rockhampton on Tuesday 30 January.

The company offered its support for the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023 and the overarching Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, applauding the state's commitment to a cleaner energy future.

The Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023 seeks to enshrine key commitments from the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, ensuring a clean and competitive energy system, affordable energy for households and businesses, increased support for rooftop solar and batteries, plus infrastructure frameworks and governance for a coordinated energy transformation.

CQP endorsed key features of the Energy Bill, including legislating renewable energy targets, developing a reporting and review mechanism on the delivery of these targets, Ministerial involvement in the development of the Queensland SuperGrid Infrastructure Blueprint, and establishment of advisory bodies to oversee and advise on employee and industry impacts.

Vincent Dwyer, CQP Director and Co-Founder at Energy Estate said as they witness the global shift towards sustainable energy solutions, the Queensland Government's commitment to legislating renewable energy targets is a commendable step.

"Our support for the Energy Bill aligns with our core mission to actively contribute to Queensland's energy transition and foster a greener, more resilient future," Mr Dwyer said.



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“Through our diverse portfolio, including the recent completion of the Dulacca Wind Farm and the progress of the 372-megawatt Moah Creek Wind Farm, we are actively shaping the renewable energy landscape in Queensland.

“In doing so, we are committed to working with project partners, Government-owned corporations, Traditional Custodians of the Area, local councils, stakeholders and suppliers.”

Commenting on the recommendations CQP submitted at the hearing, Mr Dwyer said coexistence and community acceptance are fundamental elements of their recommendations to the Committee.

“We advocate for collaboration with traditional industries, including agriculture and the resources sector, as we jointly strive for a seamless and impactful energy transition,” he said.

CQP underscores its unwavering commitment to fostering meaningful connections with the Traditional Custodians of the Land, notably the Darumbal People in the Rockhampton Area, concerning the Moah Creek Wind Farm Project. The company is dedicated to purposeful engagement, taking into consideration the perspectives and considerations of all stakeholders involved. Moreover, CQP acknowledges the importance of building robust relationships with host and neighbouring landholders throughout the planning, development, and delivery phases of a wind farm project.

“While this legislation does not directly address landholder negotiations, we welcome the initiative to extend the GasFields Commission of Queensland’s mandate to include renewable energy projects,” Mr Dwyer said.

“We recommend that the Committee considers amendments to the GasFields Commission Act 2013 to encompass renewable energy, ensuring constructive relationships with landholders and coexistence with the agricultural sector.”

Banana Shire Council, the Environmen-



tal Advocacy Group in Central Queensland, Colin Boyce MP (Federal Member for Flynn), and AgForce Queensland were amongst the other stakeholders set to address the hearing in Rockhampton.

The Transport and Resources committee

has now completed consultation in Brisbane and Rockhampton, and will next travel to Mackay, Townsville and Cairns before concluding its public hearings on Friday 2 February 2024.

The committee is due to table its report on 01 March 2024, from which point the

Government has three months to respond to the report’s recommendations.

“As we eagerly await the outcome of the Committee’s inquiry and the Parliament passing the legislation, CQP reaffirms its commitment to actively engaging with industry stakeholders, communities, and policymakers,” the CQP spokesperson said.

This marks a significant milestone in our ongoing journey to contribute meaningfully to Queensland’s renewable energy goals.”

CleanCo Queensland has partnered with CQP to develop a portfolio of renewable projects in Central Queensland.

CleanCo General Manager, Julie Whitcombe, said: “Queensland’s energy transformation means moving to more sustainable energy sources and reducing emissions, while creating jobs. CleanCo is committed to working with industry partners, like CQP, and communities to pursue opportunities to grow renewable energy production sustainably and responsibly and advance the energy transformation to meet Queensland’s renewable energy and emission reduction targets.”

“Central Queensland is the state’s industrial powerhouse and investment in reliable, affordable, clean energy to drive future economic activity and industry development is good news for the region. As a publicly owned clean energy company, CleanCo is steadfast in its commitment to unlock the renewable energy potential of the region, creating jobs and long-term prosperity for so many Central Queensland communities.”

CQP, a joint venture between RES Group and Energy Estate, stands at the forefront of renewable energy development in Australia.

With over 40 years of global experience and a portfolio boasting more than 23GW of renewable projects, CQP is actively contributing to Queensland’s ambitious energy transition.

CQP-owned Moah Creek Wind Farm is an innovative partnership between publicly-owned generator CleanCo and the CQP joint venture.

