HOME HILL NEWS

Greetings from the Home Hill Business Community

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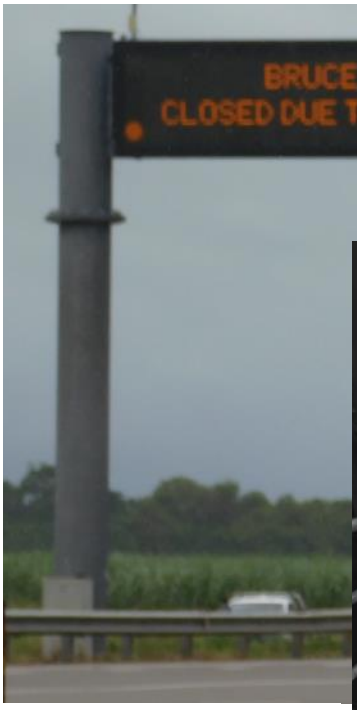
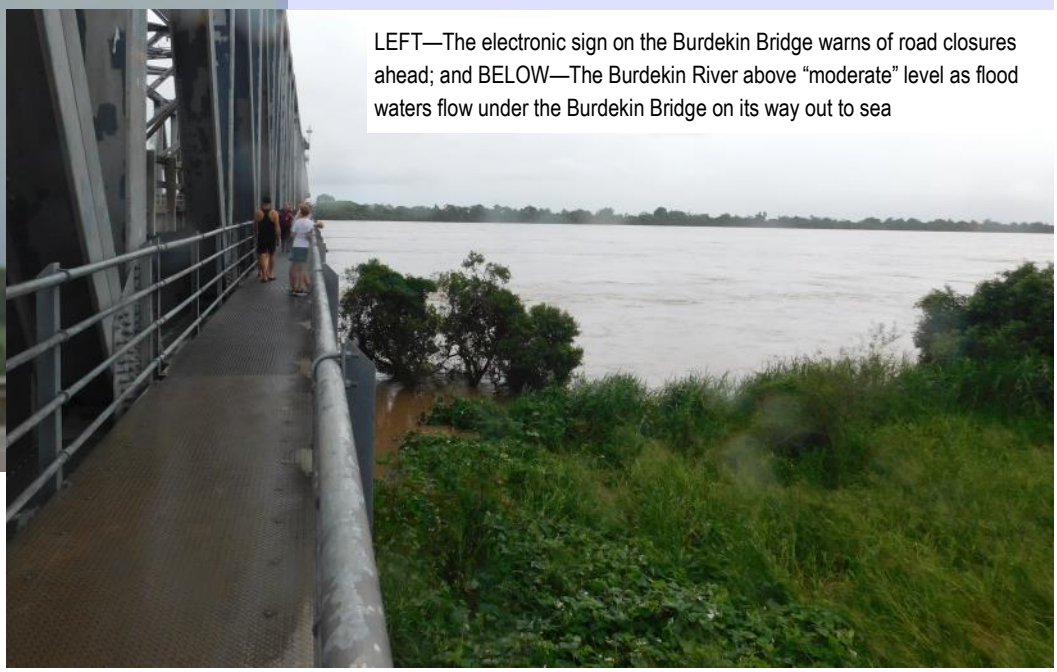
Weeks of rain—and a watch on a cyclone





LEFT—The electronic sign on the Burdekin Bridge warns of road closures ahead; and BELOW—The Burdekin River above "moderate" level as flood waters flow under the Burdekin Bridge on its way out to sea

THE North Queensland wet season hit with a vengeance early in February as monsoonal rains covered the northern part of the state, flooding large areas of many shires including the Burdekin, where the river rose to "above moderate" levels, resulting in Groper Creek being flooded and minor inundation to farming areas near the river.

The flooding resulted in the activation of the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) to assess the situation and with advice from Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), the LDMG continued to closely monitor the weather conditions and were prepared to act as needed.

Group Chair, Mayor Pierina Dalle Cort said the LDMG is working to ensure that they were responding as best as possible.

"Community safety is Council's number one priority and it will always come first," Cr Dalle Cort said. "We rely on BOM for weather updates, but it's important to note that forecasts can change rapidly, as severe weather is unpredictable."

The Mayor said that at the time, the rainfall was variable with renewed river level rises predicted.

She said council was working with the Queensland Fire Department, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Ambulance Service, the SES and other agencies to support the community.

"A dedicated Local Recovery Group has been established and meets regularly to ensure residents in isolated communities have access to essential supplies, including medical needs," she said.

"It is always better to be prepared than not at all.

The Burdekin community was urged to check for updates on road and weather conditions via the Burdekin Disaster Dashboard at disaster.burdekin.qld.gov.au.

After 2 weeks of dedicated response and recovery efforts, the LDMG moved to 'alert' status, with Cr Dalle Cort, saying that, while the immediate threat had passed, some communities remained isolated and the LDMG would maintain regular contact to address any emerging issues.

She commended the tireless efforts of emergency services, council staff, volunteers and the wider community. "From emergency services to volunteers, every person who stepped up played a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of our residents."

Cr Dalle Cort said council crews had been actively assessing and repairing roads across the region, with over 70 roads affected due the weather event.

"We appreciate the community's patience as Council crews work to complete these repairs as efficiently as possible," she said.

"This event served as a timely reminder of what a true wet season looks like. It's important not to become complacent, as the wet season isn't over until April."

Following the flooding, it was announced that an $8 million Community Relief Fund was available for flood-affected north Queensland communities.

Funding was to support councils with immediate clean-up and early recovery activities with the assistance jointly funded by the Albanese and Crisafulli Governments.

