WHO’S THE BOSS?

2016 TO RE-SHAPE MINING IN QUEENSLAND

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Miners across the Bowen and Surat Basin are changing the colour of their work shirts as one of the biggest corporate upheavals in decades rolls across the region.

Driving the changes are collapsing commodity and share prices, and the politics of global warming as companies maneuver themselves to survive and prepare for the future.

On the one hand the pessimists are predicting a massive shift away from carbon based energy like coal and CSG and are looking to exit the industry. On the other, optimists see the current low coal and CSG prices as just a short term issue that will improve over time.

Adding to all this is the usual market turmoil of a commodities downturn when companies either look to seize assets at bargain basement prices, or sell assets to keep their business afloat.

Headlining the changes is the possibility that two of the Bowen Basin’s biggest mining contractors could become a single entity after CICIC - formerly known as Leighton Holdings - made an off-market cash offer of $243 million for contractor Sedgman.

CIMIC is the parent company of Thiess Contractors - the largest mining contractor in the Bowen Basin (and the world).

A successful takeover of Brisbane based Sedgman, which has contracts at Daunia, Coppabella, Dawson, Cbal Ridge, Lake Vermont, and Moorovale mines, would make Thiess by far and away the biggest mining contractor in the Queensland.

CIMIC currently holds a 37% stake in Sedgman, but the new offer would see it buy up the remainder of the company.

Elsewhere, Anglo American has announced the sale of a second coal mine in less than a month, as it seeks to weather the protracted slump in commodity prices.

The world’s fifth-largest miner agreed to sell its Callide thermal coal mine near Biloela, to private company Batchfire Resources.

Anglo didn’t disclose the price, but RBC Capital Markets said in a note the sale will likely fetch less than $US100 million.

The deal follows Anglo’s decision in December to sell its Dartbrook coal mine in Australia to Australian Pacific Coal for up to $50 million.

Meanwhile Stanmore Coal says it’s on track to start exporting coal from the recently purchased Isaac Plains coal mine.

Managing Director Nick Jorss told Shift Miner they have started preparing the site for a return to production and awarded key contracts before Christmas.

“We are excited about the mine and looking forward to getting going even though it’s a tough market, but we did our homework and we feel confident,” Managing Director Nick Jorss said.

Stanmore Coal will contract out all mining operations at Isaac Plains and expects around 150 jobs will be created when the mine becomes operational.

Mr Jorss remains bullish about the longer term prospects for metallurgical coal, saying it is only a matter of time until the fundamentals reestablish themselves.

More locally, Mackay based mining services business Masterny is on the cusp of announcing the takeover another major Mackay based engineering firm, two years after the company swallowed up DMS Engineering in late 2014.

In CSG, Oil Giant Royal Dutch Shell launched a $53 Billion takeover of the BG Group which recently completed its QCLNG CSG exporting plant on Curtis Island, and the establishment of significant gas fields across Southern Queensland.

THE Wesfarmers-owned Curragh mine has cut overburden removal and coal production by nearly a third in the last quarter as the company brought forward planned maintenance.

During the three months to December 2015, overburden removal was 32.1% lower than the previous three months, while coal production was down 25.5%.

According to Wesfarmers, the mine had to be shut down temporarily to allow a critical power upgrade to the coal crushing facilities.

During 2015 at Curragh mine, metallurgical coal production decreased by nearly 10% to 8,472,000 tonnes, while steaming coal production increased by 4.1% to 3,435,000 tonnes.

Meanwhile, just to the north at the Yancoal owned Yarrabee open cut operation, production increased 10% in the last three months of 2015 compared to the previous quarter.

However, total annual production of coal was down 13% following a voluntary two week shutdown and reduction in shift hours to achieve required operational cost savings.

The future of Cook Colliery - Queensland’s oldest underground coal mine - looks doubtful following major management changes and ongoing problems with a new Chinese longwall.

Caledon Resources confirmed to Shift Miner that CEO Brett Garland has exited the business, along with the Cook Colliery general manager (GM). Shift Miner understands Mr Garland’s departure from the business was not on good terms.

Replacing them is a new CEO Peter Trout who up until recently was GM of Caledon’s gold and copper business PanAust, and respected 30-year coal industry veteran Julian Hoskin who will act as GM.

However both Mr Hoskin and Mr Trout face a herculean task at the mine.

Caledon has spent more than two years trying to expand output from Cook Colliery to meet take-or-pay contracts committed to at the new Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal (WICET).

The existing Cook Colliery operation is a board and pillar (continuous mining) operation with an output of 600,000 tonnes per annum, but Caledon wants to expand output to 3.5 million tonnes a year by introducing a longwall mining system into the Argo Seam.

Also, the existing coal handling and preparation plant (CHPP) is to be upgraded to increase capacity by 66%, from 300 to 500 tonnes per hour.

However deploying the new Chinese built longwall has proved a technical headache, and for more than 12 months the machine has been on site, but has yet to start working.

Midway through last year Mr Garland told local media they were proud of their achievements at the mine.

“This [Longwall] is a major investment and as a result, we were not only able to put new equipment into the mine but increase employment up to 330, and there’s not too many around that are saying that type of thing,” he told local media at the time.

“None of this would have been possible without the Chinese investment through Guangdong Rising Assets Management (GRAM) - the mine, the employment, the whole thing would not have survived without the purchase of the company by Gram and the follow-up investment.

“It is a vote of confidence in the Central Queensland region as a whole, in the people - particularly the people of Blackwater and our workforce.”

GRAM, is a Chinese state-owned investment group, who acquired Caledon in August 2011.

In April 2015, Caledon signed a new eleven-year contract with Aurizon that would see an eightfold increase in the volume of coal it exports from its mines in Central Queensland.
BMA enforces ANCAP standard

BMA has confirmed the 5-star ANCAP standard for light vehicles is now being enforced.