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AGL Energy forges ahead

By Marion Rae/AAP

Electricity and gas giant AGL Energy is pressing ahead with a multibillion-dollar pipeline of projects amid fears Australia's renewable energy targets are off track.

AGL has almost doubled its development pipeline since the 2022 stoush with its biggest shareholder billionaire Mike Cannon-Brookes who forced the company out of the slow lane on shuttering coal plants.

Reporting a solid return to profitability in its half-year results released on Thursday, AGL also rejected accusations it had exploited energy users hit by years of surging power bills.

"We are acutely aware of the cost of living pressures both our customers and the broader community is under," chief executive Damien Nicks told AAP.

Former anti-monopoly tsar Professor Allan Fels has alleged Australia's biggest energy companies, airlines and supermarkets are price-gouging consumers and generating extortionate profits.

However, Mr Nicks said AGL had plenty of competitors.

"We have a large retail footprint but we compete with the likes of Origin Energy, Alinta," he said.

"We are in a very, very competitive market."

Mr Nicks said the company's \$70 million support program targeted people in hardship because it was important to keep them connected.

AGL announced a half-year net profit of \$576 million, compared with a loss of \$1.075 billion a year ago amid an energy shock and the impending closure of the coal-fired Liddell Power Station.

Shares in AGL surged 10.9 per cent to \$8.85 in afternoon trade as investors welcomed the solid result and interim dividend of 26 cents per share - more than triple a year earlier.

Underlying earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation rose to \$1.07 billion in the half, up 78 per cent.

Revenue fell 20.8 per cent to \$6.18 billion in the six months to December 31, but the underlying profit of \$399 million was sharp-



AGL chief Damien Nicks rejected accusations the energy giant had been exploiting customers.

Picture: BIANCA DE MARCHI/AAP PHOTOS

ly higher than \$87 million a year earlier.

In line with a strong first half, AGL pushed its fiscal 2024 guidance for underlying profit to the top of the guidance range of \$680 million to \$780 million.

Mr Nicks said the strong operational and financial performance provided "headroom" for investment in the future business and energy transition for Australia's biggest emitter.

"Coal ultimately exits the market over the next 12 years so we have to - as a market, and as an industry - have that pipeline and build it out," he said.

But financial details were yet to come from the federal government on the expanded Capacity Investment Scheme, which aims to fast-track 32GW of generation in-

vestment.

"We'll see where it makes sense for us to be that, or not," Mr Nicks said.

Separately, an agreement is in place with the Victorian government for the ongoing operation and closure of Loy Yang A power station in 2035.

Chief financial officer Gary Brown said AGL was well-placed to deploy up to \$4 billion by 2030 towards the transition of its energy generation portfolio, supported by strong cash flow and a larger and more diversified pool of capital.

AGL plans to add 12 gigawatts of firming and renewable capacity by 2036, and said the development pipeline had grown from 5.3GW to 5.8GW since August.

In the meantime, coal-fired power plants

can "flex" down in the middle of the day when solar energy is dominant and prices are low, without causing extra wear and tear.

UBS energy analyst Tom Allen welcomed the earnings upgrade and AGL's "clearer insight" into how it will replace coal assets expected to retire over the next decade.

Wholesale energy prices were lower across all states after government caps on coal and prices, fewer outages, mild weather and increasingly higher penetration of solar in the national electricity market.

AGL's total fuel costs for gas and coal generation fell 28.6 per cent in the first six months of FY24.

But Mr Brown said it was too early to comment on the price outlook for fiscal 2025.

Isuzu chiefs give nod to 35-year run as top-seller

Isuzu's status as the leader in the Australian truck market was celebrated in Sydney recently.

Isuzu Motors president and chief operating officer Shinsuke Minami travelled Down Under to celebrate the unbroken 35-year Australian truck market leadership run at the company's National Dealer meeting in Sydney. His visit comes at a pivotal time, with high industry expectations following the recent launch of an all-new range of light to heavy-duty truck models including zero-exhaust emission driveline models.

"It is a pleasure and honour for the whole of the Isuzu Australia organisation to host Minami-san at our annual dealer business meeting," Isuzu Australia Limited (IAL) managing director and chief executive officer Takeo Shindo said.

Isuzu Trucks closed out 2023 with another sales record, delivering Australian businesses a record 13,658 trucks for 28.6 per cent total market share.

IAL director and chief operating officer Andrew Harbison further commented on the significance of the visit.