Continued on Page 3—

THE large crowd of prospective passengers who turned up at the Home Hill Comfort Stop to support the "Rail Bus" service that was introduced to transfer workers across the flooded Burdekin River and Plantation Creek showed just how welcome the service was. The Burdekin Local Disaster Management Group was able to obtain the rail bus from the Ingham area and it served a purpose for all those who needed to cross the flooded roadways. It was unfortunate that the vehicle only carried ten passengers and there had to be a priority loading, resulting in some prospective passengers giving up on waiting for their turn. However, it must provide a prod for our northern members of the Government to start looking at a bigger type of rail vehicle that can carry more passengers across blocked roads like Plantation Creek in faster time, so that all those needing the service do not have to wait for hours. Surely there must be a former rail motor in this vast state that could be converted for the purpose at the many flood times that occur each year. Most areas of the north gain no value out of the 50-cent fares that are now offered in the south-east corner—a vehicle that can carry passengers above flood height would provide value for money and would be well used all over the state.

THE floods again showed how Politicians of all colours quickly target the affected areas to get their photos taken, while also offering their ideas on how to assist the flooded towns. However, once again, it was also clear that they do not want to know anything about how they can assist our own community. The cameras were out in Ayr and Townsville and everywhere in between to record the Pollies' words of wisdom for posterity, but unfortunately, the people of Home Hill were once again deprived of the opportunity to put their case for much-needed improvements to our facilities and services. Apparently, there is an urgent need to do something about Plantation Creek (which has been a problem for many decades) - which everyone in authority in Ayr were able to put their case for to visiting politicians—while Home Hill's up and down central business district and the large numbers of heavy vehicles using the highway through the town and the need for a second bridge crossing of the Burdekin River are not as important for a case to be presented from the Home Hill point of view. We are aware that a helicopter was available to transport ministerial staff across the flooded areas to Ayr, so there should have been no excuse for our government representatives to come and hear Home Hill's point of view. It begs the question—Are the people of Home Hill being taken for granted by all levels of government?

HOME HILL is losing out through the lack of that chance to present our case. Through decisions of different levels of government, we have lost our annual Show and the unique position the town was in as the only centre outside of Victoria to have a public holiday on Melbourne Cup day—which was lost with the town's show holiday. On top of that, when the annual Australian Hand Cane Cutting Championships were in the hands of the local people who did much of the hard work preparing for it, it was held annually. However, now it is controlled by another level of government, it gets changed to every second year—and Home Hill misses out on the 4000 visitors who, it is claimed come when it is held. How much say did the people who were in charge get in those decisions? Another case of Home Hill missing out on putting its case to the various levels of government. We can't win.

DURING the recent flooding of the Burdekin River, there were questions asked about the system currently being used to keep track of river heights right up the river to the dam and to other tributaries. Years ago, local residents could keep track of the river heights and the levels it was expected to get to at various points along the river, which made it easier to everyone to know just how high it was expected to get to. When the South Burdekin Water Board existed in Home Hill, the manager regularly went down to the office and recorded the river heights on a blackboard, just to keep the community informed. Something else Home Hill has lost! - DAVID JACKSON

The finer points of Home Hill . .

JUST like the Boy Scouts and their slogan, "Be Prepared", the Home Hill Central Business District was well and truly prepared for any eventuality, should flooding have occurred in February from the two weeks plus of rain that the town copped—and even without the visits that other communities received from politicians of all political colours—as our photo shows of three businesses that had the sandbags in place ready to keep out the rising waters, even though they were not needed at that time. And there are still some who have left them in place, just in case there is another deluge to come. Home Hill has always been a town that has helped itself in the past, with members of the community going from shop to shop offering their services to assist with flood prevention. However, it would be good to receive at least some of the assistance that other communities received on a government level, when that flooding does eventuate—and after so many lucky years without, it has to happen some time!

Two weeks of rain—and a watch on Cyclone Alfred

Continued from Page 1—

Funding of up to $1 million per Local Government Area was available for the Burdekin as well as other Shires throughout the north.

Funded under Category C of the joint Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), the package provided timely and immediate support to impacted councils to remove waste and debris, clean-up properties, community facilities, playground and parks and undertake other make safe activities as required by council to progress with local recovery.

Trucks queued up on the Bruce Highway to the Burdekin Bridge waiting for their turn to cross the flooded roads

The latest funding followed disaster assistance already provided by the Albanese and Crisafulli Governments in the wake of the devastating floods, including Personal Hardship Assistance payments to eligible residents and counter disaster assistance funding for councils.

Warning—Stay out of flood waters

FOLLOWING the heavy rain in February, the Burdekin Shire Council issued a strong warning to all residents to stay out of flood water following multiple reports.

With more rain predicted in the future and the possibility of a cyclone forming and moving down the east coast, the Council urged everyone to avoid walking, driving or swimming in floodwaters, creeks and rivers due to the significant risks posed by hidden dangers and contamination.

Mayor Pierina Dalle Cort said floodwaters can pose life-threatening dangers, including fast-moving currents, submerged debris and the risk of serious injury or death.

"Floodwaters can be deceptive. Even shallow waters can hide dangerous obstacles and swift currents can quickly sweep away vehicles or individuals," Cr Dalle Cort said.

"It is critical that we all stay out of floodwaters to protect ourselves and our community.

"Flood waters can pose many hidden dangers, such as strong currents, submerged debris and unstable roads, which all create life-threatening conditions.

"Floodwaters can carry sewage, chemicals and bacteria, posing serious health risks," she said. "If it's flooded, forget it. Never attempt to drive, walk, or swim through floodwaters."

The Burdekin River in high flood at the entrance to the old highway crossing

The Council has been working closely with emergency services to keep the community safe and has urged everyone to heed the warnings and make safety a priority.