However, there continues to be confusion over what vehicles will meet the new standard with at least one rental car company on the Central Highlands taking the decision to no longer supply vehicles for BMA sites after their 5-star ANCAP rated Ford Ranger vehicles were deemed non-compliant.

The business, which preferred not to be named, told Shift Miner they had made a business decision to no longer supply vehicles for use on BMA sites.

“We received the new standards at the start of 2015 and from what we could understand the 5 Star ANCAP Rangers we had, were no longer compliant, leaving just the 5 Star ANCAP Toyota Hilux vehicles,” she said.

“In the end, we just decided to stop supplying vehicles for use on BMA sites, despite the fact that we have had heaps of calls from contractors looking for vehicles.

“The reality is, we just are not geared up for it, and we have enough work with our existing vehicles that can be used across all the other sites, so that is what we are focussing on.”

Meanwhile, the Queensland Mines Inspectorate says it has taken no action against BMA over claims by the CFMEU that BMA are using non-compliant minibuses. Although in a short statement to Shift Miner a spokesperson for the inspectorate says: “The Mines inspectors are investigating to determine what action needs to be taken.”

In January the CFMEU’s Greg Dalliston told Shift Miner BMA were looking to amend their rules so that their own minibuses fitted with extra rollover protection (ROPS) would be allowed.

“Having ROPS fitted to mine vehicles was the very issue we went to court with BMA over, and now they have about 49 light vehicles being used across their operations that don’t meet their standard,” he told Shift Miner at the time.

“We have made a report to the Chief Inspector showing that BMA are not complying with their rules, so it is up to the government now to do their job.

“We spent half a million dollars arguing this change in court, and the Inspector was more of a hindrance than any help, so we will see what they are prepared to do now.”

Callide Mine workforce in Limbo

THE future of the Callide Mine workforce remains up in the air today, with the CEO for Batchfire Resources Peter Westerhuis saying it would be purely speculative to discuss the issue while the sale is still being finalised.

Many people will remember Mr Westerhuis from his days as boss at Ensham mine in 2011. Last week his name resurfaced as CEO for the newly created private Brisbane based company Batchfire Resources who is close to finalising a deal to buy the mine near Biloela.

In a short interview with Shift Miner, Mr Westerhuis said they were hopeful that the deal to buy Callide mine from Anglo American (for an undisclosed sum) would be finalised, but it was not yet a done deal.

“What the future is for the current workforce and the proposed Boundary Hill South expansions are both good questions,” he told Shift Miner.

“However the deal is not yet finalised, there are still some mechanical things to be worked through, so any comments about the future of the mine are still unfortunately speculative.

“So it is not going to be constructive for us to make comments about them until the deal is finalised, hopefully by April.”

The Callide mine is an open pit thermal coal mine which produces around seven and a half million tonnes of coal a year.

Unlike many other mines, the majority of its coal is sold direct to local power stations on long term fixed contracts.

However like many other mines, it has struggled to break even in recent years because the price paid for the coal is linked to global prices - which as everyone knows are at historic lows.

Aside from the price of coal, the mine has a suite of other problems including a very old mining fleet, and the stalled Boundary Hill South expansion project.

That expansion project has been in development for more than five years, but was cancelled in the last month prior to Anglo American announcing the probable sale of the mine to Batchfire Resources.

Bed providers look long term

THE Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) has approved nearly a 1000 more mining camp beds around Blackwater, despite opposition from Blackwater residents Kevin Cracknell and Kevin Pickengill.

In its first meeting for the year, council approved a proposed 408 person camp on the Capricorn Highway to be built by existing accommodation provider Minumbra, and another 505 person camp in Blackwater that would house workers for Caledon Coal.

However neither camp is expected to go ahead - would more than double export capacity at the port from the current 50 million tonnes a year to 120 million tonnes per year.

The lease for the Minumbra camp is for 10 years, with options to extend for a further 20 years.

Caledon are hoping to increase their coal exports out of the Blackwater region through their proposed greenfield Minyango coal project and a new Longwall operation at the existing Cook Colliery.

The new camp is totally contingent on whether it can achieve these goals. If they do, their local workforce will increase between 300 and 500 people. However both projects are currently mired down in approvals and other delays.

Dissenting councillor Kevin Cracknell told local media he is concerned about how the camps will affect the Blackwater community.

“I know this has been a public issue, certainly at the state and national level about what these camps are providing these communities.

“If we have got even 10 per cent of these 400 workers coming back to live in the Blackwater community, that would put teachers in their school and all sorts of things”

“I am not just talking about Blackwater here, this is every mining community so we need to look at the full picture here.

“Everything seems to be going towards camps camps camps.”
All gas projects producing

Anglo American’s Grasstree coal mine is claiming the record for the most coal (run-of-mine) ever produced from an Australian underground mine in a single year.

The mine produced 10 million tonnes of ROM coal in 2015, which it says has been achieved largely through consistently operating the Longwall mine for 100 hours per week.

Anglo American’s head of underground operations Glen Britton said the achievement is a testament to the commitment and calibre of the team at Grasstree.

“This is a world-class operating team and results like this start with the vision and belief that we can achieve something no one else has done before.”

Big bed adjustment

BMA have left the door slightly ajar on the future of the Crinum mine near Emerald, adding substance to rumours that the 21 year old operation still has plenty of life left in it.

After flagging the closure more than six months ago, BMA released a statement late last year saying the Crinum underground mine had reached the end of its productive life, with the final longwall panels mined in early November.

However the company also said the mine will transition to care and maintenance once the last coal has been processed and railed to Gladstone for export. Care and maintenance is a term used to describe a mine site which has the potential to recommence operations at a later date, and a source close to the Crinum mine operations told Shift Miner there were still “vast quantities of viable coal in the mine, providing the existing wage costs of mining were reduced”.

