

# as crisis batters region



More than 700 mining contractors in the northern Bowen Basin region will lose their jobs after BHP Billiton announced a 10-15 per cent production cut at BMA coal mines in the region.

PHOTO: PETER HOLT 270407/247

could not control employment but was working hard to stimulate the economy and create work.

"It's a devastating situation to be placed out of a job - these are good, decent hardworking people," he

said. "Fortunately Queensland and Australia are in a far better way than other places but that doesn't have any comfort for someone who has lost a job."

Queensland Resources Council CEO Michael Roche

said the job cuts were tragic but the effects may be even worse.

"For example, in the Bowen Basin, the resources sector is responsible directly and indirectly for one in four jobs," Mr Roche said.

It was a grim sentiment shared by Group Engineering's managing director, Allan Ruming.

"We're expecting (the bad news) will keep coming."

He said his company was waiting to see how this

"cyclone" would hit Mackay.

"Everything is just going to cut back," he said.

"I've learned never to lose people if I can help it, but if it gets worse, you have to make unsavoury decisions about who stays."

## THE DIRT

■ BHP Billiton, which owns 50% of BMA, announced 1100 workers were being cut from their coking (or metallurgical) coal division.

■ BMA also owns the Hay Point Coal Terminal, south of Mackay.

■ The job cuts would be spread out across the next six months with 3300 jobs being cut by BHP Billiton Australia-wide.

■ The company is dropping its coal production by 10 to 15 per cent.

■ Since mid-December last year more than 500 workers had been laid off from our resources industry; yesterday that number was immediately tripled by BMA's morning announcement.

■ Contracting companies that service the mine industry will be the first hit by the flow-on effects from these job cuts, which may in turn affect other Mackay businesses.

■ Those who have lost or are worried about their jobs can register with the Queensland Government's workers' assistance line on 1800 035 749.

■ General manager of Anglo Coal's underground operations, Ernest Johnson, said the company had made a "strategic decision". Mr Johnson blamed the shutdown on the "reduced demand for commodities world-wide." "Once operations have stopped and the salvaging and sealing process is complete, the mine will be placed under care and maintenance in accordance with mine safety requirement."



REDC CEO Narelle Pearse: Workers will probably be absorbed by skills shortage.

## Industry will absorb sacked mine workers

AT Moranbah the fear of a mass sacking had been brewing for some time, so Isaac Regional Council Mayor Cedric Marshall wasn't surprised when he finally got the phone call yesterday morning from a BMA mine manager.

"It was something we knew was coming ... I would say people have been pretty nervous."

Cr Marshall was told 1100 jobs were lost, 6 per cent of BMA's Bowen Basin work-

forc; 300 of those were permanent positions. The trenchment of those full-time workers was Cr Marshall's main concern.

"The permanent employees normally live within the regional council area, they have their families in town, we will see school kids being moved out of the area."

Cr Marshall was tipped off to yesterday's announcement at his monthly meeting with BMA mine manag-

ers, which was held yesterday morning.

"They told me to expect news out of Brisbane," he said.

Although BMA sacked 6 per cent of its workforce yesterday it promised Cr Marshall that it would continue community commitments such as maintaining halls, civic centres and swimming pools.

In Mackay, REDC CEO Narelle Pearse said she felt "fairly confident" the

sacked workers would be absorbed into related industries.

"They will get picked up by (mine-related) businesses in Paget or transferred between mines, depending on how highly skilled they are, but they might not be earning the same money."

However, Ms Pearse admitted it was a lot of workers for the region to absorb.

"1100 is a lot of jobs, we want to try to keep them in the region," she said.

CANELAND CENTRAL

## AUSTRALIA DAY TRADING HOURS

Monday 26th January 2009

CLOSED

Tuesday 27th January 2009

8:30am - 5:30am



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