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Magazine: Only available on bulk subscription to SPQ’s and similar venues. Costs $10 per week

Individual: Weekly subscription news service available direct to inbox, through the iPhone App and online. Costs $3.99 a week
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Shift Miner is published by Fitzroy Publishing Pty Ltd
A.B.N 72 122739879
368 Williams St Rockhampton QLD 4700 - PO Box 1440
Rockhampton QLD 4700

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November 27, 2017
Expansion has to happen

Deciding how much money is allocated to new projects is a significant business risk confronting mining companies according to accounting firm Ernst & Young.

Based on discussions with mining companies (number not known), EY has put together a list of what they think are the top 10 business risks facing mining and metals.

At number two on the list is a risk defined as: “competitive shareholder returns” which EY says is a problem not seen for a while.

“Due to significant project overruns and poorly timed M&A, there have been significant impairments across the industry, and management remains cautious about allocating cash for expansion projects,” EY says.

“But simply returning cash to shareholders is not a long-term strategy, ultimately, good projects executed effectively will offer better returns for shareholders in the long run…. exercising good judgment in investment opportunities are crucial actions toward offering shareholders a unique value proposition.”

In a similar vein to the other risks titled “Cash optimisation” and “resource replacement” came in at number six and eight respectively.

A recovery in commodity prices and the related cost-cutting exercises have resulted in higher margins and improved cash generation,” EY said.

“However, new risks are emerging as the industry switches to growth and while there will be relatively less cash commitments for debt reduction purposes, mining and metals companies have signalled intentions to return cash to shareholders.

“Over the last five years, CapEx spent on resource replacement has declined by 66% from US$20.5b to US$6.8b due to lower commodity prices and returns.”

“Now that growth is back on the agenda, mining and metals companies are allocating more sustaining or growth capital to get the most out of current projects…. we have yet to see a significant increase in exploration CapEx.”

Notably, skills shortages and infrastructure access risks have dropped out of the top 10 altogether despite being at the top of the list in 2008’s boom times, and perhaps surprisingly EY says digital readiness is now the number one risk to mining businesses surveyed.

According to EY companies are scrambling to get efficiencies out of their businesses by applying digital technology to areas like how they buy and maintain machinery, how they respond to their customers, and of course automation and machine learning.

“Digital goes beyond adopting technology though – it needs to be solving a business issue and is key to resolving the sector’s number one operational challenge: improving productivity across the value chain,” EY said.

As a consequence, cybersecurity is now considered a significant risk to mining companies coming in at number three in the report.

The risks around the social licence to operate, regulatory environment and the price of energy, remain perennial business risks sitting in the top 10 for more than a decade.

“Gone to shit”

The CFMEU says a meeting yesterday with the management of the Glencore owned Oaky North mine has not resolved any differences - in fact, it has moved the parties further apart.

District Vice President for the CFMEU Chris Brodsky says he expects the industrial dispute to continue through Christmas and into the new year, with no visible sign of a resolution in sight.

“Yes everything has gone to shit,” he told Shift Miner.

“We met with them yesterday and had a pretty decent meeting.

“We went, willing to move a little bit on the big hitter issues like workplace representation and the disputes clauses, but they responded by saying they wanted a whole lot of other smaller things included as well, that they had previously conceded.

“So the result is that we are further apart.”

Under the Fair Work Act, both employers and employees have levers they can pull to influence negotiations during an enterprise negotiation.

The employees can go on strike which costs the employer, while the employer can lock out the workforce which costs the workers. Both actions can be classified as protected by the Fair Work Commission, meaning they are not illegal.

However, the CFMEU says the Lock-Out - which has now extended beyond 100 days is a disproportional response by Glencore.

“This is likely to mean 180 workers and their families are going to be without work or income over the Christmas period,” Mr Brodsky added.

“The Union is going to look after them, and try and keep things as normal as we can, but when workers went on strike earlier in the year, Glencore said they lost 6400 man hours.

“Well by locking them out all this time, it has cost them more than 300,000 man hours.

“It’s a discussion I have been having with a lot of people lately about what is a fair or proportional response in this negotiation.”

Glencore has not yet responded to requests for comment. However, they recently told Shift Miner earlier strike action cost them 28-thousand hours of labour at the mine.

They also claim the average salary for permanent employees at Oaky North is about $180,000 a year and increased around 10% between 2011 and 2016 when wages were adjusted for inflation. According to the CFMEU, short of a resolution between the two parties, the only thing that can end the lockout now is a Federal Government intervention or a new ruling by the Fair Work Commissioner. They say it’s now the longest lockout of employees in Australian history.

Good solid contract

BMA has awarded contracts worth more than $50 million for the construction of a new 11-kilometre overland conveyor linking Peak Downs mine with the Coal Handling Preparation Plant (CHPP) at the neighbouring Caval Ridge Mine.

Mackay-based G&S Engineering has been awarded a $9.5 million work contract, while CIMIC Groups CPB Contractors has been awarded $38 million worth of work.

G&S CEO Mick Crowe said the project was a great opportunity and they will be recruiting new people to get the job done.

“This is a great project to deliver a homegrown solution, bringing together our local knowledge of the Caval and Peak sites along with our high-quality infrastructure and construction experience in the Bowen Basin,” he said.

“Importantly for the broader industry as a whole it is a good solid contract that is going to be worth people coming back to the sector for.

“For a long time coal has been a sector where people didn’t see any long term opportunity, but these are real jobs for real people.”

Construction of the project is scheduled to commence later this year and take 18 months to complete.

In addition to the new conveyor, BHP says they will build a new stockpile pad and Run-off-Mine station at Peak Downs and upgrade the Caval Ridge CHPP and stockyard.

BMA will also invest in a new mining fleet, including excavators, and trucks.

“The progression of this important project for our business means we can continue to safely and productively produce our high-quality metallurgical coal for steelmaking around the world.”

BMA Asset President, Rag Udd said this week.

Since coal prices spiked late in 2016, BMA has been using haul trucks to take coal from Peak Downs to the under utilised Caval Ridge CHHP.
An eye watering loss

Contractor Bounty Mining is likely to be a mine owner by Christmas, following their successful bid of around $40 million for the Cook Colliery and Minyango mining lease from liquidators of the now-defunct Caledon Resources.

The deal - which still has to meet some criteria to be finalised - materialises an eye-watering loss for Caledon shareholder Guangdong Rising Assets Management Company (GRAM) who paid around $400 million for Caledon in 2010.

GRAM chairman Li Jinming at the time said the takeover would be a “significant step forward in the company’s strategy of acquiring more resources investments”.

Bounty mining has historically operated in the Bowen Basin as a thin seam mining specialist using technology developed in the US. However, like so many other contractors, they lost key contracts during the downturn and had since turned their attention elsewhere. Executive Chairman of Bounty Mining Greg Cochrane is a Bowen Basin veteran, telling Shift Miner back in 2013 that this was the fourth mining cycle he had worked through.

Using that experience, he says they now plan to reconfigure the Cook Colliery and develop the Minyango coal project.

“Bounty will bring the Cook Colliery back into production as a more flexible and efficient bord and pillar style mining operation (previously longwall),” he said.

Coal production is expected to commence in the first quarter of 2018, and Bounty aims to progressively increase production to a total 1.8 million tonnes of product over 12 months.

“These transactions will provide Bounty with revenue from the Cook Colliery and a mid-term development project in Minyango, for which a mining lease has already been granted.”

While the Minyango underground coal project is still a long way from being operational, it does have potential, with previous mine plans allowing for up to 7 million tonnes of coal exports a year.

However, as former CEO of Caledon Coal Brett Garland told Shift Miner in 2013 when they hatched their plans for a longwall operation, Cook Colliery has beaten many people before.

“The longwall back in the 80s wasn’t real successful, and every man and his dog has had a go at it, and everybody has lost money.

“And we thought, in for a penny, in for a pound, we had better start looking at what we could do.”

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The buoyancy in the Central Queensland coal sector is finally translating into sales in the industrial property sector according to valuers Herron Todd White (HTW).

However, despite some green shoots, the volume of sales remains low and industrial property values across the region remain at or near their cyclical bottoms.

In Gladstone, HTW says the most notable sale was the RCR Tomlinson workshop in January this year.

“One of the more significant investment sales this year has been for the RCR Tomlinson workshop which traded for $6.2 million in January,” they reported in their latest monthly report.

“The 3.04-hectare site is improved with a 3,000 square metre heavy industrial shed with an additional 300 square metres of office space, and it sold on an analysed yield of about 9.75%.”

HTW says owner-occupiers have also been active for properties below $2 million, however, rates the industrial property market overall in Gladstone as being near - but not quite at - its cyclical bottom. In Rockhampton, HTW says the only way is up.

“There are some signs that the Rockhampton industrial property market is at or near the bottom of the cycle,” they said.

“Sales volume is still low but appears to have improved slightly from a fairly static market in 2015 and 2016, and there are reports of increased enquiries to agents, so this could be an indication that the industrial market is finally turning.