Unusually for a mine that is apparently being redeveloped to other mines and 50 have taken voluntary redundancies. Of the 61 BMA staff affected by the change, 54 have taken redundancy packages and seven have been redeployed.

General Manager at the Gregory Crinum complex Barry Mitchell said they have worked closely with their workforce following the end of production at the mine.

“Our employees have taken great pride in striving to finish coal production with record breaking performance and they can be very proud of their efforts,” he said.

“BMA has worked closely with our employees and the local community to manage any potential impacts associated with the transition to care and maintenance.

“Despite the challenging coal market we have been able to provide the majority of our employees with either their preference for redeployment, or a voluntary redundancy.”

More than 176 million tonnes of steelmaking coal has been mined over the 36 year history of the Gregory Crinum complex. The Gregory open cut mine opened in 1979 and operated until 2012 when it was put into care and maintenance.

Development of the Crinum underground mine began in 1994 and first coal was produced in 1997. A workforce of five staff plus casual tradespeople will maintain the site during care and maintenance.

LNG has become the largest producer of natural gas in Eastern Australia.

At full capacity Australia Pacific LNG’s two-train LNG production facility will supply 9 million tonnes of LNG a year to a number of Asian customers, although primarily to project partner Sinopec that has an Offtake Agreement.

The important milestone for APLNG comes nearly 12 months after the BG Group was the first company ever to export gas from the Island, and six months after the Santos owned GLNG project commenced exports in 2015.

QRC chief executive Michael Roche said the major milestone underscores how important the gas sector is to the Australian economy.

“In 2014-15 the oil and gas industry provided 5% of Queensland’s jobs, delivered 7% of the state’s regional product and contributed $22.1 billion into the economy to help pay for services such roads, hospitals and schools,” he said.

“The $70 billion investment in the gas industry represented, in today’s dollars, the equivalent of three Snowy Mountain Schemes – the largest engineering project in Australian history.

“In its 2015 World Energy Outlook report, the International Energy Agency confirmed demand for natural gas in Asia is set to skyrocket by 160%.”

Mine shuts with a bang

employees working at the mine 68 are being redeployed to other mines and 50 have taken voluntary redundancies. Of the 61 BMA staff affected by the change, 54 have taken redundancy packages and seven have been redeployed.

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The construction of QCoal’s Byerwen Coal project near Glenden has begun, with preliminary earthworks for the development of a rail loop underway.

A spokesperson for QCoal told Shift Miner the construction workforce was expected to grow soon as new work contracts are awarded.

“In late 2015, rail infrastructure manager Aurizon and civil works contractor Murphy Pipe and Civil mobilised to the Byerwen site and commenced earthworks for the project’s rail loop,” QCoal said.

“Additional work packages including the civil works, CHPP design and construction and high voltage electrical supply for the project have been progressed and are expected to be announced or awarded this quarter.”

The decision to push forward with the project - despite the current low coal prices - is a strong endorsement of coal’s future by the company’s owner Chris Wallin.

The first of the mining leases required for the Byerwen Coal Project was granted in April 2015.

Stage 1 of the project is expected to create up to 100 jobs during construction and employ approximately 300 people during operation.

At full production, Qcoal expects the mine will produce 10 million tonnes of hard coking coal a year, and be a major part of their plan to export 20 million tonnes of coal by 2020.

Production and shipping were expected to commence in the first half of 2019, ramping up to full production by 2020. The project’s design provides options for future expansion to 50 million tonnes a year.

Rio Tinto chief executive Sam Walsh said Amrun is one of the highest quality bauxite projects in the world.

“In addition to generating attractive returns, with mining costs in the first quartile of the industry cost curve, it will provide jobs and strengthen the economy for the people of Cape York and Queensland for many decades,” he said.

“This long-life, low-cost, expandable asset offers a wide variety of development options and pathways over the coming decades.

“We are establishing Cape York Bauxite as the product of choice for the Chinese seaborne market with consistent quality, security of supply and strong technical marketing support. Amrun will be significant in helping to meet growing Bauxite demand from China.”

Rio Tinto agreed with the Traditional Owners to change the name of the South of Embley project to Amrun.

Amrun, is the Wik-Waya name for the area where the processing and port facilities will be developed.

The Amrun project is about 40 kilometres south of Rio Tinto’s existing East Weipa and Andoom mines on the Cape York Peninsula in far north Queensland.

Rio Tinto holds 1.49 billion tonnes of bauxite reserves and 1.91 billion tonnes of resources in the Cape York region.

Amrun will help to support ongoing employment for the existing workforce of around 1400 employees and contractors at Rio Tinto’s Cape York bauxite operations.
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Inspector heads to court

Anglo American is expected to appear in court following the death of an electrician at its Grasstree mine in 2014. Late last year the Queensland mines inspectorate completed its investigations into the miner’s death near Middlemount in 2014, and is now seeking to prosecute the miner’s owner, Anglo American.

More than a year ago, electrician Paul McGuire was discovered unconscious underground and taken to the surface where attempts to revive him were unsuccessful.

In a statement made immediately after the accident, Anglo American said the miner was found in a closed area of the mine.

“Preliminary indications suggest the electrician entered a closed area of the underground mine workings and may have been asphyxiated by a noxious atmosphere,” a spokesperson told Shift Miner at the time.

The matter was heard in the Mackay Magistrates Court in November and expected to continue this year.

The death is one of six fatalities that occurred in Queensland over the 12 month period from March 2014 to March 2015. It was the sector’s worst safety performance in nearly 20 years.

The prospect of higher coal prices is looking more likely following major cuts in global coal exports in 2015.

The current low coal price, that is crippling many local miners is being driven by a global oversupply after production skyrocketed in response to coal prices that peaked nearly a decade ago.

While for many people the boom in the coal sector seems like yesterday, in reality coal prices have been falling since they peaked prior to the GFC in 2007.