"IAL supports a vast array of road-transport applications and businesses operating across the myriad of Australian industry, but ultimately, our enduring success comes down to a very simple proposition—purpose-built product, sold, serviced and supported by Australia's most comprehensive and professional dealer network," he said.



IAL managing director and chief executive officer Takeo Shindo, IML president, representative director and chief operating officer Shinsuke Minami, IAL director and chief operating officer Andrew Harbison, IML general manager regional management office No.2 Yoshihiko Watanabe with IAL staff.



CapRescue soars across Central Qld in 2023

As the sun set in 2023, RACQ CapRescue reflected on a year of continuing to make a real difference through unwavering commitment and the tremendous support of the Central Queensland community.

January witnessed a flurry of 50 rescues, setting the stage for a year of challenges and triumphs. Despite the substantial flight hours and operational costs reaching new heights, the unwavering dedication of the Rescue300 crew remained steadfast.

Throughout 2023, the crew faced diverse challenges, kicking off with the retrieval of nine people from a car in flooded waters following a deluge of rain. Missions also included attending to a man who had fallen from a horse whilst mustering on a property in Theodore to rescuing a mother and daughter from Great Keppel Island suffering severe pain from Irukandji stings.

Critical inter-hospital transfers from smaller facilities around the region demonstrated the necessity of CapRescue in remote areas for those needing more advanced medical care.

September 10th marked a significant milestone as the CapRescue crew celebrated their 10,000th rescue and took the time to reflect on their impactful journey. Despite over 500 rescues in 2023 and the daily average increasing to 1.4, the ongoing community support continued to fuel their life-saving mission.

This was made clear during the CapRescue Annual Appeal as the call for fundraising echoed around the 350,000 km2 region, and Central Queensland shone, contributing over \$150,000.

Beyond their life-saving rescues, 2023

saw CapRescue actively engaging with the community through vibrant events, fostering unity and support. Colour Me Capricorn Rockhampton, held for the fifth year, raised over \$13,000 with 550 participants all expressing great joy in contributing to such a meaningful cause.

Emerald witnessed its first Colour Me Capricorn on May 7th, attracting 250 participants and raising \$6,000. The Rockhampton Community Open Day at CQUniversity in July offered families a fun and educational experience, while the biennial CapRescue Ball on July 21st blended glamour with heartfelt stories from past patient Kev Mauger.

Gladstone's Community Open Day on July 30th allowed families to explore the rescue helicopter up close. The Spring Picnic in August and the CapRescue Degustation in September continued to unite the community, including the celebration of local produce in the six-course dinner presented by renowned chef Matt Golinski and guest Glen Barratt.

The year's events wrapped up with Colour Me Capricorn Gladstone, which raised \$14,000, and the ever-popular Christmas Seafood Raffle, which made some people very happy in time for Christmas.

Community fundraisers scattered across Central Queensland showcased the region's spirit. The Springsure Working Horse Campdraft, drenched in rain, raised \$20,000, highlighting the resilience of volunteers and the community's unwavering support.

These events and the many others organised by various groups help strengthen the wings that keep CapRescue soaring above Central Queensland.

Volunteers are also a valuable part of the CapRescue family. During National Volunteer Week in May, the dedication of the StepUp CapRescue Volunteers was celebrated. The program, supported by Thiess, set records with over 1,050 collective volunteer hours in 2023, valued at over \$49,000. Caitlin Buttenshaw, Community Fundraising Officer, expressed gratitude for the passion volunteers bring to each role.

Workplace-giving initiatives from businesses within the community also increased the funds raised and extended the CapRescue family. Richglen Maintenance Services demonstrated the impact of this support by matching employee contributions dollar for dollar, resulting in a significant \$4,600 donation to CapRescue. In a unique initiative, 3MK Transport donated a generous \$4,000 in place of client Christmas gifts, showing their commitment to keeping the community safe.

Exceptional corporate partnerships were the backbone of CapRescue's success in 2023. Squadron Energy's Clarke Creek Wind Farm, together with Shell QGC

and Aurizon, contributed generously to install solar panels at the CapRescue hangar, reducing operating costs and championing sustainability.

Santos GLNG renewed support for another three years, ensuring seamless aeromedical service for the entire community. Hastings Deering returned as a Lift Off Partner, reinforcing shared values and dedication to community outcomes. Anglo-American's Blue-Sky Partnership was renewed for the fifth year, resonating with the importance of health services around mining communities. Jellinbah embraced a new three-year partnership, enhancing operational viability for swift and effective rescues.