More big race days ahead in Home Hill

Enjoy a day out under the big trees at the **Home Hill Race Track**, as the **Burdekin Race Club** features these **coming events** —

Future meetings:

Saturday, March 1, 2025

Saturday, April 5, 2025

Saturday, May 17, 2025

Burdekin Growers Race Day

A large program of local races plus southern events—and with local bookmakers on course and an excellent range of food options available

Rail Bus rescues stranded Burdekin workers

LARGE numbers of workers from the Home Hill community took the opportunity given to them to get to work during the two weeks of February rain, which forced the closure of the Bruce Highway at Plantation Creek between Home Hill and Ayr, as the Burdekin Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) secured assistance to help the community cross Plantation Creek.
That help came through Queensland Rail deploying a 10-seater Rail Bus to help residents travel between Ayr and Home Hill, while floodwaters impacted road access following its successful use in Ingham.
Passengers were bused from the Home Hill Comfort Stop to Mirrigan Road, railed across Plantation Creek and dropped at the Ayr Railway Station.
From the station, another bus transported passengers to the Graham Street Bus Depot, with parking available at both the Graham Street Bus Depot and the Home Hill Comfort Stop.
Priority seating was given to patients with medical appointments, emergency services staff, healthcare workers (Hospital, Regis Aged Care, pharmacies), school teachers and other staff required to attend their work place.
However, it did not make it easy for Deputy Mayor, Max Musumeci, who had the initial task of co-ordinating the transport from Home Hill, when two council workers were the first to take their seats on the bus.
Many people were unaware that those workers were urgently needed to correct a fault at the Brandon Sewerage treatment works.
Over the three days that the Rail Bus was in use, hundreds of people took advantage of the transport offered, especially to and from the Home Hill Comfort Stop where it is understood that visiting SES volunteers helped co-ordinate the transfer of passengers.

Deputy Mayor, Cr Max Musumeci had the initial task of overseeing the preferential loading order on to the IComply Bus, which took passengers to meet the Rail Bus at Plantation Creek

As far as traffic could go at the Burdekin Bridge with “Road Closed” Signs preventing travel past the southern approach to the bridge

Part of the large crowd that waited patiently for a seat on the Rail Bus that could give them a lift to their work places in Ayr

Home Hill Police Beat

By **Sergeant Sam Pyke,**
Officer-In-Charge of
Home Hill Police Station

CRIME

ON THE evening of January 14, 2025, a male offender damaged glass panels to two businesses in the IGA Complex using a large metal bar.
A 28-year-old was identified and taken into custody by police on the following day for Wilful Damage offences.
He was released on bail to appear in the Ayr Magistrates Court on February 10, 2025.

BETWEEN January 17, 2025 and January 18, 2025, two Home Hill businesses were subject to break and enters.
The offenders were linked to a vehicle, which was stolen from an address on Twelfth Avenue overnight on the January 19, 2025.
The stolen vehicle was located in Alva after the offenders crashed.
Police apprehended five offenders after they fled the scene.
Police have charged six offenders aged between 13 and 18 years old with multiple property and driving offences.
They are due to appear in the Ayr Magistrates Court on various dates in the future.

COME February, crime has settled down. A limited number of property crimes have been reported and local officers are keeping a 'watchful eye' over any troublemakers.

Local officers conducting briefing at the official conference room at Home Hill Newsagency & Coffee

FLOODING

HOME HILL Police were busy during the North Queensland weather event, with a number of officers deployed from Ayr and Rockhampton to assist keeping our community safe.
I am thankful we came off quite unscathed compared to our northern areas.
Flooding at Plantation Creek caused the Bruce Highway to be cut for a number of days, with QPS assisting council with roadblocks and traffic management.
We only came across a few disgruntled tourists who weren't too familiar with the extremes to North Queensland.
Our local community was well prepared for the event and I thank everyone for their patience and keeping up to date via the Burdekin Disaster Dashboard.

Ayr officer, Constable Mackenzi Griggs conducting an inspection of flooded Plantation Creek

NOTICES

THE Home Hill Police Station counter will be closed for administration-related inquiries from 3pm on February 13, 2025.
It will reopen at 8.30am on March 10, 2025, due to our Administration Officer, Josie being on leave.

For any inquiries relating to driver licencing or firearms, please attend as below –

Queensland Transport functions—
• Online at - www.tmr.qld.gov.au
• Ayr QGap (Ayr Courthouse). 163 Queen Street, Ayr - 8.30am – 4.30pm

Firearms—

• Online at - www.police.qld.gov.au
• New Applications – Australia Post. 155 Queen Street, Ayr – 9.00am - 5.00pm
• Renewals - Ayr Police Station. 165 Queen Street, Ayr - 8.00am -3.00pm

Busy start to 2025 Scouting program

IT HAS been a busy start to the 2025 year for members of the Lower Burdekin Scouts, as a variety of events were planned in January, including the attendance of two members at a Jamboree at Maryborough, which was a 10-day camp packed with fun and activities.

That was followed by a night for the Group in Plantation Park as well as a walk around Ayr to visit some of the Heritage sites.

A few days later, several of the Scouts and adults attended the Australia Day ceremony at the Burdekin Theatre on Australia Day, where they took the opportunity to promote the Scouting organisation.

People aged five to 85 can go to "Try Scouts" for four nights for free and begin to Learn valuable Life Skills; Explore the Outdoors and Develop Lifelong memories.

People of all ages, even adults, join Scouting and develop Skills, Resilience, Leadership, Respect, Confidence, Friendships and Outdoors experience.

The Lower Burdekin Scouts program and badgework is based around four challenge areas - Community, Outdoors, Creative and Personal Development

The program for the month of February involved a theme of 'Aquatics', with three nights at local swimming pools and then a Region swimming day in Townsville at the end of the month.

The Lower Burdekin Scouts meet on a Thursday night at 57 to 59 Twelfth Avenue, Home Hill (behind the swimming pool).

Scouts from five to eight years meet from 4pm to 5pm; and the eight-plus years meet from 5.30pm to 7.30pm.

LEFT—Chris Berkery with young scouts, Aaliyah and Harper outside the Australia Day event at the Burdekin Theatre, where they promoted the Scouting organisation.

Author describes "The Journey" to Chamber members

Home Hill Chamber of Commerce member, Jim Ashworth (left) with author and Burdekin Life journalist, Mark T. Rasmussen, who addressed the Chamber about his journey to different parts of the world and his book, "The Journey".

THE Home Hill Chamber of Commerce welcomed one of its best attendances at a meeting in many years at its February meeting, as almost 30 people took the opportunity to hear the story behind the book, "The Journey" from author and journalist, Mark T. Rasmussen.