However, because it takes so long to build a new coal mine, much of the new coal supply hasn’t arrived until recently - depressing an already falling coal price.

Hardest hit by the continuing low coal prices are the United States producers where coal production declined by 109 million tonnes (11%) in 2015 - the largest decline ever recorded. The largest percentage decrease occurred in the Appalachian region where production fell by more than 15%.

The US Energy Information Administration estimates U.S. coal exports decreased 21% last year and predicts exports will fall a further 12% this year.

By 2017, total exports of coal from the US - the world’s fourth largest exporter - are expected to have fallen by nearly 40%.

However despite some of the pain felt locally, Central Queensland coal miners are the lucky ones enjoying major advantages over other countries by being close to key markets in Asia, having high quality coal, and a relatively low Australian dollar.

Queensland’s coal producers achieved record coal exports last year with 216 million tonnes exported, which is up 2% on the previous record set in 2014.

According to the Queensland Resources Council (QRC), the figures also shed a different light on claims by anti-coal activist Tim Buckley, that India is turning away from Australian coal.

“The benefits of the destination data produced by Gladstone Ports Corporation, we know that coal exports from Gladstone port to India (which accounts for about two-thirds of Queensland’s total coal exports to India) actually accelerated in the second half of 2015,” QRC CEO Michael Roche said.

“This evidence of a growing Indian market for Queensland’s lower-emission high-energy coal refutes the anti-coal activists’ claims about the economics of new coal projects such as the proposed Adani and GVK Hancock mines in the Galilee Basin.”

Minister predicts more black lung

CLARITY on whether the current system for managing Black Lung (Pneumoconiosis) is working, won’t be known for at least three months.

The Queensland Government, mining companies and the CFMEU met on 14th January to discuss the re-emergence of the disease in Queensland.

In the wake of that meeting, Monash University’s Professor Malcolm Sim has been commissioned to undertake a review into the incidence of the disease. He will also review how people in the coal sector are being tested for Black Lung.

In announcing the review, acting Health Minister Dr Anthony Lynham said he expected more cases of the disease to be found in Central Queensland.

“We have confirmed five cases of coal miner’s pneumoconiosis in Queensland and I have asked for Queensland Health data on any other possible cases.

“THERE’s still research to be done on the medical and workplace records, but I suspect there are more cases to come and I am determined to get on top of this issue to protect workers now and into the future and to be open and transparent as we progress.”

Currently, miners are tested for Black Lung when they enter the industry, every five years while they are working, and again when they retire.

However because earlier testing didn’t detect the disease in at least one of the latest confirmed victims, the review will also examine how the actual tests are undertaken and who checks the results.

The Queensland Resources Council says it welcomes the review.

“The top priority is the health and safety of miners and the resources sector is committed to their protection,” CEO Michael Roche said.

Following claims by the CFMEU that underground mines were routinely breaking the rules set for dust levels, the Government says it will continue to focus on gas monitoring.

However while the government has identified one Central Queensland mines that was exceeding safe dust levels, it has no plans to release the detail publicly.

“Workers are wearing additional personal protective equipment as an interim safety measure while the mine is seeking a longer term engineering solution,” he said.

“Directives will remain in place until mines inspectors are satisfied that mines can stay within the regulated level for at least three months.”

A DIRECTOR of the Resource Industry Network (RIN) in Mackay has forecast 2016 will be another tough one for local businesses - but not without promise for the region’s innovators.

Mick Crowe, who is also CEO of GtS Engineering, says while the Christmas gift many had been hoping for failed to arrive, there were still opportunities.

“A lot of us were hoping for a spike in the coal price or a fall in the Australian dollar but unfortunately neither of those things happened, so the Christmas stocking remains empty,” he told Shift Miner.

“But as we keep saying at RIN, both those things are outside of our control so we need to worry about the things we can influence and control.

“Things like how we innovate, cut costs and increase productivity for our clients.

A year for innovators

“Because the message from companies like BMA and Anglo hasn’t changed, they are very motivated about improving productivity and getting in the bottom part of the cost curve.

“Because those companies that don’t get their costs into the lowest quartile will not survive.”

While Mr Crowe acknowledges that many of the obviously big changes have been made since the height of the mining construction boom, he says it is not helpful for companies to think that the big period of change has ended.

He says business needs to reconsider everything, get more “doers” and less managers and cut the layers that slow down the time it takes to implement good ideas.

Adding that this philosophy needs to extend beyond just business.

“There needs to be new mines because you can’t forever keep mining the existing deposits,” he said.

“But the likes of Adani need support from the community and government as well, because whether these new projects happen, will be driven by the cost and effort required to get through those initial stages of approval.

“But it’s not just Adani, it’s an issue for all the mining houses.

“But I think that the Australian community understands that responsible mining is not only fundamental to Australia, it’s also what we are good at.”
Terrifying account into dual fatality

A DIFFICULT-to-read report into the loss of two lives in an underground mining accident at a NSW mine in 2014 has concluded the accident was caused by a severe “pressure burst”.

At 9:05 pm on 15 April 2014 at the Austar mine near Cessnock, James Mitchell (49) and Phillip Grant (35) were working alongside a bolter miner and shuttle car to develop a gate road for a future longwall panel when the wall beside them exploded horizontally crushing them under nearly 40 cubic metres of rubble.

The force of the burst was such that he was knocked off his feet.

“It had the conveyor still running when I was lifting the head up, just to park the head until the car came back again,” the miner said.

“I started lifting up, and then I flicked the conveyor off.

“As soon as I flicked the conveyor off, that’s when they had this huge pressure bump; it was like hitting a switch.

“It was, like, almost instant at the time I flicked that switch - enormous pressure bump.

“It sort of knocked me back onto the rail and I sort of ducked down, just out of habit, like coal sort of flying down your back and all that sort of stuff.”

