

# HOME HILL NEWS

A welcome from the Home Hill Business Community - No. 43, March, 2019

## Prayers answered with two weeks of rain

WE prayed for rain for many years—and our prayers were answered — although with much more of a drenching than we could have hoped for or even required over a two-week period early in February.

With a monsoonal trough centred over Townsville, which copped the worst of the drenching and various quantities extending to the north, south, east and west, most areas in the top half of the state received more than enough — including graziers out west who would have welcome an inch or two, but received amounts that has turned around their lifestyles from drought-feeding to devastating loss of cattle herds through too much rain.

Home Hill received more than its share as well, with two weeks of falls and no sunshine or blue skies over that period. It is not often the district just wishes the rain will go away. Falls of around 700mls (28 inches) were recorded throughout the Burdekin district, which, at first, was a welcome sight.



Water in the Burdekin River reached just over 11 metres as it flowed under the Burdekin Bridge towards the sea.

However, when it extended to flooding of lower areas of the Shire, including Groper Creek and the Burdekin River reached a height of 11 metres, local residents began to make preparations for what may

come.

That included some businesses in the town lifting stock above recorded flood heights and some farmers moving tractors, cars and implements to higher ground — something that has not been seen in and around Home Hill for many years.

The district was devastated by the tragic loss of a newly married Home Hill resident, Justin Scott, who was washed from a boat in flood waters in front of the huts at Groper Creek, with two of his mates in the boat saved from the same fate.

The flooding resulted in the Bruce Highway being cut between Home Hill and Ayr at Plantation Creek (on the southern side of Ayr) for up to three days.



A transport road block at the southern end of the Burdekin Bridge which stopped many travellers.

Continued on Page 3

TWO weeks of wet weather are finished at last. However, while the river was still flowing, aided by water coming over the wall of the Burdekin Dam, many believed it would be a long time before the northern community forgot the repercussions of what had just hit the region.

The unfortunate loss of a young life was not what our district needed and sincere sympathy goes out to his extended family for their sad loss.

The one major community concern that came to us out of the deluge and subsequent flooding was the lack of information provided to the community about what was happening with the rise and fall of the Burdekin River.

This shire has always prided itself on its flood reporting system that ensured residents could watch the height of the river at any point in its length and be able to guesstimate within reason just what height the river would reach at the "Inkerman Bridge".

That did not seem to be the case this time!

Up to last year, representatives of Council, local emergency services, community organisations and anyone else who was able to provide assistance in times of emergency met regularly as part of the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) leading into such an event, to report on what they were doing and how they could assist in any situation.

Did that happen this time? How many Home Hill representatives were present at LDMG meetings this time to pass on information to this community? Who leads the way on the ground in Home Hill when the town is cut off from the local authorities?

Information and photos were appearing on Facebook regularly, but how correct was it? The local community was urged not to pass on information unless they knew it was correct.

If residents are not provided with the correct information, there is every chance that anything will be passed on publicly, whether it is factual or not.

In fact, very little was provided to the community in general by way of public

## The finer points of Home Hill . .

### WHY?

That is the question that must be asked of the drivers who insist on tearing up areas of vacant land or leaving tyre marks all over roads throughout our region, without any real purpose to the end result.

Surely they are not trying to show off their driving skills, as the culprits are so short of logical thinking that they could not be considered to be reasonable or safe drivers under any circumstances.

Our photo shows an area of land at the end of the Home Hill State Primary School sporting fields, which seems to be regularly targeted in recent times—and the recent consistent rainfall allowed those responsible to again leave their marks all over the area. It is to be hoped that one day, nearby residents won't find a vehicle on its side with occupants injured through their stupidity!



announcements from the LDMG, apart from varied announcements on radio stations such as the ABC (which was criticised by people in hard-hit Townsville for broadcasting from Cairns) and Sweet FM, which did a great job broadcasting information hourly from many official sources — but they cannot be picked up by many local listeners. And as for being told to connect to Facebook, not everyone makes that connection, no matter how much users swear by its benefits.

Some people have better things to do than sit at a computer all day, every day to see what some people ate in their most recent meal. Council needs to go back to regular reports of river heights from early morning to late nights and even put them in local shop windows to ensure the message gets out — as was suggested in previous years — and especially when Home Hill is cut off from Ayr for several days.

IT HAS been interesting to note in recent months the push for a water park to be constructed by Council in Plantation Park near Ayr. With many other regions looking at installing such facilities in their own local government areas, it is developing into what some people believe is a must-have recreational facility for every area to have.

But is it??

The Burdekin Shire has had a water slide in the past—and the council of the day ended up scrapping it because the cost of entry turned

people away and its usage dropped, making it uneconomical.

Do the majority of ratepayers really want to add the cost of such a facility to the bottom line of the annual rates bill when there is already a call for the council to consider how to slash rates?

And would a private developer see the benefits of investing in a water park or slide of any type, with regular suitable public transport unavailable to ensure residents of all areas of our shire are able to access it at any time?

Anyone who drove past Plantation Park after the recent flooding would not have seen any incentive to build anything in that area — even the new playground facilities that council is already working on.