In what was the Chamber's first meeting for the year at the Home Hill Community Sports Club, many of the attendees targeted the meeting to hear the author's own story of "The Journey" he took leading into the completion of the book of the same name.

That story included many adventures as he travelled through 60 countries across six continents while living in a large number of major cities around the world.

Many of those present at the meeting also lined up to purchase a copy of the book at the end of his address.

The Home Hill Chamber was also pleased to welcome some of the new officers of the Burdekin Chamber or Commerce, who were in attendance at the meeting.

Chamber President, David Jackson also advised of an offer from the Business Chamber Queensland of assistance to any businesses affected by flooding in and around the Burdekin.

Any Home Hill businesses seeking assistance should contact the :Chamber if they wish to talk to someone from the Business Chamber who had a representative in Home Hill last week.

$800 donation to Chaplains from Christmas puddings

CHRISTMAS dinner came easy for many residents of the Burdekin District when it came to being prepared for dessert, as they were able to obtain their Christmas Puddings in Home Hill, while at the same time supporting the Burdekin School Chaplains.

Home Hill resident, Margaret Taylor has been an avid supporter of the Chaplaincy, for many years through her cooking prowess (and her regular stalls in front of the Home Hill News & Coffee) and that has come through again as she made approximately 80 of her delicious plum puddings.

Using her own special recipe and her system, which allowed her to deliver up to six of the plum puddings to the Home Hill Newsagency whenever they were required, Margaret was able to then take advantage of the sales ability of Ken and Shay Linton and their staff at the newsagency to ensure dessert was well and truly covered on many Christmas dinner tables in Home Hill.

Margaret Taylor hands over her $800 donation to Burdekin Chaplain, John Mackay

As a result of the combined effort by Margaret Taylor and the Newsagency, Margaret was able to hand over a total of (pictured) $800 to local Chappies representative, John Mackay to allow them to continue their important work with the students of local schools.

Margaret has offered her sincere thanks to everyone in the community who purchased one of her Plum Puddings for their continuing support and to Ken and Shay and staff at the Home Hill News & Coffee for their ongoing support in selling the puddings.

New apprentices now on the job

SEVENTEEN new apprentices from the Burdekin region are among 37 young apprentices who have kicked off their careers with Wilmar Sugar and Renewables' four sugar factories this year.

Joining the new recruits from the Burdekin are nine from Wilmar's Herbert mills, five at the Proserpine Mill and six at Plane Creek Mill in Sarina. The apprenticeships are in the electrical, fitting and turning, boilermaking and diesel fitting trades.

Wilmar Sugar and Renewables Training Superintendent Daniel Shipard said he was pleased to welcome such a high-calibre group of first-year apprentices into the business.

"Wilmar Sugar and Renewables has a long history of developing great tradespeople in our sugar milling regions," he said.

"We're one of North Queensland's largest apprenticeship providers, with about 150 apprentices employed across our operations at any one time.

"Our program is also one of the most successful in Australia, with a completion rate of 98 per cent."

Mr Shipard said this year's intake included five young women, one of whom had transitioned from a school-based apprenticeship with the company.

"We've also signed up five seasonal employees who were keen to get into our apprenticeship program and learn a trade," he said.

Brooke Smith from the Burdekin was Wilmar's first school-based apprentice and is now enrolled as an apprentice boilermaker at Pioneer Mill. She said she was excited to be working full time and developing her trade skills.

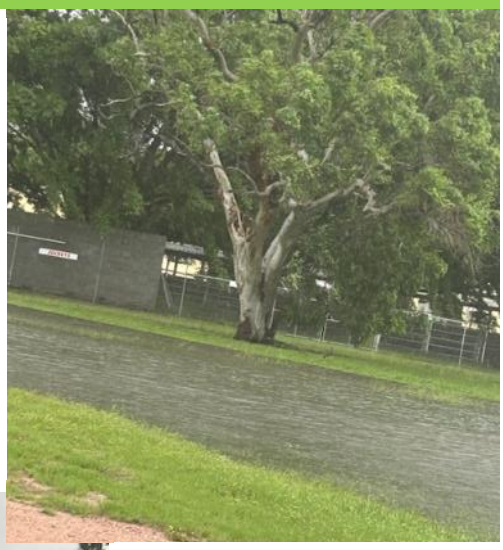
"Getting into Wilmar's apprenticeship program means I'm finally going to get more experience and get more involved in what goes in the workshops. It also means I can really be part of the Wilmar business, instead of just being there one day a week," she said.

Mr Shipard said the first-year apprentices kicked off their trade training with a two-week Safe Start program in December before beginning work at their respective sites.

Jayde Holm and Brooke Smith from the Burdekin region have signed on as first-year boilermaking apprentices with Wilmar Sugar and Renewables. Brooke (right), has transitioned from a school-based apprenticeship with the company.

Wilmar Sugar and Renewables new Burdekin apprentices, back from left, Casey Calligaro (electrical), David Saunders (electrical), Dominik Arrate (fitting and turning), Jaxon Baldwin (diesel fitting) and Lucas Gabiola (fitting and turning). Front from left, Corey Baker (electrical), Jayde Holm (boilermaking), Cooper Raitelli (electrical), Jayden Shelton (electrical), Brooke Smith (boilermaking), Luca Lago (boilermaking) and Jacob Rossato (fitting and turning). Absent are Samantha Christensen (boilermaking), Brad Patti (boilermaking), Daniel Johnson (electrical), William Ghobrial (fitting and turning) and Dominic Forman (diesel fitting).

Wet weather dampens Home Hill race meetings



LEFT—The access road into the Home Hill Race Track from E.W. Ford Park was completely under water.

RIGHT—The parking area for horse transport vehicles in front of the race day tie-up stalls was also under water during the consistent heavy rain.

BELOW—The drain along the Bruce Highway, which was fed by water from under the highway and adjacent railway track and covered the access road into the track

Photos courtesy Burdekin Race Club

THE Burdekin Race Club has started the 2025 year with the forced cancellation of its planned meeting on Saturday, February 15 because of the wet conditions on and around the track, caused by two weeks of continual rain.