“We note a vacant industrial sale on Somerset Road in Gracemere earlier this year for $1.2 million (or $50 per square metre).

“This was a 2.38-hectare site on a major transport route which was purchased by the sitting tenant.

“Also of particular interest was the reported sale of a modern industrial warehouse in Gracemere with over 7,000 square metres of lettable area for $15.1 million.

“The warehouse is leased to Toll NOX, and agents report it’s been purchased by a Western Australian investor after strong interest from rural landowners who have been experiencing strong commodity prices and favourable seasons.”

In Mackay, HTW says there have been more sales as buyers and sellers reach agreement on reasonable value levels after the big mining correction.

“The highest sale of the year occurred in August and was the former Blackwoods warehouse at 53–55 Enterprise Street which sold vacant possession for $4 million,” HTW said.

“It had a net lettable area (NLA) of 3,894 square metres including large office, showroom and mezzanine storage areas.

“Analysis shows $1,027 per square metre NLA, and this sale is considered to be a market leader in the new, corrected market.

“At the other end of the industrial property market, a 239 square metre unit at 4/12 Iridium Dr Paget which sold in May for $320,000 or $1,339 per square metre.

“We are also aware of a substantial workshop property at Slade Point which was purchased in December 2015 for $850,000 and is now under contract at a marginally lower price.”

Peabody sells CHPP

Peabody’s Australian coal mines continue to be the star performers in their portfolio, with their thermal operations delivering margins of 37% and their Australian business overall delivering the best results in five years.

“Australian earnings (EBITDA) increased $226.5 million to $240.9 million, the highest contribution in five years, on improved seaborne pricing,” Peabody said.

“Australian sales volumes totalled 8.7 million tons, including 3.5 million tons of metallurgical coal sold at an average price of $119.55 per ton and 3.3 million tons of export thermal coal sold at an average price of $69.31 per ton, with the remainder delivered under domestic contracts.

“As a result of both strong operational performance and increased volumes, metallurgical costs per ton declined significantly to $78.42 per ton compared to $109.07 per ton in the second quarter of 2017.”

Despite some strong production results, the primary driver of the results was the recovery in coal prices which led to a 60% increase in revenues per ton for their metallurgical coal.

“Seaborne thermal coal demand and pricing continue to be supported by robust Asian demand primarily in China and South Korea,” they said.

“While import demand from India has been sluggish on increased domestic coal usage, stockpiles are currently at multi-year lows, which is supportive of additional imports in the fourth quarter.”

Looking to the future, Peabody is predicting demand for both thermal and coking coal to increase between 10 and 15 million tonnes this year.

Despite the stronger outlook, Peabody continues to offload Australian assets, in an attempt to get their balance sheet in order after going into administration in 2016 at the height of the downturn.

This quarter they announced they had sold 50% of the Millennium mine Coal Handling and Preparation Plant to BHP Mitsui coal who jointly use the facility for their Poitrel mine under the “Red Mountain” joint venture.

This follows Peabody’s sale of the mothballed Burton Coal mine North at Nebo to the Newhope Group controlled Lenton Joint Venture for around $14 million in September.

The Burton mine was entered into care and maintenance late in 2016.

In 2016 the US-based Peabody went into administration after reporting total losses of around $42.6 billion in 2015 due to historically low coal prices.

Since that time it has managed to renegotiate a plan with its creditors, that’s seen the company return to normal operations. However, it has been forced to sell around $5 billion in assets over that time.
Aurizon looks to buy port

Queensland’s biggest rail business Aurizon has expressed an interest in buying Queensland’s newest coal port facility - the Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal (WICET).

A consortium of banks funded the construction of the Gladstone terminal at the height of the mining boom, after securing “take or pay” contracts with eight Central Queensland coal miners.

Under the arrangement, miners pay to export a set amount of coal through the terminal, irrespective of whether they physically deliver the coal or not. These fees are then used by WICET to pay down the A$1 billion worth of debt owed to the banks who funded its construction.

However, today just five of WICET’s original eight shareholders remain, with Bandanna, Caledon and Cockatoo Coal all succumbing to bankruptcy in the downturn that followed the biggest mining construction boom in Australia’s history.

For years there’s been speculation about the imminent financial failure, possible sale, or refinancing of WICET. However this week the first evidence of change came from logistics business Aurizon.

“Aurizon confirms it’s in preliminary discussions with some parties in relation to a restructuring proposal for the Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal,” they said in a statement.

“As part of a consortium proposal, Aurizon would acquire WICET, and other consortium members would acquire one or more of WICET’s source mines.

“The consortium proposal would secure long-term volumes for WICET, and through restructuring and the proposed introduction of lower, market-competitive port charges, there would be an incentive for miners to increase throughput at the port.

“This could also incentivise expansion tonnages from existing mines and new mines.”

As the dominant rail operator in the Queensland coal sector, Aurizon sees “strategic alignment” in owning the port but has emphasised that discussions are young and may not go anywhere.

The major shareholder in WICET is Glencore, who may not be a willing seller after the significant recovery in coal prices in the last 12 months, and their continued investment in the epic Wandoan coal project.

In August, Glencore was granted a mining lease for the project but said they would take things further when the market allowed it.

“Adding significant new tonnes to the market at this time would adversely impact the profitability of existing thermal coal production”, they said.

Like the Galilee projects, the proposed Wandoan mine would redefine large-scale coal mining in Australia.

The initial plan is to develop an open cut dragline mine capable of producing 30 million tonnes of coal a year, followed by stage 2 which would take annual production to 100 million tonnes.

However, like the Galilee, the coal at Wandoan is stranded which means coal can’t be exported until a 210-kilometre railway track is built linking the mine with Gladstone port.

In 2012 Glencore pulled the pin on a proposed billion-dollar export terminal at Balaclava Island, north of Gladstone which initially would have been used to export Wandoan coal.

However, this coal could now be sent through the under-utilised Wiggins Island Coal Terminal.

Galilee gas deal

A “binding” agreement between a gas explorer and Chinese-controlled gas and electricity business Jemena could see stranded CSG supplies in the Galilee Basin unlocked.

In a written statement, Galilee Energy said they had reached an agreement which might see gas from their Glenaras gas project piped across the Bowen Basin and into the East coast gas network.

“The agreement fast-tracks Jemena’s plans to build a new pipeline delivering gas produced by Galilee Energy to the east coast, and means Jemena will begin engaging with local communities conducting field surveys and completing pipeline design concept works,” they said.

“In parallel, Galilee Energy will progress their appraisal activities at the Glenaras Gas Project to certify a proven gas resource large enough to underwrite the pipeline construction.”

However, what elements of the agreement are binding isn’t clear, with a spokesperson telling Shift Miner they would clarify as soon as possible.

According to Galilee Energy’s managing Director Peter Lansom, they have one of the largest uncontracted contingent gas resources on the east coast, which they want to develop into a significant gas reserve.

However, this will require significant further drilling and assessment because in the gas sector contingent resources, while potentially recoverable, are not yet considered mature enough for commercial development due to one or more contingencies.

For its part, Jemena says having access to a vast Galilee gas resource would strengthen the case for an extension to the pipeline they are currently building from the Northern territory to Mt Isa.

“To overcome the gas supply concerns currently gripping the east coast, large new sources of gas need to be produced and delivered to the market as quickly as possible,” Jemena Executive General Manager Corporate Development, Antoon Boey, said.

“By undertaking the early planning works, both Jemena and Galilee Energy will be ready to proceed to front-end engineering and design (FEED) on both pipeline and field development in 2019.”

“This project is another key step in Jemena’s plans to expand and extend its Northern Gas Pipeline, via the Galilee Basin, to the largest gas markets on the east coast.”

Jemena began work in July on a 622 km pipeline from Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory to Mount Isa in Queensland creating around 600 jobs. First gas on that pipeline is expected to flow in late 2018.

Private company Renewable Energy Developments (RED) has lodged paperwork with the Federal Department of Environment this week, for the development of a 215 MW solar farm within eight kilometres of the Oaky Creek and Gregory coal mines.

Known as the Gregory Solar Farm, it would cover 872 hectares, and could include an energy storage system consisting of batteries contained in enclosures the size of shipping containers.

“Construction would last for a period of up to 18 months,” the company says.

“Up to 100 staff would be employed during the peak period, and local staff and contractors would be utilised whenever possible. The solar farm is expected to have an operational life of 30 years after which it would be decommissioned or repowered with new equipment.

The lodging of referrals with the Federal Department of Environment is a small but significant step for the development of an energy project. The acceptance of a referral entitles RED to begin the enormous task of getting an approved Environmental Impact Statement.
Forget about robot haul trucks

While driverless trucks on mines may be the most talked about automation in mining, their widespread use remains far from certain, even if it has captured the imagination of the broader public.

However, right now, automation is being rolled out across the Bowen Basin which is likely to have a far more profound impact on the future than a driverless truck.