Many years ago, consideration was given by a council to upgrading the local pools so that the Ayr facility could cater for swimmers who used the sport for competition and serious recreational use, while the Home Hill pool was considered for change to 25 metres in length, with more playground area for families to enjoy the fun of the sport.

The Mount Isa Council at the time spent a lot of money developing their pool to attract big crowds.

At the present time, there will need to be considerably more thought put into costs and usage before any ideas for development of a new slide are even considered.

- DAVID JACKSON

# Flood waters split the Shire at the river

## Continued from Page 1

Large numbers of travellers were held up if they were unwilling to pay the \$125-plus tilt-truck fee that was being charged to get them across the flood waters.

That also resulted in many workers from both sides of the river being unable to get to their places of employment until the flood waters receded, including teachers at local schools and staff of businesses in each town.

Food supply and take-away businesses and accommodation houses were kept busy, as the travellers purchased their requirements to tide them over until they could continue their travels.

The hold-ups highlighted the need for local residents to support Home Hill's only supermarket to ensure the town always has continuing supplies of food at all times.

Imagine what would happen if Home Hill did not have that facility at times of such flooding.

However, we understand some intrepid workers were able to get to work by walking across the Wilmar tramway bridge along Giddy's Road, near McDesme, where they were met by pre-arranged transport.

However, we were told that some drivers attempted to take vehicles across the same crossing without success — until Wilmar installed signs at each end of the bridge to stop the practice.

The Burdekin State Emergency Service was also able to assist the Meals on Wheels Service from Ayr to take across meals for 19 of its clients, to be delivered on the Home Hill side of the river.



Maria Pitcher (centre) collected a Meals on Wheels delivery from State Emergency Service volunteers, Robert (left) and Chelsea Sutcliffe near the bridge.



Boats used the old river crossing entry to travel along the flooded Burdekin River.

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# Hand Cane Cutting festival expanding

PREPARATIONS for the 2019 *Sweet Days, Hot Nights Festival* in Home Hill are under way with an expanding program, allowing for the event to include a cultural food and activity fair in Ayr in 2019.

Home Hill resident, Doug 'Chippo' Chappell and a large group of dedicated volunteers, planted nearly one hectare of sugar cane in October last year—more than seven months out from the festival.

Last year, more than 5000 locals and visitors flocked to the former Home Hill Showgrounds across two days to take part in the event and Mayor Lyn McLaughlin has advised those not wanting to miss the 2019 festival to mark their calendars accordingly.

"Festival-goers can hear the roar of the First Fire on Thursday, May 30 and witness the power of the Australian Hand Cane Cutting Championships on Saturday, June 2," Cr McLaughlin said.

The Mayor said they wanted to cement the Sweet Days, Hot Nights Festival as a feature festival throughout Queensland.

"There's not too many other places in Australia you can see the raw power of a sugar cane fire up close and feel the heat on your skin," she said.

"The Sweet Days, Hot Nights Festival is a uniquely Burdekin event."

The announcement of the addition of the Burdekin Cultural Fair was made during the official launch recently with the newly-announced Burdekin Cultural Fair making it into a three-event program.

This year will see the return of the First Fire on Thursday, May 30, the Australian Hand Cane Cutting Championships on Saturday, June 1 and the event will now conclude with the Burdekin Cultural Fair in Ayr on Sunday, June 2.

Renewable energy company, Pacific Hydro has committed to a three-year partnership with Council, coming on board as Presenting Sponsor of the Festival.

Pacific Hydro Engagement and External Affairs Manager, Krista Kim said the partnership was extremely important to the company.

"Having the opportunity to once again partner with Burdekin Shire Council to deliver the Sweet Days, Hot Nights Festival is very exciting for us," she said.

Cr McLaughlin also announced Evolution Mining as the Presenting Sponsor of the First Fire event and Queensland Sugar Limited as the Presenting Sponsor of the Australian Hand Cane Cutting Championships.

Created in 2018, the Sweet Days, Hot Nights Festival is a celebration of the Burdekin agricultural region and the enviable lifestyle that comes with it, from fresh produce and culinary delights through to adventure and sports tourism experiences, country hospitality, great music and family-friendly entertainment.

The inaugural event combined the pre-existing First Fire and Australian Hand Cane Cutting Championships events to create a revitalised family friendly festival.



THE efforts of Doug (Chippo) Chappell (pictured) in ensuring there is a paddock of sugar cane ready for harvest in time for the 2019 Australian Cane Cutting Championships at the former Home Hill Showgrounds have now spread to his own back yard in Home Hill.

Chippo's improving skills in growing cane are being enhanced with the assistance of a number of local cane farmers, who are also helping with the preparation of the crop in time for the first cane fire on Thursday, May 30. On the home site, he made use of two billets of the previously popular Badilla variety of cane, which was being shared around amongst former local Lions Club members and which he put in the ground beside his home.

His success is evident in our picture, which shows just how well the cane has grown at a time when it no longer appears in local cane paddocks.

Chippo plans to place samples of his Badilla cane around the ground at the Cane Cutting Championships — although the quality of his home crop may mean there will be little to share around amongst all those wanting a piece of it.