The loss of the February meeting has been countered by the Club taking on an extra race meeting on Saturday, March 1, after it was transferred from the Charters Towers Club.

The western club is still unable to conduct meetings, resulting in the Home Hill Club being asked to run their March 1 meeting by Racing Queensland.

While welcoming members to the February monthly meeting, President Ricky Gudge said that on a racing point of view, they had a "fantastic 100-year celebration" while, as per the norm, they had lost their February meeting due to the deluge received prior to the allotted date.

Mr Gudge said that, while Racing Queensland was once again told at a recent Leichhardt meeting that it (the February meeting) was likely to be washed out and a new date needed to be selected, "we will just need to wait and see if finally, they realise what we keep saying".

He also highlighted the fact that the rain and wind had created quite a few other issues with mould through the jockey's rooms and leaks into the tech/TAB rooms. There were also many branches down and "the top rail of the patron fence came off", although the later was corrected by a small team of workers last Sunday.

A working bee was also being planned to have the club ready for the March 1 race meeting, with Mr Gudge indicating that "there is quite a bit to be done".

The Club President also announced that he had been liaising with a representative of Racing Queensland with regard to having TAB coverage for the Growers Day in May.

"While we would be on Sky2 and the prize money would remain the same, costs of conducting the meeting would be covered by Racing Queensland," Mr Gudge said.

A contract to undertake a project to lift the roof of the tie up stalls has now been let to Truenorth, who had agreed to undertake the work.

Mr Gudge said the work needed to be completed and signed off by the end of March.

The Club has also found another volunteer worker to take on the role of mowing the grounds, which Mr Gudge said, "reduced a significant amount of extra work for some already strained members".

Prepare for Christmas decorations early

RESIDENTS of Home Hill who decorate their homes in December leading into the Christmas celebrations have been urged to prepare early for the Chamber of Commerce Residential Christmas decoration awards this year.

The lack of suitable entries for the Neighbourhood Award has prompted the Home Hill Chamber of Commerce Executive to consider reducing the number of homes required to win the Neighbourhood trophy to four homes on one or both sides of the street in the one block (reduced down from six).

Based on this year's entries, that means there should be stronger competition between a number of blocks for the 2025 award, with there being several areas of the town that would now be eligible.

The Chamber could also introduce another award – for a People's Choice Award—which, it is hoped, will encourage more people to drive around the streets in the period before Christmas and make their choice for a winner.

An entry form will be available in *The Home Hill News* in the November and December issues to ensure there is plenty of opportunity to submit an entry.

Grant assists local artists to improve skills

BUDDING artists throughout the Burdekin district now have the chance to improve their skills through the efforts of the Burdekin Artisan Community Association Inc., who have organised art classes to be held at 170 Arts on the Avenue over the next six months.

The Artisan Community Association were successful in obtaining a RADF (Regional Arts Development Fund) Grant from the Burdekin Shire Council, which is being used to cover the cost of prominent Townsville artist, Anne Walsh to travel to Home Hill once per month for the next six months to pass on her skills to a group of local artists.

The first of the art classes started on March 1 at the Artisan's home at 170 Eighth Avenue, Home Hill (adjacent to Ashworths Rock Shop) where the first group of ten artists, ranging from relatively new artists to some with talents that have been honed over many years were able to start their classes.

The classes will be held at the beginning of each of the next five months and anyone wishing to obtain more information about the classes should contact Sandi Milani (Phone 0427 821 065) or Desley Jackson (0437 356 355).

The Burdekin Artisan Community Association Inc. also has plans in hand to re-commence their monthly Car Boot sales on Saturday, March 8 in front of Ashworth's Rock Shop. The Car Boot Sales are held on the second Saturday of each month on the lawns in front of the Rock Shop and any prospective sellers should contact Sandi Milani or Desley Jackson at the above phone numbers to arrange a site.

Tutor, Anne Walsh watches over two of the artists, during the first art classes at 170 Arts on the Avenue

Participating artists were honing their drawing skills during the first of the art classes organised by the Burdekin Artisans

Racing back after February meeting lost with rain

AFTER losing a meeting in February following two weeks of constant rain, the Burdekin Race Club was able to revert to its track for racing on Saturday, March 1, with the five races attracting a small crowd that enjoyed a social day out at the Home Hill track.

The fields were not large, but the racing was competitive, although two of the events resulted in runaway wins by more than six and nine lengths by horses that travelled from as far away as Rockhampton and the Atherton Tableland.

The March meeting was again gifted to Home Hill after the Charters Towers Club were not able to race on its track and the local Club accepted the invitation to race on that day.

The first race, the SES Volunteers Benchmark 50 Handicap over 1460 metres provided a tight finish with only a short neck between the winner, Emerald trained Gigi Fille ridden by Jaime-Lee Devine and the second placed Robust Boy (Wanderson D'Avila) with third placed All Powered Up (Ashley Butler) a short head back in third place.

The second race, the Fire and Rescue Open Plate over 1000 metres was a one-sided affair as Yes Dream (Amanda Thomson) bolted away from the rest of the field to win by six-and-three-quarter lengths from Beauty Bloom (Wanderson D'Avila) and Mr Tangles (Chris McIver) in third place.

There was a similar result in the fourth race, the Swift Water Maiden Plate over 1180 metres as top-weight Sideshow Frankie (Chris McIver) gave the rest of the field no chance as it also raced away for a nine-and-three-quarter-length win over Missin' De Quo (Bella Youngberry) with Polly Hoffa (Nikki Olzard) in third place.

The other two races had closer results with Race Three, the VMR Benchmark 50 Handicap being won by the Mackay-trained Moon Over Matilda (Chris McIver) by three-quarters of a length from Look At Rosa (Wanderson D'Avila) with Sensationabull (Nikki Olzard) half a length back in third place.

The Fifth Race, the Food on the Run QTIS Benchmark 60 Handicap over 1180 metres was won by Rubunker (Ashley Butler) one and a half lengths ahead of top weight, Recruiter (Amanda Thomson) with third-placed Turn Bird (Wanderson D'Avila) a long head further back.