There are now 27 draglines operating in the Bowen Basin, recently fitted with new mapping technology that - according to its vendors - has revolutionised large-scale earth moving, and can pay for itself in as little as 15 days.

In layman’s terms, the new dragline guidance equipment gives operators real-time feedback about where their bucket is relative to visual real time engineering plans, meaning pinpoint accuracy on where they should dump spoil and overburden.

Traditionally dragline operators would have made these decisions based on what they could see, according to markers laid down manually by surveyors.

As one surveyor told Shift Miner:

“It’s the biggest change I have seen to our job since I became a surveyor and it has completely revolutionised how overburden is managed”.

BHP has recently rolled out MineWare’s Pegasys digital terrain mapping technology across most of its joint venture operations (BMA and BMC) as well as at its South 32 operations in other states.

According to MineWare Manager Gary Robertson, it’s been nearly 20 years from when CSIRO first developed prototypes for the technology to their being commercialised in the coalfields.

However now that it’s here, he says it’s made an enormous difference.

“Originally surveyors would have to go out there and peg the Engineers designs, like the crest line and the tow lines that the dragline would have to dig to,” he told Shift Miner.

“But it still relied on dragline operators being able to line up the survey pegs and try and dig as best as possible between those sets of pegs.”

“This technology allows operators to see exactly where their bucket is, and they can dig and dump to the Engineers design exactly the first time.”

“Before commercialisation in 2014, I did a lot of development work, and in those studies, we were getting a return on investment in 100 days.

“That being said, depending on which site you are talking to, some of the guys at Caval Ridge said it is much less than that, and one site at Blackwater believes their machines got return on investment in 15 days.”

“The initial recouping of it is very expensive because you have got two laser scans running 24/7 so the whole system has to be really robust because you don’t want to be pulling up a dragline.”

Gary says a trial is underway at Saraji mine adapting the technology to rope shovels - however, because of their mode of operation there a few more technical challenges.

Investment returning to Dysart

Long-term residents of Dysart say the mood is improving, investors are back, and the rumours about a restart at Norwich Park are more believable than they have been in years.

One of the first communities to feel the full force of the mining downturn was Dysart.

The nearby Norwich Park mine - a major employer in the town - was one of the first operations to be shut down in 2012 costing the community hundreds of jobs.

Since then, rumours of a reopening of the mine have been in constant circulation.

Dysart Community and Business Group representative John Crooks can recall comments in the past by BHP that reopening Norwich Park would be considered at $170 a tonne.

With contract prices recently settling at around $190 a tonne, he says the rumours are carrying more weight.

“There are always rumours that they are going to reopen Norwich, but now even some people at BHP are saying that they’re going to do something,” he told Shift Miner.

“We also had a town meeting with the people behind the Olive Downs Project, and they seemed to be pretty positive.

“But so far nothing has happened.”

Nonetheless, the rising optimism has triggered some local investment activity with the Dysart Newsagency and Post Office finally selling, and the vacant engineering sheds near the town centre understood to be under contract.

“I have even seen a few of the property investors that got in and out during the last boom, rebuying houses,” Mr Crooks added.

“Although the property market is probably at a low point after Aurizon put all their houses on the market in one big hit a month or so ago for around $50,000.”

“With the worst of the downturn now in the past, one of the local initiatives that Mr Crooks says has helped has been BHP’s local buying program.

He says it’s put millions back into the local community and given small business owners a chance they might not have otherwise got.

“Previously you had to have a vendor number to sell them a sandwich, but now independent local buying program hundreds of local businesses are able to compete for jobs,” he said.

“It doesn’t guarantee you the work, you still have to get your price right to be a chance.”

“But I think it is about $50 million a year being spent through it locally, which is a big deal for the little bloke.

“Not only is the money spent locally, but a certain percentage of it also goes back into business and community development programs.”
Moranbah dust innovation

With more than 20 cases of Black Lung in Central Queensland so far, the issue of ventilation and dust suppression has never been higher on the agenda.

As they say, necessity is the mother of invention, and after twelve years of working at mines near Moranbah, David Brims decided there was a critical piece of underground infrastructure that was badly in need of some innovation.

“I came to Moranbah 12 years ago to work underground, and over the years I could see inefficiencies in the current mining processes,” he told Shift Miner.

“The main problem I could see was that we had below standard solutions to some of our ventilation challenges, and it seemed like they were ready for some innovation.

“What we developed wasn’t rocket science, we simply designed a new exhaust system that worked in a similar way to the existing exhaust fans, except that we used bladeless air fan technology which gave us a system that had no moving parts.

“We called it the VTEX Ventronic which did the same job traditional exhaust systems were doing, only it was quicker and had better production times.”

After spending months developing a prototype, David and his business partners embarked on the sometimes costly process of testing and certification.

“The testing is always difficult and ongoing,” he said.

“We are working with Simtars and trialing different applications that are targeted at reducing dust levels.

“We have also developed VTEX safety collars that are a simple, lightweight alternative to the old-fashioned timber or steel supports.

“We have to get those tested annually by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA), but we think they are the best solution on the market.”

David says they are also looking at other products to compliment what they are already doing, and they have recently become the exclusive importers and distributors of Rivers carbon fibre vent tubes which he says are a game changer in the market.

“We are obviously looking at applying the technology to other mining environments, but our focus remains Central Queensland,” he said.

“We live here, and this is the best place at the moment to get our products out and about.

“The industry as a whole has improved dramatically in the last six months, and we are seeing a lot of new and returning companies to Moranbah and surrounding areas.

$45 million in six months

The new owners of the Blair Athol mine near Clermont are claiming its value has increased by more than $45 million since they acquired it in May this year.

TerraCom announced the revaluation in a quarterly statement released to the Australian Stock Exchange recently.

“TerraCom’s closing net asset position as at 30 June 2017 was $9.621 million representing an improvement of $27.272 million in the Group’s net asset position on year, they reported.

“This result has been driven by several key items, including the $45.739 million gain on the acquisition of Blair Athol Coal Mine.

“The Company acquired the mine for a nominal purchase price and the Queensland Government received $79.698 million in cash from the prior owners as TerraCom’s financial assurance for the rehabilitation requirements of the site.

“The mine has JORC Reserves of 15.6mt which has been converted to a mine plan to produce two mtpa for eight years, and this equates to a $3 per tonne gain on acquisition per JORC Reserve tonne.”

However, their cash position isn’t quite as robust, having spent all the money upfront to start selling coal, but so far having not yet received payments from their clients.

Consequently, they have $7.8 million accounts receivable, inventory worth $6.92 million, but just $800,000 in cash at the bank.

The most significant headache for the company now at Blair Athol is finding an alternative to trucking coal 110 kilometres to the nearest available railhead at the Isaac Plains mine. To do this requires around 190 trips daily truck trips along the Peak Downs highway.

The galling part for TerraCom is that there is a working coal loading facility at Blair Athol mine. However, it’s owner Glencore won’t let them use it.

“Orion [TerraCom owned company] has assembled a project team being led by Aurizon to establish Blair Athol’s own dedicated private train loading facility by re-commissioning the rail line that runs across the site and connects into the main Goonyella Rail Line which runs to Dalrymple Bay Coal terminal.

“The team is completing detailed design and work programs, with construction completion scheduled for February 2018.”

Downs to the under utilised Caval Ridge CHHP.

Rolsten Sale

Glencore and its partners Itochu and Sumitomo have started an official sale process for the Rolleston coal mine.

Last year the mine produced a little over 13 million tonnes of thermal coal, and according to Glencore is a profitable operation.

In a statement, the company said they were a willing but not desperate seller.

“It will be business as usual at the mine as we work through the sale process,” Glencore said.

“The Rolleston mine is a high-quality asset that offers potential buyers the opportunity to gain a strong foothold, or significantly increase their current position, in the Australian and Queensland coal industry.

“This decision is part of Glencore’s ongoing program to optimise its portfolio and redeploy capital into other opportunities.”
Seven organisations representing the interests of the resource industry support sector have jointly signed a letter to Queensland’s major mining companies, asking them to review the hyperextended payment terms they enforced at the height of the mining downturn.

Eighteen months ago both BMA and Rio Tinto outraged local businesses when they decided to double the time they would take to pay their bills from 30 to 60 days. In reality, however, that meant some companies are still waiting more than 120 days to get paid by the time “delays” and other “issues” are resolved in the invoicing process.

It was the first time that the business was to assist mining houses achieve successful cost-effective and productive outcomes.

“It is widely acknowledged that without these businesses the mining sector would be significantly impacted.

“Ultimately if the extended 60-day payment terms persist there will be fewer suppliers in the market, meaning higher prices, less competition, and the burden of R&D will fall entirely back to the big miners.”

A recent report by cash flow finance company The Invoice Market found that the number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in mining not being paid on time, is more than double that of other industries. It also found that 36% of mining businesses had more than 20 invoices outstanding which is more than twice the percentage in the non-mining sector.

