

INSIDE: Marriner back in council focus over new round of unpaid rates. Story Page 5

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\$1.50*



RUSSIAN BALLET COMING TO TOWN

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This time last year there were 19 coal ships off Hay Point and Dalrymple Bay. This week the queue hit a high of 90

THE \$800M WAITING GAME

The number of coal ships queued at Dalrymple Bay and Hay Point coal terminals has skyrocketed to 90, as demand for coal returns. This time last year, just 19 ships queued for the ports.

PHOTO: AMANDA BALMER
280807/149

By **KATE BASTABLE**
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THE coal ships are well and truly back.

Ninety ships queued off the coast of Mackay on Monday, waiting for their turn to be loaded with coal at the Dalrymple Bay and Hay Point terminals.

This time last year, just 19 ships were in the queue; tangible evi-

dence of the global financial crisis.

Dalrymple Bay Coal Chain Board central co-ordinator Ross Dunning said there were 76 coal ships standing off Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal yesterday morning, waiting for about \$710.6 million in coal.

Another seven queued for coal at the Hay Point Services terminal,

bringing the total estimated value of coal being waited for to almost \$800 million.

Mr Dunning said the global financial crisis had led to decreased demand for coal, however, as suggested by the current queue of coal ships, demand had returned.

Queensland Resources Council chief executive Michael Roche

said the ship queue was a graphic reminder of the significance of the Mackay region's coal industry to the Queensland and Australian economies.

"What we are seeing now is the culmination of a number of factors," Mr Roche said.

"In particular, China's strong entry into the spot market for coking

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'Comparing Mackay to the rest... we've weathered this fairly well'

A ninety-strong coal ship fleet indicates a growing economy

Playing \$800m waiting game

FROM PAGE 1

coal means that ships are not arriving in the same orderly way that they did previously under long-term supply contracts.

"This situation has also worsened as a result of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) decision not to renew a ship queue management system operating at Dalrymple Bay late last year.

"At the same time, the efficiency of the export supply chain for the coal industry is being hampered by infrastructure and operational deficiencies including rail service performance and reliability.

"The earliest improvements will come from an improvement in the performance of the rail system."

Mr Dunning said improvements to increase the capacity of the rail system were on schedule for completion in September 2010.

The ACCC denied an application to extend the queue management system due to concerns that its continuation would reduce incentive to implement a long-term solution to ship queuing issues.

Mr Dunning said he was working with coal producers and service providers to develop an equitable queue management system, which could be put in place while the coal chain worked to increase its capacity.

Coal ships queuing to be loaded at the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal can expect 30-day waits at the moment, and Mr Dunning said some reports claimed demurrage fees were costing \$600 million a year.

"That is unacceptable, but it is driven by exceptionally strong demand (for coal). We obviously are all working hard to reduce the time (ships spend) in the queue."

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By KATE BASTABLE

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THE 90 ships queuing up for coal at Hay Point and Dalrymple Bay suggest our economy is bouncing back from the global economic downturn.

REDC CEO Narelle Pearse said the high number of ships indicated the strength of the economy, and Mackay Chamber of Commerce chairperson Kylie Porter agreed.

Ms Porter said local business appeared to be picking up, with employment advertisements on the rise and retailers expecting a strong Christmas period.

"Comparing Mackay to the rest of Australia, we've weathered this fairly well," Ms Porter said.

"Lots of businesses have financial difficulties; however, we certainly haven't seen the lows other regions have."

Some businesses were experiencing cash-flow problems, with longer payment timeframes and reduced availability of credit," Ms Porter said.

Mackay Area Industry Network training and development manager Darren Crocker believed things were picking up, however he said some businesses were still affected.

Some companies had spaced out their maintenance schedules, decreasing the amount of maintenance work, and some were repairing equipment rather than buying new equipment, he said.

One business that was picking up is Townson

OUR ECONOMY:

- There is strong demand for coal, with 90 ships queued at local ports.
- There is a growing number of employment advertisements.
- Business is picking up and retailers expect a strong Christmas period.

Plumbing, which just had its best month in six months, according to owner Graham Townson.

Mr Townson said he had done what he could to keep costs down and the number of jobs up during the downturn. This included reducing rates, being more helpful and introducing cost-cutting measures. Improved technology allowed Townson Plumbing to send jobs directly to mobile plumbers, helping them get from job to job faster and decreasing petrol costs, he said.

"We've also kept up our advertising, offered some promotions and we've gone back to real estate agents (seeking business)," Mr Townson said.

Ms Pearse said, that with the potential for another boom around the corner, adequate infrastructure, including the recently announced Northern Missing Link, was extremely vital.

Construction of the missing link, which will connect the Goonyella coal rail system to the Newlands rail system, is expected to be completed by January 2012.

The region also needed to ensure it had enough skilled workers and housing, Ms Pearse said.



Townson Plumbing owner Graham Townson says his business just had its best month in six months, signalling strength returning to the economy.

PHOTO: TONY MARTIN 131109

If you've separated or you're planning to, here's how you find out what you're entitled to...

Advertisement

Hi, I'm Richard Callaghan, specialising in Family Law at The Family Law Centre. I will be conducting a **free information night** on **Tuesday 17th November 2009** from 6pm to 7.30pm, to explain to you "who gets what" property when you separate from your partner.

Because of my experience in Family Law, I understand the pressures of breaking up and in down to earth language will point out some of the common problems in Family Law property disputes and how you can avoid them. I'll give you tips to help you take control so you can get on

with your life, and I'll discuss how your entitlements are worked out.

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I'll give you guidance on how to avoid costly court disputes and will also explain the different steps involved when cases proceed through the Family Court (in situations where there is no choice but to go to court).

There will also be time for questions and general discussion. The **free information night** will be held at the offices of The Family Law Centre, 34 Wood Street on **Tuesday 17th November 2009** from 6pm to 7.30pm.

To reserve your place please phone Kate Robinson on 4963 0843.



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