Jockey Christ McIver had a good day with two wins while Wanderson D'Avila had no luck, riding three seconds and a third on the five-event program.

Gigi Fille's narrow win in the first race

Council review of Shire Community Grants Program

THE Burdekin Shire Council has undertaken a thorough review of its Community Grants Guidelines, as it recognises the diverse needs of the local community and the importance of equitable access to funding.

The program is designed to support and empower local community organisations and groups by providing financial and in-kind assistance for projects that enhance community wellbeing and development.

Mayor Pierina Dalle Cort said the adjustments were specifically tailored to maximise the number of eligible community organisations and groups that could benefit from the available funds.

Burdekin Shire Mayor, Cr Pierina Dalle Cort

"The community is at the heart of everything we do and it is essential that our grant programs reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of our residents," Cr Dalle Cort said.

"By updating the guidelines, we aim to make the application process more inclusive and accessible, ensuring that more community groups can benefit from this vital support."

The new forms and updated guidelines are now live on Council's website.

Community organisations and groups have been encouraged to review the updated information and apply for funding to support their initiatives.

Rounds one, two and three of the program are all now closed, while round four will open from April 1 to 14, 2025.

Further information is available by contacting the Community Development Team on 4783 9800.

New apprentices on the job

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"We've also signed up five seasonal employees who were keen to get into our apprenticeship program and learn a trade," he said.

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All advertising funds paid to the Chamber are for the benefit of the Home Hill Community

Join the Home Hill Chamber of Commerce TODAY to save on advertising costs

Launch event sets *Sweet Days Hot Nights Festival* on its way

WITH AN official launch held in Ayr and the announcement of sponsors for the 2025 event, Home Hill's *Sweet Days Hot Nights Festival* is on its way for 2025.

The launch event, held at the Burdekin Theatre and attended by sponsors, councillors and event organisers, provided an exclusive insight into what festivalgoers can expect in May.

Announcements during the evening included festival dates, headline events and associated activities.

Mayor Pierina Dalle Cort highlighted the festival's growth, made possible by the continued support of existing sponsors and the introduction of new partners.

"The 2025 *Sweet Days Hot Nights Festival* will be brilliant, thanks to the support of all sponsors including naming rights partner, Pacific Blue," Cr Dalle Cort said.

"The festival will take place over two days, from Friday, May 30 to Saturday, May 31, including the Burdekin Cultural Fair featuring the First Fire and the Australian Hand Cane Cutting Championships."

She said the launch event was a fantastic opportunity to thank their sponsors for their contributions, while giving them a preview of what's to come and a chance to network with other community-minded businesses and representatives.

"I look forward to sharing more details as we get closer to the festival."

More information is available from sweetdayshotnights.com.au.

The Council has called on local suppliers and stall holders to be part of what is the Burdekin's premier destination event.

After the incredible success of the 2023 festival, which attracted over 4000 attendees over that weekend, it is anticipated to be an even larger turnout in 2025.

Council's event-organising team is currently securing quotes for a variety of festival elements, including, but not limited to, equipment hire such as lighting towers, seating, tables, portable toilets, generators, kids' activities and entertainment, catering for sponsors and volunteers, alcohol and bar supplies and stage and tent décor.

In addition, the Council is seeking registrations for food, beverage and market stall vendors for both the Friday and Saturday events, for which a vendor/stall fee applies.

Sponsorship opportunities are also open for those wishing to be involved in this vibrant community event.

Sponsorship can be provided in the form of cash, in-kind services or donations of gifts/prizes.

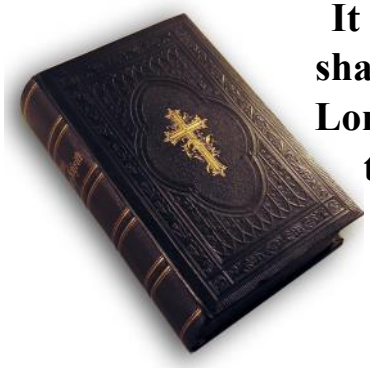
Interested parties have been encouraged to contact Council at sweetdays@burdekin.qld.gov.au to receive the 2025 Sponsorship Package.

For more information or to register as a supplier, stallholder or sponsor, contact the Burdekin Shire Council on 4783 9807 or via email at sweetdays@burdekin.qld.gov.au .

Cutters competing in a previous Australian Hand Cane Cutting Championships

Monthly Bible Message

(Contributed)



It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your GOD to the test'

Luke 4
Verse 12

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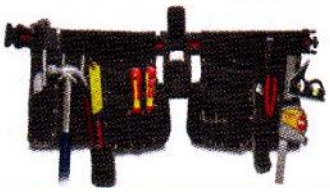

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Parliament Update

PARLIAMENT has resumed for 2025 and just as we finished 2024 keeping our promises to Queenslanders, we started 2025 on the same note.

The Crisafulli Government has officially axed Labor's Patient Tax and abolished stamp duty for first home-owners who purchase a new home after May 1. This change will not only ease the pressure for those looking to purchase their first home but reduce the risk on our GPs when it comes to considering future growth.

Across the Burdekin Electorate, residents know first-hand the impact of having limited access to healthcare when we need it and fortunately in Home Hill, we are lucky to have the GP services that we do.

Ensuring our primary health care providers are empowered by governments to continue to grow is crucial, particularly in rural and regional areas like ours.

Nominate your Community Hero

OVER recent weeks, our community has felt the widespread impacts of significant flooding.

While recovery efforts remain ongoing, the focus soon turns to reviewing the response of all agencies to this disaster.

The Crisafulli Government has promised to build back better and of course, that means addressing crucial infrastructure like our roads. Rest assured, I will be fighting to ensure we secure our fair share of funding from Canberra for the Bruce Highway—we deserve nothing less.

As a community, there are a number of unsung heroes who have done their part to ease the pressure as flood waters rose.

Whether they are emergency services personnel, business owners or everyday community members who have gone above and beyond, I want to ensure they receive the recognition and thanks they deserve on behalf of our community.