The deputy in charge of the crew was driving the shuttle car at the time and describes it like a bomb going off.

“It was like there was an explosion; it was massive,” he said during investigations.

“I was sitting in the shuttle car, and it blew me into the mesh guarding.

“I lost my helmet.

“It was like a split second; it was just that quick and intense.”

When the dust settled and it was realised that the rocks had collapsed through the installed rib supports and that two miners were underneath them, a decision was made by the deputy that a rescue at that point was too dangerous, and they withdrew from the area and raised the alert.

It was another two days before the bodies of both miners could be removed.

Determining the cause of the incident entailed a detailed examination of the nature of the overall geology of the mine and the forces and load distributions at the depth that the mine was operating.

Two experts concluded that the depth of mining (more than 500 metres) and local geology played a large role in the accident.

They also observed that the Greta coal seam they were mining had a long history of “pressure bumps and bursts”.

Miner ready to go

STANMORE Coal says it’s on track to start exporting coal from its recently purchased Isaac Plains coal mine.

Managing Director Nick Jorss told Shift Miner they have started preparing the site for a return to production having awarded key contracts before Christmas.

“We have G&S Engineering helping replace the swing rack and doing a bunch of other maintenance on the dragline, so we are spending a bit on it,” he said.

“It was swinging in December last year so it is in pretty good condition, but it is a critical piece of gear so we want to get it up to a high standard.

“We are also in the short strokes of awarding mining contracts, and based on how that goes we are hopeful that we can get plant mobilised not long after.

“As you know it’s a pretty competitive market out there so people have been pretty realistic with their prices.

“We are excited about the mine and we feel confident.”

“Most people have in mind that the mine is located in a perfect area in town, has been knocked on the head by council for obvious reasons.

Stanmore money to cover contractual obligations, which will have to be repaid when the mine is operating.

However one man’s trash is another man’s treasure, and almost every private fortune made in mining, had its genesis in a period like this when entrepreneurial miners could see value where other corporate miners couldn’t.

The purchase is likely to make or break Stanmore Coal, who with just $17 million in cash, is punting everything on the belief that they can restart the mine profitably, in a period like this when entrepreneurial miners couldn’t.

The purchase of the mine is in care and maintenance for Stanmore Coal, who with just $17 million in cash, is punting everything on the belief that they can restart the mine profitably, in a period like this when entrepreneurial miners couldn’t.

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Wages revolution

MACKAY-based workplace consultant Craig Joy is predicting further tightening of mining wages in Central Queensland; however, he says it is still going to be better pay for those willing to work away from home.

While he says it is hard to make broad sweeping statements about how far wages have fallen since the construction phase of the mining boom passed, he says employers should be looking long and hard at some of the non-cash payments in mining that became standard during the boom.

“I know of businesses that have had their day rate cut by 30 per cent, and they have only reduced their wages by three percent,” he told Shift Miner.

“Employers are only required to pay superannuation based on an employee’s base rate, not the rate after allowances and penalties.

“In some cases I know of those extras, they have lifted a base rate of around $26 an hour to more than $42 an hour.

“I actually had one client who, by correcting that, were able to pull $180,000 out of a quote, and they didn’t need to cut anyone’s pay; they just moved back to paying what their staff were legally entitled to.”

On the Shift Miner Facebook page, a number of miners have reflected on whether the money being paid in the mines justifies being away from family and friends.

However, Mr Joy says you will always make more in the mines, because mining companies need to give people an incentive to work there.

“A premium to work in the mines is pretty much unavoidable, because who is going to go over the hill and work for the same amount they could get in town,” he said.

“Wages in the coal fields and Paget have fallen, but they have remained in proportion to each other, and I can’t see that ever changing.”

QGC pushing ahead

A spokesperson for QGC has confirmed the company is pushing ahead with its $1.7 billion Charlie project west of Wandoan despite the collapsing oil price.

The company has started digging trenches, and stringing out pipes in an area west and north of Wandoan as they expand their gas fields over the next two years from 2015.

The development involves the construction of around 350 gas wells and a large field compression station creating more than 1500 construction jobs.

Ray Brown Mayor of the Western Downs Regional Council says they have heard nothing to suggests the project’s timelines have changed.

“There was movement within 24 hours of the company deciding to move ahead with the project,” he told Shift Miner.

“Our understanding is that here has been no curtailing of activity, although whether it’s still at the same speed, I don’t know.

“But I guess with oil at $28 a barrel it makes things very difficult, but certainly we have not heard anything to suggest that the project is slowing or stopping altogether.”

QGC recruited Hutchinson Builders to move its accommodation facilities from the Ruby Jo complex near Chinchilla to Woleebee Creek as it seeks to centralise its workforce closer to where the action is.

The camp will hold 990 beds by the end of March, and QGC has commenced a procurement exercise for Wandoan based accommodation to support the project.

The works are part of the continuous development of QGC’s tenements in the Surat Basin to sustain natural gas supply to both domestic customers and the two-train Queensland Curtis LNG (QCLNG) liquefaction plant on Curtis Island, near Gladstone.

QGC, has appointed Leighton Contractors Pty Limited as the main works contractor and the company expects to make a decision on a suite of subcontractors.

Major infrastructure will be built on QGC property.
BOWEN Basin miner, Cockatoo Coal, has called in the administrators in a move which is likely to cost more than 100 jobs in Central Queensland.

Nearby residents in Baralaba are holding onto the slim hope that the administrators PPB Advisory will be able to restructure the company, or sell it as a going concern.

However, given the effort Cockatoo Coal has put into restructuring the business to keep it viable in the current mining downturn, a silver bullet solution to their problems seems unlikely - other than a coal price recovery.

In a short statement last last year, PPB Advisory - who is also handling the Bandanna Energy administration - said no jobs have been lost yet.