Record $/hr rate

An underground mining contractor has been forced to offer near record hourly rates to entice the skilled miners they need to complete contracts in a revived Central Queensland mining industry.

At the same time that the Queensland Resources Council claimed there were more than 70 mining lease applications currently being assessed by the Queensland Government, Mackay based PIMS group was offering more than $85 an hour for short-term skilled labour to work on a longwall move.

Director at PIMS Andrew Itzstein told Shift Miner it’s what’s required to get the people they need.

“The rate depends on the skills required for the role and of course the length of the contract,” he said.

“These roles are for skilled and experienced workers for a longwall move.

“People are not willing to move for cheaper rates at the moment because they don’t have the confidence that there is going to be follow-up work.

“We are trying to attract people who may have left the industry and are doing something else, or just trying to attract the experienced people already employed that can do the job.

“But this is very difficult with wages up ten to 15% in the last 12 months.”

Mackay based workplace consultant Craig Joy says there is evidence of a skills shortfall for mining related business.

“I don’t know whether $85 is a record or not, I am not a specialist for longwall moves, but there is definitely upward pressure again.

“I was talking to a colleague about this, and he had calculated there was something like 500 vacancies among mining businesses at the moment.

“It’s just the nature of the beast; you have a significant downturn followed by mining companies wanting things done yesterday at any price.

“As soon as there is a rumour of a shortage, the miners tend to panic, and that pushed prices up,”

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NSW team win mine rescue

Queensland based underground mine rescue teams have secured second, third and fourth in the 55th Australian Mines Rescue Competition held recently at Whitehaven Coal’s Narrabri mine.

In first place was Peabody’s NSW based Wambo team who beat Moranbah North by just six points, and ahead of Broadmeadow and Kestrel teams in the 3rd and 4th place respectively.

The national event requires the teams to simulate emergency response situations including first aid and firefighting, as well as an underground mine rescue and virtual reality scenario. Peabody’s Australian President George Schuller said winning a national competition of this calibre takes a lot of time and dedication.

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Adani filling Bowen Motels

The owners of a Motel in Bowen say they’re enjoying near-record occupancy, with more contractors staying in the town while working on Adani’s mega-mine, port and rail proposal.

In August, Adani confirmed it was ramping up work on the various parts of their planned pit to port project, despite having not yet finalised funding arrangements and some outstanding legal objections.

Two months on there is evidence on the ground, with the owner of the Port Denison Motel in Bowen Anita Rogan, telling Shift Miner there had been a definite increase in business.

“No it’s not a record but it’s given everyone in town a bit of heart,” she said.

“It’s busy one week but then quiet the next, so it’s a bit hard to know what exactly is happening, but we are seeing people mostly working as contractors on the rail line Adani are proposing,” she said.

“We have had a lot of test drillers, some indigenous groups who are walking the [proposed rail] track as well as surveyors.

“Although the surveyors aren’t saying exactly what they are doing.

“I think we had only one person in lately who is actually employed by Adani, but certainly we have had lots of people telling us they are contracted to Adani.

“I really thinks it’s a question of when the project will get going, not if.”

Adani is planning a vast thermal coal mine in the Galilee Basin, but to make it viable, they also need to build a 300-kilometre stretch of railway and expand capacity at Abbot Point Coal Terminal North of Bowen.

On top of that, they also have to build significant water supply infrastructure, a coal handling and processing plant, a huge workers’ accommodation village and an airport to service the mine.

There are forecast to be more than 3300 jobs generated during the construction and operational phases of the proposed Carmichael coal mine of which 2100 are now contracted to come from newly selected FIFO hub Townsville.

Adani’s second FIFO hub Rockhampton expects to supply 1700 workers.

To establish themselves as FIFO hubs to the Carmichael project the Townsville and Rockhampton Councils have jointly committed to invest $30 million into the development of the FIFO airport at the Carmichael mine.

Adani said recently they have also reached a milestone at their Townsville regional headquarters with 100 people now employed.

Wotif Stanmore

Condamine businessman Lyn Brazil has invested a further $1.3 million in Stanmore Coal - lifting his voting power to 7.75%. The move follows Mr Brazil’s purchase of around 16 million shares in Stanmore at the cost of around $10 million in February this year.

His investments in the company make him one of the biggest shareholders on the register.

The increased investment follows big improvements in production, prices and profits at the Isaac Plains coal mine in the last quarter, and the announcement that they plan to expand operations into the nearby Isaac Plains East (IPE) coal deposit before the end of this financial year.

Mr Brazil was ranked the 55th richest person in Queensland by the Courier Mail in 2014 and his most well-known investment was in online room booking business Wotif, which netted him around $30 million when it recently sold for about $700 million.

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$57M drill deal

Action Drill & Blast (ADB) continues to build a presence in the coal sector picking up two new contracts, and a contract extension in Central Queensland.

In total, ADB says it’s secured $57 million worth of drill and blast work in the coal sector, including at the Broadlea mine for Golding contractors (sister company), for McMahon at the Byerwen greenfield project near Glenden, as well as a contract exne ADB’s Collinville mine for Glencore.

In NSW their contract has been extended at the Idemitsu owned Boggabri and Muswellbrook coal mines.

ADB is owned by Western Australian mining contractor NRW Holdings who purchased Golding Contractors for $85 million in August this year.

In 2011, NRW paid well-known Emerald earthmover, Joe Comiskey, $84 million for machines that were put to work at Middlemount mine on a contract understood to be worth more than $100 million.

Thiess tightens contracting grip

Mining contractor Thiess has secured BMA contracts worth $440 million for work on the construction of BMA’s Cavendish Southern Circuit project.

BMA confirmed in April that it would build an 11-kilometre overland conveyor system to transport coal from Peak Downs mine to the Coal Handling Preparation Plant (CHPP) at the nearby Cavendish Mine.

According to BHP, the project will create around 150 new construction jobs and kick in approximately 200 ongoing operational roles associated with the increased production supported by the new conveyor.

The Cooroorah tenement is between Curragh and Jellinbah mines near Blackwater. The project has advanced to the mineral development licence stage and has a deposit of around 125 million tonnes of metallurgical and thermal coal.

The two other projects BCB is pursuing are the Lilyvale and Mackenzie coal projects both owned by Stanmore Coal.

The Lilyvale project (formerly known as Theresa Creek) is 25km north east of Emerald and near the Kestrel and Gregory Crinum coking coal mines. The project is currently owned 100% by Stanmore Coal, but at the completion of certain milestones, BCB will acquire 15% via its parent company Cape Coal Pty Ltd.

The Mackenzie project is north of Comet, and a concept study in 2012 looked at a mining operation generating around two million tonnes of coal a year.

BCB’s parent company is the Brisbane based Cape Coal which has interests in gold mining as well as a South African diamond mine.

According to a recent annual report, BCB had income of $113 million and had $125,000 in cash at the end of the last financial year.

Explorer targets 5 projects

A small exploration mining company called Bowen Coking Coal Ltd (BCB) has acquired the Comet Ridge Coal project near Springsure and has designs on five other potential coal projects in the Bowen Basin including the Hillalong project near Nebo.

BCB paid Acacia Coal around $350,000 and issued them around 17 million shares in return for the Comet Ridge coal project – which according to Acacia is a 10.4 million tonne (JORC) resource North East of Springsure.

In April this year after more than two years in the land court, Acacia resolved the legal issues stalling the project, saying the way was cleared for the development of a coal mine.

The Hillalong and Cooroorah transactions are yet to finalise. However, it’s understood BCB acquired interests in both mines when they purchased a company called Coking Coal One Pty Ltd who had ownership agreements in place with Australian Pacific Coal.

The Hillalong tenement is adjacent to the Hail Creek coal mine, and Rio Tinto had a close look at buying the Hillalong project in 2015 but instead walked away when coal prices collapsed.

Bowen Basin pool review

A public consultation on eight Isaac pools has gone swimmingly well thanks to hundreds of residents having a say. Isaac Regional Council wrapped up the three week Aquatic Facilities survey on October 31.

Mayor Anne Baker said those who took part will help shape a better outcome for their local pool.

“Young families have given us information for our pools, and we’re now compiling all your thoughts. “The information you provided is vital to helping us make your pool and facilities better.”

“Congratulations to all the winners of our annual family passes at Moranbah, Clermont, Nebo, Middlemount, Dysart, St Lawrence, Glenden and Flaggy Rock.”

The winners of the annual pool passes are as follows:

Clermont Swimming Centre – Brandon Sturch
Dysart Swimming Pool – Ashley Stokes
Flaggy Rock Pool – Jacky Newton
Glenden Swimming Pool – Alfi Spice
Middlemount Swimming Pool – Angela Hite
Moranbah Greg Cruickshank
Aquatic Centre – Renae Womal
Nebo Swimming Pool – Jennifer Ennis
St Lawrence Swimming Pool – Jennifer Clark

For more information on your local pool’s opening times, visit www.isaac.qld.gov.au/aquatic-facilities or contact Council on 1300 ISAACS (1300 472 227).
Realm Resources, 70% owner of the Foxleigh coal mine near Middlemount have released their first estimates of the amount of coal contained in two exploration areas adjacent to the North West boundary of the existing Foxleigh mining lease.