To nominate a Community Hero please visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/THKXHL2.

Flood help available

IF YOU, your family, your property or sporting group have been impacted by the recent weather event, there is financial help and support available which Burdekin residents can access through qld.gov.au/disasterhelp or alternatively, you can visit the Home Hill Recovery Hub from February 17 during the hours of 9am to 4pm at the Memorial Hall.

Here to help

IF YOU or someone you know has an issue that you need help with, please remember, my job is to represent you. I may not always be able to fix the problem, but rest assured, I will always do my best.

For help, please call my office on 1800 817 594 or send an email to burdekin@parliament.qld.gov.au

Until next time, stay safe and well.

- Dale

Networking opportunity for Industry representatives

THE Burdekin Shire Council's first Industry Breakfast for 2025 was held on Wednesday, February 26 at the Burdekin Theatre, providing local businesses with key insights into emerging opportunities and developments in the region and bringing together industry leaders and business representatives for a morning of networking and knowledge-sharing.

The breakfast featured a line-up of speakers, including representatives from Midway Ltd, Local Buy and Sweet FM, who will share valuable information on projects and initiatives relevant to the Burdekin business community.

Project Leader at Midway Ltd, Mick Theobold, presented an overview of Rio Tinto's pioneering biofuels pilot project, which, as part of the initiative, Rio Tinto is developing pongamia seed farms in Australia to explore sustainable fuel alternatives.

The project holds significant potential for regional economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Emma Peters, the Head of Engagement at Local Buy, provided insights into how local businesses can become suppliers through Local Buy's procurement framework, with her presentation highlighting opportunities for businesses to engage with government contracts and expand their market reach.

Charlie Scuderi, from Sweet FM, took the opportunity to highlight how businesses could advertise and support the station.

Sweet FM plays a vital role in keeping the community informed and his presentation provided businesses with an understanding of the benefits of local media engagement, with Mayor Pierina Dalle Cort saying that local businesses should take advantage of this valuable opportunity.

"The Industry Breakfasts are a fantastic way for local businesses to stay informed about key projects, connect with industry leaders and explore new avenues for growth," Cr Dalle Cort said.

"With Rio Tinto's biofuels initiative, Local Buy's procurement insights and Sweet FM's advertising opportunities, this event is set to offer something for everyone.

"The Burdekin is home to a diverse and innovative business community and events like these help strengthen our local economy by fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing."

Manager of Sweet FM, Charlie Scuderi (left) at the Burdekin Industry Breakfast with Mayor Pierina Dalle Cort, the Head of Engagement at Local Buy, Emma Peters and Mick Theobold, Project Leader at Midway Ltd..

Uli Liessmann comments . .

*Businessman and Home Hill Chamber of Commerce Vice President, **Uli Liessmann** reports on local issues of interest in the Home Hill district*

DUE to the road closure and flooding heading north, Home Hill came to the rescue, but in a case like this, someone's misfortune is another man's gain. In this case, Home Hill came to the rescue with accommodation and the supply of food. A good deed was also done by Home Hill News & Coffee, which had free coffee from 5am to 10am on Tuesday Morning. I hope this was appreciated by the many flood-bound travellers. There are many stories about people that we will never hear about doing their bit to help the more unfortunate who were caught between towns and I'm quite sure this story was repeated throughout North Queensland above and beyond what can be expected.

I KNOW I'm flogging a dead horse, but is it my imagination or are flying foxes taking over all the Home Hill parks, as well as Kidby's Gully plus more, about which I don't know. In the end, these flying foxes will destroy the trees in the parks as they did in Charters Towers. Have we got to the point where the general public needs to make way, let flying foxes rule our lives to the point where we can't enjoy going out into the parks and all activities will cease in those parks. The only way to safely move these flying foxes is to keep them in the air and as they don't have the stamina to stay in the air, they will soon move on to the river bank—I hope! But all this comes at a cost, so it's keeping the flying foxes or keeping the Parks for the public to enjoy. Obviously we can't have both.

THUMBS up for the JJ Richards rubbish trucks, which, in this case, is the Cleanaway truck and its driver, who are still picking up the rubbish despite the wet weather.

RADIO 97.1 Sweet FM and all of its announcers need to be congratulated for keeping up the broadcast with constant updates with regard to the weather and river heights. I myself found the Disaster Information Dashboard was very good and it was the only information provider that I used. It is saving a lot of confusion.

A NEW but short-lived business of ferrying cars between Home Hill and Ayr started with three car carriers and doing a great job. I'm led to believe the going rate was from $300 to $600 for larger vehicles per trip and there was no shortage of willing customers. I suppose that is cheap is you are on a deadline to get to a destination on time. The accompanying picture is off Michael Howie (left) of Home Hill, who had just loaded his van on to the car carrier so as to deal with his business in Ayr. Now what is the short term solution to this problem? As it can happen again next week or next year, but it's a guarantee it will happen again. Upgrading the road at Planation Creek crossing will take years, if not half a lifetime, because there will always be something more important somewhere in Queensland. This suggestion has been implemented in the past, during the period when the Queensland Government still owned the railways. Why not get back to the good old reliable rail motor to ferry people back and forth? Okay, this would cost and the rail motor would be in storage until needed, but it would be there for emergencies when needed and general commerce could keep flowing. I believe we will have many more floods before we ever see the upgrade of this bit of road. Numerous residents and other people were queuing up at the Home Hill Comfort Stop hoping to be on the next bus, which was supplied by IComply from the Backpackers Hostel in Home Hill. The bus ran appropriately every hour and the service stopped on Rossiter's Hill and the passengers were then transported by rail over Planation Creek to the Ayr side. It was not a first come and get a seat on the bus— itwas all about essential service people first and if you fell into that group, you had a seat. The Backpacker Company, iComply provided free accommodation for up to 30 stranded traveller's for four days. I do not think anyone could have done more. On behalf of all travellers who will remember Home Hill, thank you!

ANOTHER form of transfer was by a local helicopter company, if you could just not wait for the water level to drop. Again, we are very fortunate to have such services at our disposal in times of local disaster.

