

Cuts keep coming but region's employment market remains strong



Diesel fitter Sean Byrne, left, arrives for his new job in Paget, with Hayes HR branch manager Alan Hayes and Cummins workshop manager Steven Scarth, right, welcoming him to work.

PHOTO: PETER HOLT 070109/286

Here comes flying squad

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from key departments including industrial relations, state development, tourism and treasury, who will meet those miners struggling to find work after last month's mass sackings at Macarthur Coal and Xstrata.

A spokesperson for Regional Development and Industry Minister Desley Boyle said the team would help affected resource workers if they needed to relocate around the region to be closer to work and could work to pair up miners with new jobs.

"Our first priority is to keep them in the region," he said.

"It depends on the individual situation. But if they were employed in the mines, the assistance is there. And we'll ensure they get their entitlements."

The spokesperson said there had been no specific call for the Flying Squad but it would land here in an effort to help.

"The whole point is that if they're not needed, that would be perfect," he said.

Where the help might be needed is for the former MCG contractors who were taken into a crib room at 6pm after their day shift and told by human resources staff that there was no work left. One worker who was laid off said everyone was in shock.

"All the female operators were crying," she said.

The workers were employed at mudflats, near Poitrel and Millennium mines, where coal from the two sites is cleaned.

A MCG Group spokesperson said the sackings resulted from a client's request "to change the scope" of their work.

"There were 30 people working on the project, 12 people will be affected, 12 will remain in place and six have been redeployed (to other MCG Group projects)."

As well as the flying squad, the State Government would also provide continued support for about 11,000 jobs in the region through its \$1.6 billion capital works program. The program provides reassurance for the region's workforce after State Treasurer Andrew Fraser this week warned the global credit crisis would "move out of financial pages and into the real economy" in the first half of 2009.

The 2008/2009 \$1.6 billion capital works projects include the start of the redevelopment of Mackay Base Hospital, the continuation of the upgrade to Mackay-Bucasia Road and the replacement of the Forgan Bridge and the Hospital Bridge, along with infrastructure projects like the \$400 million upgrade of Jilalan Rail Yard and \$357 million for the Abbot Point Coal Terminal.

The spokesperson from Desley Boyle's office said the Rapid Response Flying Squad did not include pilots, nor did they have codenames. He did describe them as an "all-star" team which would operate from the Mackay office of the Department of Tourism.

Jobs still on offer for selected skills

By **BIANCA CLARE**

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A FEW weeks ago Sean Byrne applied for a job at Paget, a day later he had a call-back and within a week he had a job.

Now the trade-qualified diesel fitter has started working with Cummins, a company specialising in diesel engine rebuilds - not bad considering the talk of a slowing resource industry.

For Mr Byrne, finding a job in our area "turned out to be very easy".

"Hayes HR got back to me the next day and from there to Cummins was about four days

to a week," he said.

"I think if you have the skills that there is a demand for, it's pretty easy.

"But it's a case-by-case scenario."

In fact, local employment agencies are finding themselves in the midst of a recruitment bonanza for skilled workers.

Hayes HR's branch manager Alan Hayes said he had about 50 jobs on his books at the moment.

"Skilled tradesmen are in high demand. Particularly those involved in coal infrastructure construction," he said.

ATS, The Recruitment Ser-

vices Company, branch manager Paul Quinn said he had more than 30 jobs on offer.

"We haven't noticed any decline in the job market," he said.

We haven't noticed any decline in the job market

- ATS Recruitment's Paul Quinn

"We have vacancies in the fields of sales, trades and labour. There is definitely still a skills shortage in the area."

Ready Workforce branch

manager Nic Willis said she had a dozen jobs for those with the right attitude.

"On top of that there are still a lot of companies that have jobs to fill that are not actively advertising," she said.

"When someone comes in who is a perfect match we let them know and they snap them up."

All three recruitment companies agreed the market was tight for electricians and professional white collar workers such as accountants.

Mackay's unemployment rate remains lower than the state average of 3.7 per cent - at 3.5 per cent.

MACKAY STATE HIGH - REACH FOR THE SKY!



Kaye Perry
(School Captain - Class of 1988)
Bachelor of Education
- Special Education

My memories of Mackay State High are all very positive. A time spent with great friends, a time to pursue sporting interests, the chance to develop academically and the opportunity to develop leadership skills as School Captain. Mackay High offered the opportunity to participate in courses such as Toastmasters (Public Speaking),

which in hindsight has put me in good stead for my chosen career to date. As a Coordinator at an Autism Specific School, one of my main roles is to educate families and the broader community about Autism Spectrum Disorders.

I also remember the school having quite a sense of community, where parent involvement was encouraged, as I fondly recall my parents being involved with the school and 'helping out' where needed.

Being the third child in my family to attend Mackay High, with a Prefect who was an academic high achiever and a School Captain preceding me, Mackay High served not only me, but my family very well!



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