The area is known as the Roper Creek Coal Project and could, in theory, provide an avenue of expansion for Foxleigh operations at some point in the future.

The geological work completed so far predicts a total resource of 48 million tonnes of coal within 200 metres of the surface, of which 42Mt is classified as indicated, and 6Mt as inferred, under the JORC code for reporting exploration results. There are no details on coal quality and type.

Under the JORC code inferred and indicated classifications are given to resources that have had the minimum amount of drilling and interpretation, so significant further work would need to be done before the deposit could be considered a viable option for expansion.

However, the assessment confirms there is coal there and adds to the much better-understood situation at Foxleigh mine. The most recent assessment of Foxleigh reported marketable coal reserves of 39.2Mt, total coal reserves of 52.7Mt and another 82.3Mt of coal resources (33.3Mt Measured, 29Mt Indicated and 20Mt Inferred).

In August, the Foxleigh joint venture of which Realm Resources is 70% shareholder committed to spending nearly $25 million on upgrading the Foxleigh mining fleet as it looks to capitalise on a much stronger outlook for coal prices.

This financial year, two Liebherr 9400 excavators and one Liebherr 996B excavator are scheduled to start work, replacing the older equipment currently in use.

Realm hopes the upgrade will: “greatly reduce the risk profile of the current mining equipment and assist the site to efficiently meet its targeted production in future years”.

Realm Resources is more than 85% owned by Taurus Funds Management who acquired the mine from Anglo American in August 2016 for an undisclosed amount.

Taurus also has a significant interest in Stanmore Coal who operate the Isaac Plains mine as well as Terra Com who operate the Blair Athol coal mine.

Chinese-controlled gas and electricity business Jemena says it’s begun exploring the possibility of building a gas pipeline from Mt Isa to Wallumbilla through Central Queensland as a way of supplying gas from Northern Australia to the East Coast.

They made the comments as construction officially begun on the 623-kilometre high-pressure Northern Gas Pipeline linking the Northern Territory gas fields to Mt Isa. A project Jemena says will cost around $800 million and generate more than 600 jobs.

“Jemena has already commenced investigative work on expanding the Northern Gas Pipeline and extending it south from Mt Isa to the Wallumbilla Gas Hub to further integrate Territory gas into the east-coast gas grid, provided additional gas supplies are made available in the Territory,” Jemena Managing Director Paul Adams said.

“The pipeline will also benefit Australian households and businesses in the southern states, as it will free up gas currently flowing north to supply LNG plants in Queensland, making this gas available for use in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia.”
Former Coppabella coal miner Andrew Hill has failed in his attempt to appeal a decision earlier this year by the Fair Work Commission that found his dismissal was fair.

Mr Hill was employed as an electrician by Peabody at Coppabella mine but was dismissed in August 2016 because the mine’s owners claimed he drove into a ‘restricted access area’ and failed to drive to weather conditions resulting in a collision that caused extensive vehicle damage.

In the original hearing, the Commissioner heard Mr Hill had received three earlier warnings before the incident that led to his dismissal.

The first concerned sleeping in his vehicle, the second related to a failure to pay attention at a pre-start meeting, and the third was an allegation that Mr Hill had exceeded the speed limit at the mine by up to 15 kph on eleven occasions on one day.

After hearing arguments from both Peabody and Mr Hill’s legal representatives in the first hearing, the Commissioner concluded that there was a valid reason for dismissal.

However, Mr Hill appealed the commissioner’s finding, and representing himself to a full bench of the Fair Work Commission, argued his previous warnings at Coppabella mine should not have been considered.

“Mr Hill contends that the Commissioner was wrong to accept the validity of, and place weight on, the three earlier warnings received prior to the incident,” the FWC said.

“Mr Hill had clearly failed to comply with the requirements of the award in regards to his safety duties,” the FWC said.

“However, after examining the details of the first case, a full bench of the Fair Work Commission found that the first decision was right and blocked Mr Hill’s attempts to appeal.

“We do not consider there to be an arguable case of a significant error of fact in the Commissioner’s decision, nor does it appear to us that the decision discloses a manifest error of public significance.

“We do not consider that it is in the public interest to grant permission to appeal, and permission to appeal is therefore refused.”

The Banana Shire Council says it expects Anglo American to foot the repair bill for major damage to a public road near their mine.

Earlier this month, a crack about 30 metres long, and about half a metre wide opened up on the Gibihi Road at Kianga following a routine blast at the Dawson Mine.

Yesterday both Anglo American and Council chosen engineers examined the road and used scanning gear to get a better picture of what had caused it.

“Anglo American is aware of damage to Gibihi road sustained following a routine blast at Dawson Mine on Thursday,” Anglo said in a statement.

“As per normal practice, the road was closed before the blast and remains closed.

“No incidents, injuries or equipment damage has been recorded.

“All work in the immediate area has ceased, and we’re working with authorities to determine the condition of the road, repairs required and a schedule for its reopening.”

While he is still wading through the details of the Engineer’s report, Mayor of the Banana Shire Council says he expects the road to be closed until at least the new year and predicts it will be a “major” job to fix it.

All access to the mine now has to be via the Leichhardt Highway adding about 17 minutes to the journey.
According to a mining and resources job index, permanent roles are up nearly 50% this year, outperforming the 34% increase in contract work.

The figures come from the latest DFP Mining and Resources job index which overall has seen the job index rise to the highest level since 2014, off the back of strong employment growth in both Queensland and Western Australia.

“Both permanent and contract roles grew by 5.7% in September, and on an annual basis, the gap widens with permanent jobs up 49.3% and contract roles up 34.2%,” DFP said.

“Despite this, the permanent index is lower at 75.77 compared to 82.08 for the contract index, reflecting the fact that permanent roles declined further during the downturn.

“Both are extremely encouraging conditions for job seekers after such a difficult period following the mining investment boom.”

DFP bases the index on the type and number of jobs advertised within the mining sector across Australia.

In September the index rose nearly 6%, bringing the total improvement in the last 12 months to 42.4%. Encouragingly for local business, much of the demand growth has been in Queensland.

“Once again Queensland has outperformed Western Australia,” DFP said.

“Queensland’s job market rose a very healthy 6.8%, bringing the total improvement in the last 12 months to 42.4%.

Encouragingly for local business, much of the demand growth has been in Queensland.”

Unfortunately, there has not been any positive news for Geologists where job opportunities continue to “shrink at a concerning pace.”

ETU CURRAGH CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

ETU Curragh held their Christmas party last Friday night at the Blackwater Country Club

The Achilles family Charlotte Bush Bush Family

Clare and Mitch Donovan Marty Bannan and Chayne Flint Shane and Lillian King

Darron Furseman Miss Bannan The Sauer family

$189M Jellinbah

Thiess and parent company CIMIC continue to dominate the mining contracting market in the Bowen Basin.

Thiess has announced a two-year contract extension at the Jellinbah mine worth $189 million, meaning they will continue providing mining services until at least September 2020.

Thiess Managing Director Douglas Thompson said the extension underscores their commitment to lowering costs.

“We are delighted to extend our partnership with Jellinbah Group and continue our focus on producing innovative mining techniques that drive cost efficiencies,” he said.

“We are pleased to continue our long-standing involvement with the Blackwater community.”

In January last year, Thiess secured a five-year $1.3 billion contract to provide mining services at Jellinbah’s Lake Vermont coal mine near Dysart.
BLACKWATER RUGBY LEAGUE NIGHT OF NIGHTS

Crushers and Crushettes celebrate 2017

Chrissy and Luke
Eric and Taria Smythe
(L-R) Chrissy, Vicky and Buffy

(L-R) Zoe, Megan and Tashia
Zac and Abbey
(L-R) AJ, Hayden and Zac

Jed and Bry Brunner

(L-R) Managers Award for Crushettes went to Megan Latchford seen with Leigha Paige, Jessica Murphy and Shane Pingel
Crushettes Coaches Award was won by Samantha Evans

Crushettes Rookie of the Year was won by Zoe Mackay
Most Improved was won by Vicky Te Oka
Best forward for Crushettes was Lauren Pingel

Megan Smith was named Best Utility, seen with Coaching staff
Crushettes Best Back was Tasma Vesey
Crushettes Players Player was Michelle Cummings
Expanding in two directions

Stanmore Coal says it’s confident that it’ll be able to decide on the viability of an underground mine expansion this financial year, following the release of its recent quarterly results.

“A strong physical performance at Isaac Plains during the September quarter provides further certainty to Stanmore’s short and medium-term strategic objectives,” the company said.

Known as the Isaac Plains Underground Mining Project (IPUMP), the proposal is to exploit a measured and indicated resource (JORC) of more than 21 million tonnes in the Eastern part of the Isaac Plains mining lease.