“We are currently undertaking a review of Cockatoo and working with all stakeholders to assess the current position of the company and identify opportunities to restructure the business for the future,” they said.

“During this time, Cockatoo will continue to operate on a business-as-usual basis, with all staff continuing in their roles.”

As foreshadowed by Shift Miner in October, the administration follows the decision by the ANZ bank to pull an AUS$1 million bank loan.

The announcement caps off a very difficult few years for Cockatoo Coal.

Not only have they faced plummeting coal prices, they have had to push ahead with a boom-time decision to expand coal production from about 700,000 tonnes a year to 3.5 million tonnes a year by building a new mine and load out facility at Baralaba.

Twelve months ago, they were forced to massively dilute the value of shares in the company by issuing $125 million worth of new stock at just $0.02 a share, which was 86 per cent less than they were worth before they went into a trading halt in late 2014.

However, despite all those efforts, both their share and coal prices have continued to deteriorate, forcing the company to recently slash 86 per cent of its head office staff in Brisbane and nearly a quarter of those in Baralaba.

Mayor of the Western Downs Regional Council, Ray Brown, has rejected the increasingly popular belief that CSG opportunities have ended in the region.

The Western Downs Shire covers the key CSG localities of Chinchilla, Dalby, Miles and Tara, and Mr Brown says while the opportunities have evolved, they have not disappeared.

“People think that the opportunities in CSG have ended, and certainly, they have changed since the end of the construction phase,” he told Shift Miner.

“But now that the major gas producers have gas flowing, they have contracts that they need to fill, which means they have to maintain and expand their upstream gas acreages.

“The figure is still about a billion dollars a year of investment in our region.”

“However, the business grabbing the opportunities are good, strong, long-term businesses that didn’t let their costs get out of control in the construction phase.

“I don’t know how many times we said at Chamber of Commerce meetings that the construction boom wouldn’t last, but still lots of people jumped in with everything and paid peak costs and dollars, and now they are dealing with those decisions.”

Adding weight to his argument is the continuing upstream CSG work being undertaken by gas companies like QGC.

The company is currently drilling a new CSG well almost every day with expectations that November will be a busy month.

“We are currently drilling about 25 wells a month,” the company said.

“November is ramping up to be a busy month with nine rigs completing new wells and servicing existing ones and nine crews building new access roads and well pads, and rehabilitating existing ones.”

Meanwhile contractor Murphy Pipe and Civil has just completed mechanical construction of a 46km steel pipeline to transport natural gas between processing facilities at Condamine and Tara. West of Wandoan, there is significant earthworks underway with vegetation being cleared, roads built and pipes strung out in preparation for further pipeline construction.

QGC has also finalised a deal with charter flight operator Skytrans that will see 18 return flights per week for QGC staff and contractors from Brisbane to sites in Chinchilla and Taroom.

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NEW YEAR IN BLACKWATER
Residents celebrate the end of a difficult year for Blackwater

Holding a social event you want photographed? Call the Shift Miner office on 4921 4333 to let us know. You can also give our office a bell if you’d like a copy of any of the photos in this edition.

JELLINBAH MINE CHRISTMAS PARTY
Workers relax after a tough year in mining

Holding a social event you want photographed? Call the Shift Miner office on 4921 4333 to let us know. You can also give our office a bell if you’d like a copy of any of the photos in this edition.
BLACKWATER CELEBRATES AUSTRALIA DAY

Locals recognised at Australia Day breakfast event

(L-R) Neve, Arianne, Rylee, Col, and Elkie

(L-R) Bailey, Rachel, Janell and Callum Denman

(L-R) Trey, Baily, Jenna and Kym

Event of the year was won by Lester and Mary Anderson who organised the Troop Train at ANZAC

Marg Ross having fun on Australia Day

(L-R) Award recipients, Lester and Mary Anderson, Community event, Kaitlin Rogers Junior Citizen of the year, Carol Finger Citizen of the year and the boy McAuliffe Junior Sportsperson

(Buy this and many other images at www.shiftminer.com)
### Car for Sale

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973 FORD MUSTANG COUPE MACH 1</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Very original and clean American muscle car, left hand drive, original gearbox, diff, interior, mustang rims, 302 Windsor Motor, with decked block.</td>
<td>$24,990</td>
<td>Call: 0401 080 260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973 HOLDEN HQ ONE TONNE UTE</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Vehicle requires little for roadworthy but better suited for project car, some minor panel and paint repairs required but nothing to serious.</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>Call: 0418 253 229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974 LAND ROVER</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Series 3 wagon parked for 12 years, starts and drives, Holden engine (was originally 406).</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>Call: 0746 276 061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 TOYOTA LANDCRUISER UTE</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2 owners since new. Great vehicle no rust.</td>
<td>$19,000</td>
<td>Call: 0427 186 242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 TOYOTA LANDCRUISER</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>New steering pump shockies brake shoes rebuilt steering box and rear diff.</td>
<td>$16,001</td>
<td>Call: 0457 687 638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 HOLDEN COMMODORE UTE</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Very good reliable car, has never missed a beat. 4 new tyres on vehicle, service and road worthy upon sale, only selling due to having to many vehicles.</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>Call: 0457 885 411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 HOLDEN COLORADO</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Turbo Diesel, has been used as a mine site vehicle and has all its speaks. Has 3.5 tonne towing capacity.</td>
<td>$22,000</td>
<td>Call: 0431 411 028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 MITSUBISHI PAJERO WAGON</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2011 Turbo Diesel 3.2 ltr, Auto, LWB, 7 seater, Bullbar, Towbar, Side steps, Climate control air con. Electric windows, mirrors and seat adjustment.</td>
<td>$36,950</td>
<td>Call: 0407 379 009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FJ45</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>973 FJ45, 2F 4 speed Has 60 series power steering with mod plate. 75 series diffs, fine spline with disc brake front.</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>Call: 0400 187 460</td>
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<td>8 Seat</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998 INTERNATIONAL BEAVER TAIL TRUCK</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1988 White International, 13 speed Beaver Tail with reliable diesel Cummins motor, this truck has never let us down. Model T2670, Odemeter 800k.</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
<td>Call: 0407 699 779</td>
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<tr>
<td>LANDROVER 110 6X6</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Diesel engl 8/2016, Isuzu 4 cyl td 66,304kms, pintle H &amp; R hitch, QMV800, calibrater, 3m alloy ramp, tray 3/10x2/100, complete gearbox rebuild Jul’15, rebuild diff Jul’15, new fd clutch Feb’16, overhaul clutch &amp; SM CYL Jul’14, 7 new BFG tyres Apr 14</td>
<td>$36,000</td>
<td>Call: 0408 396 700</td>
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<td>2005 KTM 65</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>WTS 2005 KTM 65. Recently had major overhaul. Top end rebuild, new water pump, front and rear sprockets plus chain, suspension rebuilt by the lads at M...</td>
<td>$2,200</td>
<td>Call: 0427 277 790</td>
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<tr>
<td>HONDA TRANSALP 650</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>LAMS APPROVED. 2005 transalp, good condition, 63503km, not registered atm. Comfortable on long trips and in cold areas the heated hand grips are Devine !!! Is a bigger bike but great to handle.</td>
<td>$4,500</td>
<td>Call: 0427 320 130</td>
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<td>$2,200</td>
<td>Call: 0427 277 790</td>
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**BOAT FOR SALE**