In 2023, these extraordinary partnerships propelled CapRescue to perform a record number of rescues. Together with community sponsors, dedicated volunteers, and generous supporters, it can be ensured that CapRescue remains the unwavering guardian angel for Central Queensland, always ready to answer the call in times of need. Because a region this big needs a fast response.

2023 STATS

Rescues 527 **Rescue Report**

Cost \$11,300,000

- 36 MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS
- 35 SEARCH & RESCUE
- 133 PRIMARY INCIDENTS
- 323 INTER-HOSPITAL TRANSFER

RACQ CapRescue

Monster Seafood Raffle

\$2

1st Prize: \$1,000 Seafood Voucher
2nd Prize: \$400 Seafood Voucher + 1 night at GKI Hideaway & transfers for 2 adults (valued at \$300)

Scan for tickets

Roslyn Bay FISH MARKET
Drawn 15/03/2024

COLOUR ME capricorn

Rockhampton
March 24
Kershaw Gardens

RACQ CapRescue
A big region needs a fast response.

Schwarz EXCAVATIONS

Scan to purchase your tickets

'Niche' no more

Australia's finest certified organic producers, processors and operators will be celebrated at the 2024 Australian Organic Industry Awards, with finalists announced across seven categories.

Hosted by Australian Organic Limited (AOL), this year's awards will be presented at a gala dinner after the two-day Australian Organic Conference, held at Pullman Melbourne on the Park on 7-8 March.

AOL Chief Executive Officer, Niki Ford, said this year's award finalists cover some of the most recognisable brands and products available to Australian consumers.

"It's clear certified organics is no longer a niche industry, with more and more shoppers looking for certification marks on the products they purchase," Ms Ford said.

"The 2024 Australian Organic Industry Award finalists set the standard for excellence, innovation and a commitment to sustainability in their certified organic products across a range of sectors including fresh produce, packaged goods, skincare, coffee and even fencing materials.

"We're excited to showcase the products, individuals and businesses helping push our sector forward."

Hewitt Foods and its retail brand, Cleaver's Organic Meat, is a finalist in three categories including Brand of the Year and Business of the Year, plus Ash Murphy and Montanna Schollick from the company are both vying for the Young Organic Leader of the Year prize.

All Cleaver's products are free of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), antibiotics, added hormones, synthetic chemicals and artificial preservatives, colours and flavours.

In its 25th year in the market in 2023, Cleaver's introduced new paper-based trays to reduce plastic in landfill – one of the ini-

tiatives recognised in the Innovation Award category.

Having expanded rapidly to be established in over 1500 outlets nationwide, Honest to Goodness is also in the running for Brand of the Year and Business of the Year, with Founder and Product Manager, Karen Ward, a finalist in the Organic Woman of the Year category.

On top of its broad range of certified organic products, the company is a strong advocate for the health benefits of certified organic foods, its environmental benefits, and the practices contributing to healthy soil, biodiversity and reduced water pollutants.

Central Queensland organic beef producers, Fred and Anna Appleton from Appleton Cattle Company, have been rewarded for their sustainable farming practices with nominations for the Farmer of the Year and Organic Woman of the Year categories, respectively.

Returning winners Kialla Pure Foods (2022 Brand of the Year) and Dr Oetker Queen Australia (2022 Business of the Year) are again finalists in this year's major categories.

Along with the individual award categories, the recipient of the Chairman's Award and this year's inductee into the Australian Organic Hall of Fame will both be named at the gala dinner.

Visit the AOL website for more information on the Australian Organic Industry Awards and Australian Organic Conference.

2024 Category Finalists

Brand of the Year

- Cleaver's Organic Meat
- Dr Oetker Queen Australia
- endota
- Honest to Goodness
- INCA Organics

- Yallamundi Farms Pty Ltd
- Business of the Year
- Hewitt Foods
- Honest to Goodness
- The Kialla Group

Farmer of the Year

- Carly Burnham – Bonnie Doone
- Fred Appleton – Appleton Cattle Company
- James Pearson – Bullcreek
- Luke Cantrill – Cantrill Organics
- Shane Eldridge – Eldridge Fresh Organics
- Innovation Award
- General Organic
- Hewitt Foods – Cleaver's Organic Packaging
- Urban Forager
- Woodshield

Organic Woman of the Year

- Anna Appleton – Appleton Cattle Company
- Karen Ward – Honest to Goodness
- Lihua Song – Jasmin Skincare
- Lindsey Rogers – Conscious Ground Organics
- Marg Will – Organic Systems and Solutions
- Meryl Parker – Jasper Coffee

Retailer of the Year

- Honest to Goodness
- Santos Organics
- Sherwood Road Organic Meats
- The Natural Grocery Company
- Young Organic Leader of the Year
- Ash Murphy – Hewitt Agribusiness
- Chelsea Eldridge – Eldridge Fresh Organics
- Montanna Schollick – Hewitt

Finalists in the New Product of the Year category are to be announced in the coming days.