According to Stanmore, at peak production, the IPUMP would have a theoretical output of around one million tonnes of coal a year which would be processed and loaded through existing above ground mining infrastructure. In the last quarter, Stanmore moved 7.86 million Bank Cubic Metres (BCM) of prime waste which is roughly 25% higher than their previous record. They also broke their quarterly coal sales record after selling 411kt for the period.

“The coal handling and preparation plant (CHPP) underwent a planned major shutdown early in the September quarter, and the dragline will undergo a planned major shutdown for 15 days in the current quarter,” they reported.

“Stanmore remains in a sound position for continuity of sales during the shutdown and will go into the wet season with healthy stocks and pre-stripe inventories. However, the best news for the company was on the cash front, with average FOB cost of production coming in at around $90 a tonne and the average price per tonne of both thermal and semi-soft coking coal $124 a tonne. The average price for semi-soft coking coal on its own was $159 a tonne and $100 a tonne for thermal coal.

“The sales result has reduced stocks built as a result of Tropical Cyclone Debbie from 258kt to 164kt, with strategic stocks returning to appropriate levels by January 2018,” they said.

Stanmore also reported that they received no objections to their proposed Isaac Plains East (IPE) expansion plans during the public consultation period last quarter, and they are nearing completion of a bankable feasibility statement for the project.

Stanmore has previously said that if there were no objections, the mining lease and environmental authorities could be granted in the second quarter of 2018.

Stanmore purchased IPE - formerly known as Wotonga - from Peabody for around $7 million in 2015. While the IPE will primarily operate as an extension of the Isaac Plains Mine and will utilise the existing infrastructure, mining equipment and workforce, there is about a years worth of construction required to get the mine operating.

Rio on track for 2019

Rio Tinto says it’s on track to mine more in 2019.

“Fabrication of these components has showcased best practice Australian manufacturing using 4,000 tonnes of Australian steel,” Rio Tinto Amrun Project Director Marcia Hanzhanan said.

“Construction of the processing facility has created hundreds of jobs in Western Australia, in addition to our current Amrun workforce of around 1,200 in Queensland. Almost 80% of the Amrun workforce are Queenslanders, including 176 indigenous employees of which 43 are local Aboriginal people.

“We are proud of the supplier and employment opportunities we have created for Australians, and there will be more to come.”

Rio Tinto has begun moving the first of its industrial modules into place at it’s North Queensland Amrun Bauxite mine.

The modules each weigh over 1,200 tonnes and were moved into place using a heavy load vessel. When positioned, they will form part of the beneficiation plant where bauxite is washed and screened before shipping.

According to Rio Tinto, the critical components of the modules are made with 95% Australian steel and were fabricated by Western Australian based contractor Civmec. Civmec won the $160 million contract to build the beneficiation plant and associated water, electrical and lighting systems last year.

$30,000 Scholarship opens

Christopher Wallin, the QCoal Foundation is focused on enriching communities in rural and remote Queensland.

“Students coming from these areas often face additional financial challenges in their pursuit of education, so we are happy to provide a helping hand,” Mr Wallin said.

“Since the scholarship began, we have assisted students studying medicine and vet science, and by revising our scholarship eligibility, we hope to reach a wider range of applicants this year.

2017 recipient Melanie Martyn [pictured] said the scholarship had provided valuable financial support during the first year of her Bachelor of Veterinary Science degree.

Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate their interest in working in rural or regional Queensland and preference will be given to those from the Isaac and Whitsunday Council regions.

Applications for the QCoal Foundation scholarship close 31 January 2018.

More information can be found at jcu.edu.au/scholarships
JELLINBAH CHRISTMAS PARTY
Miners and their families enjoy a festive night out

(L-R) Denise and Farron Doyle and Keisha Byrne

(L-R) Merry, Matilda and Allan Pidgeon

(L-R) Grant, Vicki, Tel, and Ocienna Lackey

(L-R) Darren and Amy Taylor and Billy Hamm

General Manager and SSE Mr Ian Cooper and his wife Robyn

(L-R) Adrian, Henry, Hamish, Justin and Rhona

Blake MacDonald and Zander Taylor

Sue Olive and Glenda Martin

(L-R) Drewe Curtis, Pierce Anderson and Jesse Boughton

(L-R) Sam, Nathan and Chris

Kylie Webley and Steve Cronin

(L-R) Geri, Cass and Deb

Deb and Jeff Tull

Tricia Gitsham and Nikki Dodd

kayelyn and Niomi
Dear Frank,

I always fail to impress my girlfriend around Christmas time. She always says she doesn’t want me to spend a lot of money on a gift, and every year I believe her and she ends up sulking all week!

Can you offer me some advice on how to really impress my girlfriend this Christmas?

Terry, Clermont

Dear Terry,

Christmas is a truly wonderful time of year, and it’s the festive holiday that I feel I can most relate to. I’ve often thought of myself as the perfect mixture of Jesus Christ and Santa Claus. Like Jesus, I am a fairly handy carpenter, and spend a good deal of time in the company of lepers and prostitutes. Like Santa Claus, I possess a fondness for red suits, reindeer and in particular ‘Ho Ho Hoes’ – if you catch my drift - but enough about that.

Terry, I’m going to assume that you are suffering from a severe mental impairment, the fact that you would believe anything a woman says is staggering to me, and you are in obvious need of help. Luckily, you’ve come to the right man. I am well versed in how to manipulate the female mind during the silly season. I start growing a beard in October just so I can look festive by December, and let me assure you, by January there are countless ladies suffering from ‘beard rash’. In any case, I somehow get the impression that your lady can’t be brought around with facial hair. As the old adage goes, sometimes it really is ‘the thought that counts’ when choosing a gift for your lady friend. In the past when strapped for cash around the holidays I have employed some unconventional strategies with regards to gift giving. Try changing the words of a popular Christmas carol to illustrate how wonderful your girlfriend is through the majesty of song. However, as a word of caution, I would discourage the use of sexual innuendo in said modified Christmas Carol. I once spent Christmas day with a very nasty black eye after an ill-fated rendition of a Frank original entitled ‘Jingle Balls’.

If your girlfriend is religious it may also be possible to impress her with a recreation of the nativity. For the negligible sum of $20 you could pay homeless people to act out the birth of Christ. Their tattered clothes and general poor health will make their ‘costumes’ seem extremely detailed, and you can always assure your girlfriend that the pronounced smell of urine is actually frankincense.

If singing and acting isn’t your style you could always pull what’s called ‘the old switcheroo’. After several years of what she terms inadequate presents, she will no doubt be expecting you to put forward yet another horrible gift this Christmas. With this in mind it’s probably best for you to purchase her a gift of epic proportions, making her gift to you seem terrible by comparison. Using this strategy you can gain leverage over your girlfriend and she may be inclined to give you another ‘gift’ on Christmas night to make amends.

Frank

We do long shifts, up to 13 hours for many days/night’s in a row. Lately MM has been hearing a lot of whinging about radio stations repeating the same 10 songs. I mostly listen to USB’s full of podcasts and a few favourite tunes, but many don’t do this - yet.

The site where you work determines the availability of choice. Do they have repeaters? Are they set on one station, or are you lucky enough to have multiple choices?

A few stations are dedicated to us miners. Moranbah Community Radio does a fantastic job. Miners Overnight was a good one but seems to have stopped now? A google search shows Red FM are huge in WA and Macquarie Network’s Mining radio are quite widespread, but I haven’t heard of them, have you?

If you only have one station chosen for you, groundhog days become even more intense!

My crew have started learning Spanish because of a song being thrashed now. We understand they are national franchises and must cater to the morning drive, lunchtime, drive home with the comedy duos, and party hits on weekends etc. But they all play the same top few songs, daily...all bloody week.

On weekends, some stations replay conversations and callers from the weekly shows. We started counting how many times we heard a lady talking about her dog’s antics. Really? Can’t weekend hosts talk about something else?

Oh, and whilst I’m on a roll, what about Friday is always nearly weekend, Wednesday hump day and Monday blues? Fair enough for the “real job” peeps, but at least recognise shift workers occasionally? Especially a station catering to a mining town!

What about the adverts? OMG I refuse to go to a certain tile shop because of the constant thrashing of annoying adverts! Frankly I feel brainwashed, and I hardly even listen. This has a lot to do with why not!

Discussing this at the crib hut one fella said,

“If I had to listen to the ABC all day I would kill myself.”

Wow, that was a shock to me as I love the ABC, and we can’t get it. Macc on Sunday morning, the conversation hour, footy, the ashes in England in the wee hours of nightshift! I have worked at a site that you could pretty much pick up most stations which were saved in the stereo of trucks, or listen to your USB’s of choice. A happy medium for all of us.

The Real Miner says “I’m too busy! When I’m a Sunshine Miner on the surface I listen, but not underground! No Radios.”