HERE is a good story and it's true. A bra saved a couple of tourists from certain disaster, when their car fan belt broke on the road between rising flood waters. They made it slowly to Home Hill where they are now waiting to get a new fan belt. The bra was then returned to its rightful owner.

Despite difficult conditions, the council sent a crew to clean and secure a footpath with a safety sign, which is appreciated by the local community. The upside of all this bad weather is we were getting to meet the many people traveling from all over Australia and most were adapting to the trying conditions, but then again, we are an easy mob to have a good relationship with when we throw in a couple of bad jokes.

These are my opinions and views only. To contact me, please phone (mobile) 0439 822 064 **- ULI LIESSMANN**

Local sporting champions program financial assistance

Andrew Willcox

RESIDENTS of the Dawson Electorate have been urged by the Federal Member for Dawson, Andrew Willcox MP to take advantage of the Local Sporting Champions program, which provides financial assistance for coaches, officials and competitors, aged 12 to 18 years, to participate in state, national or international championships.

If successful, applicants will receive $500 to $750 towards the cost of attending their championships, with a base grant of $500

Applicants travelling 800km to1999km to their nominated championships can receive an extra $100, while those travelling internationally or greater than 2000km to their nominated championships can receive an extra $200.

Applicants residing in a rural electorate can also receive an extra $50. For terms and conditions, applicants should go to www.sportaus.gov.au/grants_and_funding/local_sporting_champions .

Applications close at 5pm on Wednesday, April 30, 2025.

To apply, applicants can also go to "Grants Expression of Interest — Andrew Willcox".

Places to see, things to do in the Home Hill district

170 Arts on the Avenue—The Burdekin Artisan Community Association Inc. invites you to inspect their display of various arts and craft forms at the Ashworths Rock Shop complex each day from 10am to 5pm Tuesday to Friday and 9.30am to 1pm Saturday.

Beachmount/Wunjunga—Visitors can move off the Bruce Highway south of Home Hill to spend time at the community's beaches—Beachmount and the community of Wunjunga. Travel east off the highway south of Inkerman across gravel roads until meeting the sea in the vicinity of Funny Dunny Park where tourists can enjoy a stay in pleasant surroundings.

Burdekin River and the Burdekin Bridge - part of the Bruce Highway plus **Home Hill Lions Club Diorama** at southern end of bridge, which features five new panels detailing the pioneering sugar industry work of John Drysdale and the town's early history;

Card making, scrapbooking, album making and assorted jewellery classes at **Lynn and Mike's Craft Studio, Home Hill.** Phone 0418 783 799 for details of how to participate.

Charlie's Hill World War II site, about seven kilometres south of Home Hill – former radar station during the second world war—Old igloos and gun emplacement still in place.

Join in the friendly atmosphere at the **Home Hill Golf Club** (phone 0467 566 448) — amongst the cane fields on Iona Road; or

Home Hill Tennis (0447 384 441) offers Monday night tennis fixtures @ 7pm and Friday social tennis @ 8am; Pickleball Tuesday night @ 7pm. Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon. (Email: homehilltennis@gmail.com; Facebook: Home Hill Tennis; To book a court: play.tennis.com.au/homehilltennis

Home Hill Community Sports Club Inc. (0468 313 115) offers roll-up bowls Thursdays and Sundays at 12.30pm with an open bar. Things to do at the Club—MONDAY: Low Impact Classes at 9am; TUESDAY: Trimmers at 9am; WEDNESDAY: Arts and Crafts at 9am. The Club is also available for hire.

Burdekin Friendship Club—Fortnightly, on Mondays from 9.30am to 11.30am at St Helen's Anglican Church Hall, Cnr Fourteenth Street and Tenth Avenue, Home Hill. $7 per person. Light entertainment and fellowship. Morning Tea provided. Phone Esme 4782 1766.

Groper Creek - worth a look as it is a unique small village —one of the many creeks in the Burdekin Delta allowing access to the numerous fishing areas throughout the district—very popular with visitors who return each year to enjoy our climate over several months;

Home Hill Friends and Neighbours Craft Group—meets every Wednesday, 9am to 11.30am at Home Hill Community Sports Club, Ninth Avenue, Home Hill for general craft activities and cooking tips. Cost $3 with morning tea. Phone 0427 804 129 for more information

Home Hill Swimming Pool (Eleventh Avenue) is open throughout the summer months—5.30am to 7pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday; 5.30am to 6pm Wednesday; 10am to 6pm Sunday.

Home Hill Service Clubs—The **Home Hill Lions Club** meets at the Crown Hotel on the second and fourth Mondays of each month. The **Home Hill Rotary Club** meets at their Club House (58 Thirteenth Avenue, Home Hill) on the first Tuesday of each month and at the Malpass Hotel, Home Hill at 6.30pm on each other Tuesday night of the month. Visitors are welcome at both clubs.

Mount Inkerman—approximately 12km south of Home Hill, near the township of Inkerman. Access to the top is via a narrow road, which is not suitable for caravans and a "Nature Trail" for walkers. The narrow road has been widened in sections and a number of new safety barriers installed. Recommend visiting as there are outstanding views of the surroundings such as cane and other farms.

Old Time Dancing at the St Helen's Anglican Church Hall, Tenth Avenue, Home Hill on the first three Saturday nights of each month;

Pioneer Avenue Plaques – learn about the history of many of the pioneers of Home Hill and the Burdekin District by reading the plaques situated along the western side of the ti-trees in Home Hill's main street

Sing Along with the **Home Hill Choral Society** — every Wednesday evening at the "The Vault" - the Choral Society Hall in Eighth Avenue—from 7pm to 8.30pm. Everyone is welcome to join in.

The Big Canecutters—Visit the former Home Hill Showgrounds (southern end of town across the railway line) to see the representation of the former canecutters that cut the Burdekin district's sugar cane crop before the advent of mechanical cane harvesting.

Comments on our town or services would be appreciated. Email ddjacko@bigpond.com or secretary@homehillchamber.com