**2013 CROWNLINE 185S**

185S Bowrider, 8 seat capacity, powered by single 150HP Mercury. New Condition with only 220 hours clocked, has sports upgrades fitted, colour cooded Red covers and Bimini, built in depth gauge sports seating and cockpit.

**$ 33,900**

Call: 0438 494 791

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**BOAT FOR SALE**

**2400 KEVLACAT WEEKENDER**

2007 Kevlacat Twin 140 fourstroke a with 300 hours. Boat has Furuno 585 sounder, Furuno GPS, back up Lowrance elite 5 GPS, Furuno auto pilot, VHF, CD player, Anchor winch.

**$ 100,000**

Call: 0458 183 885

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**BUSINESS FOR SALE**

**GOLD MINING LEASE**

Gold Mining Lease located Mount Britton. Land 1 Ha Dwelling contains 3 bed, 1 bathroom, solar energy, water tanks, generators, nbn disc. Contact owner for more details.

**$ 65,000**

Call: 0417 714 886

---

**HOME FOR SALE**

**PRIVATE WHITSUNDAY RAINFOREST RETREAT**

Tidy, contemporary home, 3 double bedrooms, master with en-suite, kitchen, dining, living, alfresco, large covered deck with spa, DLG, fenced tropical yard. Very private. Must inspect!

**$ 545,000**

Call: 0412 287 435

---

**BOAT FOR SALE**

**SAVAGE SNIPE WITH 15HP JOHNSON**

3.7m SAVAGE SNIPE with 15HP Johnson motor on trailer. Good condition, runs well. 11th REGISTRATION INCLUDED. Located Callope. Advertised elsewhere.

**$ 1,400**

Call: 0432 839 471

---

**BUSINESS FOR SALE**

**MOBILE FOOD VAN FOR SALE**

Mobile Food Trailer, Council approved, Permanent Site (Site well known, have had a pie van operating on this site for over 30yrs) 2.3mx 5m Trailer 2 mth old coffee machine, 3mth old 100 pie warmer, small display fridge.

**$ 85,000**

Call: 0407 174 304

---

**LOADERS FOR SALE**

**2010 TEREX PT-80 TRACK LOADER**

2010 Terex PT-80 Track Loader, 1900 hours

**$ 55,000**

Call: 0417 864 646

---

**EXCAVATOR BUCKET FOR SALE**

**EXCAVATOR BUCKET + TEETH**

Large excavator bucket + teeth would suit large excavator.

**$ 3,000**

Call: 0415 084 408

---

**NEW SERVICE BODY**

New service body to suit truck or trailer. Was to be set up for mobile welding. Body made with RHS skeleton frame and zinc sheeting.

**$ 32,250**

Call: 0400 208 220

---

**PRIVATE WHITSUNDAY RAINFOREST RETREAT**

Tidy, contemporary home, 3 double bedrooms, master with wakln & built-in robes to offices &/or 4th bedroom, 2 bath, open plan kitchen, dining, living, alfrresco, large covered deck with spa, DLG, fenced tropical yard. Very private. Must inspect!

**$ 545,000**

Call: 0412 287 435
Dear Frank,
I’ve been seeing my girlfriend for about three years and I’m thinking about popping the question. The only thing is, she would never say yes without her father’s blessing, and he doesn’t seem to like me very much. To tell you the truth, he’s ex-Army and I’m kind of scared of him. What can I do to earn his respect?
Conner, Townsville

If you want my advice I think you should forget about marriage altogether.
I’ve dated plenty of women, married a few, and I can tell you that nothing sucks the passion out of a relationship quite like saying “I do”. In fact, it was married life that led me to my true passion: collecting antique sex mannequins.
Stuck in a passionless relationship, I turned to the internet for solace. It was there I discovered the most revered and respected of all the perforated arts. I immediately mortgaged my house and used the money to amass what I consider to be Australia’s most extensive (and most frequently utilised) collection of sex mannequins.
If collecting inanimate sex dolls isn’t your cup of tea, there are certainly ways you can obtain your would-be father in law’s blessing.
Being an ex-army man you could always impress him by signing up to serve in the armed forces.
Better yet, you could lie to him and say you’ve signed up to serve in the armed forces.
Buy some secondhand camouflage gear off eBay, rent some war movies and memorise the lingo, then just pretend you’re a tough-as-nails commando when you visit for Sunday roast.
Deceiving your girlfriend’s father for an extended period of time will require commitment. If you don’t think you’re up for it there are other ways of earning his respect.
You could always challenge him to a fight.
If you best the ex-army man in fisticuffs, he’ll have no choice but to respect you.
Unfortunately this could also backfire spectacularly if you don’t manage to win the fight.
This is why I would recommend resorting to underhanded tactics.
Invite yourself over to dinner at your girlfriend’s parent’s place and offer to get her father a beer.
Drink the neck of his beer and then top it off with half a bottle of night-time cough medicine.
When he starts to look suitably drowsy, that’s when you challenge him to the fight.