A dream come true

Aquaculture Gladstone fish hatchery welcomes Gladstone's first ever school-based aquaculture trainee, Dean Vacher, who has taken his first steps towards a career in the industry, thanks to a new traineeship program at Aquaculture Gladstone.

Dean, who is currently in year 11 at Chanel College, has commenced a three-year school based traineeship, studying a Certificate III in Aquaculture. Gladstone Area Water Board chief executive officer Darren Barlow said the milestone was an important moment for the organisation.

"Our traineeship program is key to ensuring the operational sustainability of Aquaculture Gladstone now and into the future," Mr Barlow said.

"Dean may be our first school-based aquaculture trainee but he certainly won't be the last.

"Our desire to get young people into the workforce is underpinned by a long-term objective to develop our own team of high skilled hatchery technicians right here in Central Queensland.

"Learning pathways like traineeships benefit our local economy and support the growth of Queensland's aquaculture industry."

Dean decided to pursue a future in aquaculture following a 12-month structured work experience program last year.

"This traineeship is a dream come true," he said.

Industry *TODAY* partnering with



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Deals with five partners

The state government's Queensland Venture Capital Development Fund (QVDCF) has locked in deals with five major venture capital firms.

The firms - Antler, Five V Capital, Main Sequence, Mandalay Venture Partners and Salus Ventures - will ensure Queensland start-ups have access to up to \$200 million in new matched funding.

In response to the significant demand for the QVDCF, which is managed by the Queensland Investment Corporation (QIC), the state government has committed a further \$55 million to the program.

Treasurer Cameron Dick said the deals illustrate the Sunshine State is open for business.

"In making more capital available, businesses do not need to leave our state to pursue funding elsewhere - they can establish, grow and remain in Queensland," Mr Dick said.

"Together, we can nurture Queensland's famous entrepreneurial spirit and let the brightest minds shine in the Sunshine State."

Antler Australia partner Mike Abbott said the QVDCF will enable the company to assist Queensland founders in establishing more than 15 companies over the next four years.

"Our newly appointed Queensland Director and Queensland Venture Partner will spearhead our local initiatives, backed by the entire Antler Australia team," he said.

"This local engagement, supplemented by our global expertise and network, ensures that Queensland start-ups receive the best of both worlds - deep local insights and global scale opportunities."

Five V Capital's head of venture capital Ed Bigazzi said the company has appointed three Queensland-based venture partners.

"As Five V is a specialist investor in business software start-ups, the QVDCF funding will mean we can invest in more of these businesses, have greater reserves of capital to back our winners, and further embed ourselves into and support the Queensland



Antler Australia partner Mike Abbott.

start-up ecosystem," he said.

Main Sequence investment manager Alezeia Brown said the company had been investing in Queensland deep tech companies since it was founded in 2017.

"(We) have partnered with a number of world-leading Queensland companies like Emesent, Gilmour Space, Endua and Plotlogic," she said.

"We believe there are great opportunities to build entirely new industries in Queensland and catalyse the transforma-

tion of the state's traditional strengths into sustainable leaders.

"By drawing on world-class research and talent, these industries will benefit Queensland and Australia with new jobs and create the valuable planetary positive companies of the future."

Mandalay Venture Partners partner Timothy Hui described QVDCF as "an amazing initiative".

"Being based in Queensland places us at the centre of the national activity across the



Treasurer Cameron Dick.

agrifood sector alongside the most promising startups, best universities, most dynamic RDCs and most active Hubs across the country," he said.

"As a VC, we partner across the landscape to become a key capital provider and invest to fast-track the commercialisation of promising tech."

Salus Ventures general partner and co-founder Dan Bennett said Queensland-based trailblazers such as Go1, Safety Culture and Gilmour Space have paved the way for the next generation of visionary founders.

"This collaboration extends beyond a pure financial investment into aligning resources, networks and expertise towards a shared goal of growing a globally prominent technology ecosystem," he said.

"Salus is positioned to be an active teammate, tirelessly supporting these ambitious founders on their transformative journeys."