Recently I was contacted by someone about having my Beers with A Miner Podcast ep on a new mining radio network. Oh dear that freaked me out to think a crew would HAVE to listen to Mad Mumzie, instead of downloading onto a USB on break and choosing to listen. Maybe if it is only in WA I could handle that!

Cheers,

MM
Shutdown leave changes ahead

The public submission period has closed for changes to proposed new rules governing leave during major mine shutdowns has closed. As part of a four-year review of the Coal Mining Industry Award, a group known as the Coal Mining Industry Employers Group (CMIEG) has been agitating for changes to a clause which would give employers more power to force people to take leave when there is nothing to do at work during a shutdown.

Under the current award, in the event of a shutdown employees - with a month’s warning - can either take paid annual accrued leave - or if they don’t have enough holiday accrued, they can take paid leave in advance.

Under the proposed new wording, employees would now have three options. They can still take accrued, or future annual paid leave, but they can also now take unpaid leave.

However, the Fair Work Commission has also added two further parts to the clause which give the boss the ability to force employees to take paid accrued or future leave if they don’t choose one of the three options mentioned above.

The FWC has also clarified what happens on public holidays.

“If a temporary shutdown period includes a day or part-day that is a public holiday and would have been a working day for the employee had the employee not been on leave in accordance with clause 25.10, the employee is not taken to be on leave on that day or part-day.”

Unions who have been contesting the change have until next Wednesday to lodge their concerns before the clause in the Coal Mining Award is updated.

In August the Federal Court endorsed a decision made by the Fair Work Commission in January that will see redundancy payouts for miners capped at 30 weeks.

For more than 30 years, miners made redundant in the coal sector were entitled to 1 weeks severance pay and two weeks redundancy pay for every year of employment.

So under the old rules, for a lifelong employee at Peak Downs mine earning average mining wages, redundancy and severance at the end of their 30-year career could be 90 weeks of normal pay and worth more than $250,000.

For this Mackay, these scenarios were often referred to as the “golden handshake” in mining circles.

However, in what was the biggest change to the Black Coal Industry Award since at least the 1980’s, a full Bench of the FWC decided in January that redundancy payments will be paid at the rate of two weeks a year, for no longer than 15 years. The severance payment of one week per year remained unchanged.

Blackwater pool award

The new $14.7 million Blackwater Aquatic Centre has taken out an award for design and construction at this year’s Institute of Public Works Engineering Excellence Awards.

The awards recognise councils and individuals who have demonstrated best practice and innovation in public works projects across Queensland.

The new aquatic facility has a 50 metre partially covered 10-lane pool, a fully covered heated 25 metre six-lane pool, and a zero-depth splash pad. It’s also located adjacent to other sporting fields enabling multi-purpose use all year round.

The recognition follows an early award in the Central Queensland Master Builders Awards when contractors Hutchinson Builders won Central Queensland project of the year. Central Queensland Mayor Kerry Hayes says the pool goes beyond being just an aquatic centre. It’s just a pool, it’s a local meeting hub, a social oasis and of course a top-grade sporting Facility,” he said.

“I commend everyone involved in this project on their dedication, vision and professionalism, from the contractors and subcontractors to the designers and SEEC Pty Ltd for their project management.

“In particular, I would like to thank project manager Carol Vertigan for her leadership, patience and determination in making this project a reality.”

Industry veterans are scratching their heads over what to do about a slowly building skills crisis developing in the Queensland resources sector.

Central Queensland mining has officially swung back into a growth phase, meaning businesses are looking to recruit experienced and skilled staff after the mass departure at the end of Australia’s biggest mining construction boom.

However, the job is proving difficult with the workforce either happy elsewhere or so disenchanted with the industry that they won’t even consider returning.

One local Business owner told Shift Miner he thinks part of the problem was that in this downturn companies were too quick to hand out Voluntary Redundancies (VR’s).

“It’s pretty clear to everyone, that while this has been a particularly vicious downturn, the mining cycle hasn’t disappeared and things have got better,” he said.

“This is about the fourth cycle I have been through, and one of the things that was different this time was the number of VR’s handed out.

“Everyone knows, the only people that take VR’s are those about to retire or confident about getting another job, or in other words the best people.

“Then there are the involuntary redundancies, and I think so many people felt so severely burnt by that experience, they won’t be back.

“The mistake we all made was not fighting hard enough to find work for our best people because there are lots of businesses around Mackay who now rank skills shortages as the biggest problem they are facing.”

Just last month General Manager of the Resource Industry Network, Amanda Rourke said they were working with members to try and lure workers back.

“Our members have told us that there has been a noticeable pick up within the engineering and heavy industrial sector with many businesses now on the hunt for skilled workers,” she said.

“Their feedback has been that there are difficulties in employing the people they require, with so many skilled workers having left the region a few years ago during the downturn.”
Moranbah Cup a success in 2017

“Moranbah’s spring racing carnival is a true reflection of what we love about regional living. "Congratulations to the Moranbah Race Club and event organisers for delivering another stellar community event.”

Race winners were:
1. Greatest Version Strength Open Handicap 1000m Anzus (trained by Olivia Cairns, ridden by Jockey Rachel Shred).
2. Adept Contractors Benchmark 55 Handicap 1000m Eldyim (trained by Clinton Garland, ridden by Jockey Quayde Krogh).
3. RSL Moranbah Maiden Plate 1000m Bawaardi Rocket (trained by John Manzelmann, ridden by Jockey Chris McIver).
4. Embroidery Collective QTIS Benchmark 45 Handicap 1170m Captain Adriatic (trained by John Pointon, ridden by Jockey Quayde Krogh).
5. Isaac Regional Council Benchmark 60 Handicap 1550m Just Michael (trained by Clinton Garland, ridden by Jockey Quayde Krogh).

Central Queensland country racing galloped into the hearts of minds of punters at Moranbah’s Spring recent racing carnival. Isaac Regional Council Deputy Mayor Geoff Bethel, who opened the race day said the race day oozes country charm.

“From first class racing, through to the fun of getting dressed up and having a punt, the spirit of Isaac was loud and proud again this year,” he said.
Puzzles

SODOKU

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Across:
1. Flies on a string
4. Mammal that swims and barks
7. Artificial Intelligence
8. Amount (abbr.)
10. Note after La
11. Wishes to God
13. Worn around the neck
15. In debt
17. Unusual
18. Sheep sound
19. Hair styling product
21. Suspicious
24. Morning
26. Memorable period of time
27. A single one
28. Score in hockey
29. Pleased

Down:
1. Small motor vehicle
2. Roman 2
3. Hearing organ
4. Pig’s home
5. In the position of
6. In front of an audience
9. Organizer of a team or business
11. Flower part
12. Moist and heavy
14. Many Splendored Thing (2wds)
16. Very small
18. Boast
20. Return to the ground
22. Snake-like fish
23. Cloth fragment
25. Modus Operandi
27. Battery size

CROSS WORD

Across
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4. Mammal that swims and barks
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18. Boast
20. Return to the ground
22. Snake-like fish
23. Cloth fragment
25. Modus Operandi
27. Battery size

THE “GREATEST AUSTRALIAN IN THE CRIB ROOM” QUIZ.

1. What were the first names of the winning couple from The Block?
2. What is the highest grossing Australian movie?
3. Who is the longest serving presenter of Playschool?
4. What three movies are part of Baz Luhrmann’s “Red Curtain Trilogy”?
5. Who are the actors who play Kath and Kim?
6. Cate Blanchett has received an Academy Award nomination for what movie?
7. What Australian movie includes the phrase “Tell him he’s dreaming”?
8. What song played during Scott and Charlene’s wedding on Neighbours?
9. Which actor has had leading roles in Pharlap, The Man from Snowy River and Eureka Stockade?
10. Who won consecutive Gold Logie’s from 1997 to 2000?

ANSWERS

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Gladstone project gets youth working

An initiative to get young Gladstone people into jobs, has been a success according the Gladstone Engineering Alliance, despite unemployment in the region sitting at 6.7%

“Our 2017 Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) trainee programs have been extremely successful with more than 80% finding full-time employment,” GEA Project and Employment Coordinator Shana Gelin said.

“All of the trainees are doing a Certificate 1 at CQU in one of the three training areas and during their traineeship they are also placed with a not-for-profit community partner to get relevant work experience that will enable them to contribute in future employment.”

CQU Lead Horticulture Teacher Julie Barry is presently working with some of the GEA trainees in obtaining their Certificate 1 in Conservation and Land Management.

“I’m currently teaching the trainees about chemicals used in the horticultural industry, how to identify plant species, and the revegetation of native species,” Ms Barry said.

“The GEA traineeships are a good foot in the door for trainees working within conservation and land management with organisations like the Gladstone Regional Council, Gladstone Area Water Board and the Gladstone Ports Corporation.”

Conservation and Land Management GEA trainee Scott Gibbs said working in and being trained in conservation and land management is exactly the career path he wanted.