He’ll have no choice but to respect you after you pummel his drowsy face to a pulp on the front lawn.

Frank

The biggest benefit I see is touching base with home. Connecting with loved ones can do wonders on a bad day.
They may like to know what you’re up to, your safe, and share their news, but be aware the opposite can happen.
You could be having a great day until your kid texts and wants to borrow more money.
“Intimate” text sessions with your partner can spice your relationship up, but that’s more Frank the Tank’s department!
The Real Miner says that because you do not have normal mobile phones underground, everyone is forced to talk to each other, although he concedes all that changes when the guys are on the surface in their crib huts.
I choose to leave my phone in my locker. I like an old fashion chat to get to know people and help make the long hours interesting.
Am I annoying? Perhaps to some. So keep your head down in a corner on your phone and I will leave you alone, unless I think something’s wrong.

Frank

The bad side…..
They can create isolation and stop interaction. We all know mental health is a huge issue, and sitting on a phone instead of talking to each other won’t improve it.
Also, if you don’t adhere to strict mobile phone policies you can get sacked.
Updating your Facebook status at the wrong time, or sharing a picture from site can be your undoing.
A phone ringing in a meeting has become more serious these days, it’s not just: “That’s a carton” anymore.
Also people are less likely to help you when they can only use mobiles at the crib hut.
“Give us a lift mate? “ “Sorry, I’m busy...checking Facebook!”

The good side…..
If you are new, shy or feel unloved on crew, you can always hideaway on your phone, and look up occasionally and chat about that video you’re watching.
Google can answer a crossword question that is stumping everyone, or tell us how long it is until it rains. When it does rain you can bet someone has a movie or two on their phone to share.

Are we losing the art of communication? Many people have devices these days, so why talk to each other, just: “Shoot me a text”.
I have worked on sites with and without mobile phones and it makes a huge difference. I can see the pros and cons for having devices on site.

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“WHARTS” AND ALL

by CQ mining stalwart

TOM WHARTON

During the early stages of Moura mine, most workers lived in tents which were pitched near where the front gate is now. Single men shared a tent with four others (unless you had your own), while married people had one tent per family.

To keep perishable food, the company supplied a few kerosene fridges and all cooking was done on an open fire, although some married couples had their own little fires.

We made a showering cubicle out of hessian to provide privacy, and inside was a container you filled up with water which had an adjustable valve on it. You adjusted the valve to get your required flow of water by pulling on a small rope. Hot water was heated in a large drum (sometimes known as a donkey) and we used this water for showers and washing of all sorts. Toilets also consisted of hessian bagging strung around four posts and an old wooden seat was placed over a hole dug in the ground, which on a hot night sometimes was a little unpleasant to say the least.

The one thing to be admired is how well the single men treated and respected the married women whose life under these circumstances was difficult.

As it looked likely that the mine was going to be there for the long haul, the union decided to ask the company to assist with housing and some sort of permanent quarters for single men.

The company responded that housing was our own responsibility.

“We didn’t come to Australia to build homes for Australians, we came to mine coal where you live is your own business,” they said.

“Back in the United State we have had people living in camps like yours for a hundred years with no complaints,” they said.

After many small strikes, it was finally agreed that after a job inspection the housing issue would go to the commission to be heard under Justice Gallagher.

This justice was not known to be very sympathetic to the Unions but it was also known that he was very nationalist in his way of thinking.

On the day of the inspection while walking through the camp, he stopped at a tent to talk to four little beautifully dressed girls who were playing. He accepted an invitation for a cup of tea in the tent and then asked the lady and some of her friends to show him some of the amenities.

This interaction with these ladies made the company officers angry, but no one said a word. Afterwards at the hearing, the company repeated that it did not come here to build houses for Australians, however on summing up his judgement, Justice Gallagher said that what he had seen in the camp had made him very proud of Australian womanhood who had done their best in difficult circumstances.

He also judged the company should work with the unions to supply decent housing for married and single people and that he would expect this to happen as soon as possible.

I will not mention names, but a couple of company people that had been used to intimidate the workers were gone the next day, and houses were on the way.

About the author: Tom started work at Moura mine around 1962, and has since held official positions with the unions as well as leadership roles for various mining companies. In 1999 he took a voluntary redundancy from his role as a process coordinator, but re-entered the industry in 2001 as a dragline supervisor and then later as an Open Cut Examiner. He has worked at mines across the Bowen Basin.

PUZZLES

ACROSS
1. Exciting
5. Body of warships
9. Pacified
10. Horrified
12. No longer useful
13. Memorise
14. Clay lump
16. High seas robbers
18. Van or car
21. Delights
24. Wall recess
25. Migraines
27. Admiral Horatio ...
28. Pinpoint
29. Brutal person
30. Fire-resistant material

DOWN
1. Leave
2. Oscars, Academy ...
3. A second time
5. Body of warships
7. From the menu (1,2,5)
8. Astound
11. Onto
12. No longer useful
13. Memorise
15. Lewd
17. Twilight periods
18. Laughed heartily
20. Repeat
21. Covertous
22. Frugality
23. Advantages
26. Dumbfound

MAGAZINE

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Off Shift

1st February 2016
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