Campaign encourages visitors to 'stay a little longer'

With more than 120,000 visitors from across the nation and around the world embarking on the Capricorn Coast region in May to celebrate all things Beef, Capricorn Enterprise is excited to launch its 'Stay a Little Longer' campaign this week.

The multilayer digital destination marketing campaign, curated by local business Adz Power Agencies, is aimed at increasing visitors' length of stay before, during and after Rockhampton's biggest celebration of the beef industry, Beef2024.

The week-long major event, which observes accommodation in Rockhampton, Capricorn Coast and outlying areas reach 100 per cent capacity, is the perfect opportunity to entice visitors to extend their stay to experience more of what our destination has to offer.

Targeting the dense cattle farming localities of Southern Queensland and Eastern Darling Downs, capturing markets from Gympie, west to Roma, Charleville, south to Cunnamulla, St George and Toowoomba, Capricorn Enterprise's tourism marketing manager, Krista Brown is keen to showcase the diversity of the Capricorn Coast region and encourage visitors to explore.

"The campaign incorporates the great work of one of Australia's most well-known, highly accredited photographers, Sean Scott," Krista said.

"We have focused on visuals highlighting our incredible Keppel Bay and Capricorn Coast waters, showing the opposite end of the spectrum to cattle and agriculture aspects that will be delivered to visi-



More than 120,000 visitors are expected to arrive for 2024 Beef Week.

tors during Beef2024.

"Our messaging touches on the short and easily accessible distance between Rockhampton and the coast, showing visitors that they can come for Beef, and also see the reef."

Containing valuable information such as 'must do' lists, top seasonal activities, day trip itineraries, hot offers and more, campaign viewers intrigued by the visual marketing will be able to click through to obtain a full suite of planning tools.

The campaign will access AI marketing tools to target and re-market to individuals across the mapped locations, along with utilizing contextual targeting that will reach online publishers aligning with associated industries relating to cattle and farming.

"This campaign's algorithms basically follow our 'digital breadcrumbs' created from online browsing habits and put our advertising in front of people who have the greatest interest," Krista said.

"In the case of this campaign, we are

targeting an audience who have the greatest interest in cattle/agriculture, based on their web activity."

"We are looking forward to delivering this three-month campaign to thousands of online audiences and providing them with the holiday inspiration to either plan an extension to their visit in May or schedule a holiday for next time."

The 'Stay a Little Longer' campaign will run throughout February, March, and April.

Fuel standard gets a pass

The Motor Trades Association of Australia (MTAA) known to be the largest representative of the automotive sector in Australia, welcomes the Federal Government's release of its Fuel Efficiency Standard impact assessment.

MTAA CEO Matt Hobbs said the government has had to balance two extremes – the car companies and the single-focused EV lobby.

"I cannot underestimate the difficulty in developing this standard," he said.

"It has taken three governments and 12 years to reach this point.

"Nobody disagrees Australia needs to join the rest of the developed world with a standard to ensure we get our fair share of new technology and choice of electric vehicles.

"The whole industry knows putting in place a fuel efficiency standard is the right way to go.

"The argument is just about the fine details. We score the government a seven out of 10, so far.

"Some adjustments are needed in the early years, especially in the treatment of utes.

"I am confident we can work with the government to ensure they get a perfect mark."

MTAA's members are the largest providers of talent to the automotive industry.

It's vital, as the government implements a fuel efficiency standard, that it partners with industry to get the workforce in place to sup-

port the EV transition.

"As stakeholders resolve EV supply and range issues in Australia, the next challenge is to implement the required workforce," Mr Hobbs said.

"EVs are cutting-edge technology and as such need a highly trained Australian workforce.

"A good first step is to make more apprentices eligible for the New Energy Apprentices Program."

MTAA is concerned not all car companies will make the transition.

The huge technology shift brings opportunities but also risks for Australian small businesses and automotive workers who can lose their investment and livelihoods at the whim of international car companies in offshore headquarters.

Australian automotive workers and small businesses need the Albanese government to have their back in this period of change with an Automotive Industry Code of Conduct to protect workers who are at the mercy of multinational companies.

"The future of the global auto industry is the industrial version of the Hunger Games – played in boardrooms far from Australia," Mr Hobbs said.

"The government must develop an Automotive Industry Code to give Australian workers and businesses a fair go."

MTAA will shortly provide a detailed submission to the Federal Government on the impact of its preferred option.



MTAA CEO Matt Hobbs.

Picture: CONTRIBUTED

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