“I’m a qualified Fitter and Turner but work is hard to find; however, I really want to move into horticulture and the GEA traineeship has been really good in putting me on that career path,” Mr Gibbs said.

“I would really love to be a Groundskeeper or even a Park Ranger and the connections that I’m currently making through the GEA have been great and through those connections I believe I’ll find full-time work before the end of the year.”

The GEA traineeships are part of the Queensland Government’s, SQW Project, which focuses on assisting people who are unemployed to re-skill for a new occupation.

Funding of $20,000 is available under the Queensland Government’s Youth Boost initiative with payments made directly to the employer of an eligible employee.

For more information about GEA traineeships and the Youth Boost initiative contact GEA project coordinator Shana Gelin on 07 4972 9060.
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<tr>
<th>Car For Sale</th>
<th>Car For Sale</th>
<th>Motorcycle For Sale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014 Toyota Landcruiser Ute</td>
<td>2015 Toyota Landcruiser Ute</td>
<td>Harley Davidson Sportster 48</td>
<td>Honda Africa Twin ABS</td>
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<td>$74,000</td>
<td>$79,500</td>
<td>$14,400</td>
<td>$12,750</td>
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Call: 0447 877 485  Call: 0438 270 019  Call: 0439 837 911  Call: 0408 694 676

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<tr>
<th>Motorcycle For Sale</th>
<th>Buggy &amp; Trailer For Sale</th>
<th>Camper Trailer For Sale</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yamaha DT200R 1993</td>
<td>E-Z-Y G0 Golf Buggy &amp; Tilt Trailer</td>
<td>4x4 Camper Trailer</td>
<td>Customline Camper Trailer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Up for regrettable sale. Great bike, Very original, I have all the original plastics, lights, etc...</td>
<td>2010 new batteries, split wind screen, mag wheels &amp; tyres and seats. Trafion trailer new 2015. Golf tilt trailer.</td>
<td>Heavy duty independent suspension, only used few times, 165AH battery 20amp charger, led lights, 4.5m x 3m fully enclosed awning, new cooper AT tyres, 6 months rego and roadworthy cert.</td>
<td>Purchased new in 2010. A very strong top-quality camper with many extra features. Suitable for a large family. We have had many great holidays with this camper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
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Call: 0404 380 224  Call: 0417 783 865  Call: 0416 470 830  Call: 0429 896 907

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<th>Camper Trailer For Sale</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jayco Outback Finch 2006</td>
<td>MDC Stepthrough Camper Trailer</td>
<td>Tray-Tek Slide On Camper</td>
<td>2011 Regent Off Road Caravan</td>
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<tr>
<td>For Sale Jayco Outback Finch, 2006 model Roadworthy and Gas cert. 2 double beds, 3 way fridge - works great on 240v, 12v and gas.</td>
<td>2013 Offroad Stepthrough, Excellent condition throughout, Features included; Full annexe with floor, Tropical roof, BN spare incl.</td>
<td>Tray-Tek slide on suit extra/space cab or single cab ute. Pictured ute not included in sale.</td>
<td>2011 Regent Tereno, Off Road 20ft. 6in caravan in immaculate condition, well cared for and maintained.</td>
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<td>$11,000</td>
<td>$10,500</td>
<td>$19,000</td>
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Call: 0429 896 907  Call: 0414 945 686  Call: 0457 886 601  Call: 0407 081 094

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<th>Caravan For Sale</th>
<th>Boat For Sale</th>
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<tr>
<td>2011 Regent Off Road Caravan</td>
<td>2013 Swift/Conqueror 645</td>
<td>Custom Probe</td>
<td>Polycraft 530 CC 115 Suzuki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 Regent Tereno, Off Road 20ft. 6in caravan in immaculate condition, well cared for and maintained.</td>
<td>External features Lightweight, insulated sealed fibreglass outer Lightweight aluminium frame.</td>
<td>Custom Probe ski boat 350 chev, new 750 holley carburettor, new pump, fluidcore wake tower with board racks, ski pole.</td>
<td>Selling my 530CC polycraft, 115 Suzuki both 2007 models. 500 hours on the motor. New Century MP730 battery, new twin 3000gph bilge pumps, new anchor rope, 4 new life jackets, new led tailights on trailer.</td>
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<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$49,000</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$22,500</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>VACUUM TRUCK FOR SALE</strong></th>
<th><strong>TRACTOR FOR SALE</strong></th>
<th><strong>JCB BACKHOE FOR SALE</strong></th>
<th><strong>LAWN MOWER FOR SALE</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SUCK TRUCK</strong></td>
<td><strong>INTERNATIONAL 1466 TRACTOR</strong></td>
<td><strong>2002 JCB SITEMASTER 3CX</strong></td>
<td><strong>HUSQVARNA RIDE ON MOWER</strong></td>
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<td>Vacuum truck suks dirt from under ground diggings. As used at Lightning ridge.</td>
<td>Tractor engine has recently been recondition, transmission is in fair operational condition, power steering maybe require some attention soon. Once used in board acre work by the owner, however he's long since retired.</td>
<td>Great all round condition with no leaks. Rear plastic guards are sun damaged and rear quarter glass needs replacing ($200).</td>
<td>Selling our ride on mower due to mowing into town and no longer needing something so big. Bought at the beginning of the year. 5 years warranty.</td>
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<td>$3,000</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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<td>Call: 0749 831 832</td>
<td>Call: 0447 033 969</td>
<td>Call: 0455 866 095</td>
<td>Call: 0487 671 284</td>
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<td><strong>TRAY &amp; RACK FOR SALE</strong></td>
<td><strong>MAG WHEELS FOR SALE</strong></td>
<td><strong>HOLDEN PARTS FOR SALE</strong></td>
<td><strong>ROOF TOP TENT FOR SALE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>STAINLESS STEEL TRAY AND ROO RACK</strong></td>
<td>OX WHEELS MAGS</td>
<td>HD HOLDEN WRECKING</td>
<td>Roof top tent in good condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full stainless steel tray and rack with water tank and 6 led gutting lights, 77 pin.</td>
<td>3 mags with almost brand new tyres. Bridgestone potenza 225/45 r17. Has all wheel nuts plus 4 lock nuts. Mags are off Subaru.</td>
<td>Wrecking some parts of my HD. I no longer require these parts and all sensible offers will be accepted. Only listed parts are available</td>
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<tr>
<td>$7,500</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$1</td>
<td>$980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call: 0417 675 401</td>
<td>Call: 0457 470 051</td>
<td>Call: 0418 700 917</td>
<td>Call: 0439 732 046</td>
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<td><strong>UTE CANOPY FOR SALE</strong></td>
<td>** ELECTRIC MOTOR FOR SALE**</td>
<td><strong>CHAFF CUTTER FOR SALE</strong></td>
<td><strong>AQUAPONICS FOR SALE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTE CANOPY</td>
<td>54LB BOW MOUNT WATERSNAKE</td>
<td>CHAFF CUTTER JAS SMITH</td>
<td>COMPLETE AQUAPONICS SET UP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930mm long by 1560mm wide good condition.</td>
<td>54lb bow mount Watersnake with foot control, well used but still runs fine.</td>
<td>Jas Smith three blade cutter single bag lifter, driven by single phase electric motor. In excellent condition for age, runs well and ready for work.</td>
<td>Complete Aquaponics setup, joined twin tanks with twin pumps, 3 growbeds with seperate external siphons, including Scoria growmedia for the 3 growbeds and enough for 1 more.</td>
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<tr>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$80</td>
<td>$4,500</td>
<td>$899</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call: 0408 772 752</td>
<td>Call: 0408 761 166</td>
<td>Call: 0418 908 677</td>
<td>Call: 0448 007 334</td>
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<td><strong>CARBURETOR FOR SALE</strong></td>
<td><strong>FRIDGE FOR SALE</strong></td>
<td><strong>FRIDGE FOR SALE</strong></td>
<td><strong>HORSE FOR SALE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>KEIHIN PWK38</td>
<td>95L WAECO FRIDGE/FREEZER</td>
<td>ENGL FRIDGE / FREEZER</td>
<td>BROODMARE - Paddock Sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was bought originally for a project bike and now no longer have a use for it. Would be a good upgrade for any 125/250cc 2stroke diptbike.</td>
<td>Waeco Fridge Freezer dual zone dual Door, 6 months old still has 2 years warranty!</td>
<td>38 litre Engel fridge / freezer, 12 v or 240 v, with cover works extremely well, With external temp gauge, sits in front of car to see fridge temp, time and outside temp, no further use boz my illnesses.</td>
<td>Ruby is a 6yo mare. Unregistered but can be for breeding purposes only. Due to soundness issues, she is unable to be ridden. Fine to do anything with. Loves attention. Sire and dam pedigrees in photos.</td>
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<tr>
<td>$180</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call: 0410 063 328</td>
<td>Call: 0418 886 740</td>
<td>Call: 0474 071 626</td>
<td>Call: 0421 986 606</td>
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