# Generational change in Wilmar apprentices



ABOVE: Wilmar's 2019 Burdekin first year apprentices are (from left, back) Bryce Caltabiano (electrician), Angus Maltby (fitter and turner), Ben Collinson (fitter and turner), Seth Pugh (boilermaker), Mark Carrara (electrician) and Rhyle Burton (fitter and turner) and (front) Cameron Casella (boilermaker), Dominick Elliot (boilermaker), Adam Mottin (fitter and turner), Michael Hall (electrician, Inkerman Mill) and Casey Stephenson (electrician). Absent were Aiden Contzonis (boilermaker), Jared Butterworth (fitter and turner) and Joe Vass (boilermaker) - *Wilmar photo.*

AUSTRALIA'S largest sugar milling company, Wilmar has officially signed up 32 new apprentices for 2019, with only one starting at Inkerman Mill in Home Hill this year.

Michael Hall will be undertaking an electrical apprenticeship at Inkerman Mill, while most of the apprentices will be starting off their training at Pioneer Mill, where Wilmar's central workshop is located.

The new recruits started work at Wilmar Sugar Australia's mill sites in mid-February, following two weeks of safety training in the Burdekin.

Training Superintendent, Scott Young said the budding electricians, fitters and turners, diesel fitters, boiler-makers and instrumentation fitters would have the benefit of learning their trades in both workshop and factory environments.

"An apprenticeship with Wilmar means you'll be properly trained in safe work practices, be involved in multi-million dollar projects and get to work closely with other trade disciplines to achieve results.

"Safety is the number one priority at Wilmar and we're proud to be able to provide our apprentices with life-long safety skills from the very start of their careers."

Mr Young said 14 of the new recruits would be based in the Burdekin region, seven in the Herbert, three at Proserpine Mill and eight at Plane Creek Mill.

They'll join more than 100 apprentices already in training with the company.

"We're excited to welcome this year's apprenticeship intake to our eight sugar mills," Mr Young said.

## Batteries recycled at transfer station

HOME HILL residents can now recycle household dry cell, button cell and rechargeable batteries in designated battery containers at the Home Hill Transfer Station as part of a new Burdekin Shire Council recycling system which is helping combat the amount of Lead acid batteries, local Transfer Stations.

Mayor Lyn McLaughlin said, with Australians draining the life of more than 400 million batteries each year, it was important for local governments to do their part to reduce the amount entering landfill.

"Currently, less than five per cent of batteries are recycled each year," she said.

"When these batteries are dumped in landfill, they can leak a range of toxic substances into the environment, such as lead, mercury and cadmium.

"This recycling system will help breathe new life into these dead batteries by safely recovering mercury, lead, silver, nickel, cadmium, steel, lithium and plastic."

Recyclable batteries include—

\* Household dry cell batteries: Alkaline, zinc carbon and zinc batteries can be recycled. These batteries typically come in sizes AAA, AA, C and D size, or rectangular nine and 12 volt batteries, commonly used in torches, radios, and remote controls.

\* Button cell batteries are used in a wide variety of everyday items like hearing aids, watches and calculators.

\* Lead acid batteries are most commonly used in cars, however they are also used extensively for power storage and battery backup systems such as computer uninterruptible power supplies. Sealed lead acid batteries are used in many applications such as emergency lighting, security alarms, portable tools and consumer electronics.

• Rechargeable batteries can be re-charged and reused hundreds of times. These types of batteries are used in mobile phones, cordless power tools, laptop computers, cordless phones, portable shavers and many more applications.

## Mayoral report . .

Mayor Lyn McLaughlin addresses issues of interest to Home Hill residents and/or our visitors -



IF YOU picked up a copy of February's *Home Hill News*, you would have undoubtedly seen the two striking murals that were created by artist John Bradshaw in Eighth Avenue, Home Hill.

John is also the talented artist behind the Comfort Stop's stunning *Burdekin Snow* mural, which was created early last year. I'm happy to announce that Council has once again engaged John to create another stunning artwork for Home Hill. This new piece is currently being designed in consultation with Council and will be proudly displayed on the façade of the Home Hill Backpackers building in Ninth Street.

For those members of our community with an interest in the arts, I encourage you to nominate for membership as a community representative of the RADF Advisory Group.

The Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Burdekin Shire Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.

Nominations forms are available from Council's website, [www.burdekin.qld.gov.au](http://www.burdekin.qld.gov.au) and nominations will close at 5pm on

Friday, March 8, 2019.

Meanwhile, community and sporting groups are reminded that Round Three of Council's Community Grants Program is now open.

Eligible groups can apply for up to \$5000 in funding under the Program, which opened on Monday, February 4.

Application forms are available from the Council's website, [www.burdekin.qld.gov.au](http://www.burdekin.qld.gov.au), the Council's Customer Service Centre or from the Burdekin and Home Hill Branch Libraries.

All applications must be received by **Friday, March 8** to be eligible for consideration.



A lone small boat braves the strong current in the Burdekin River when it was near its highest level

Finally, I would like to commend our community on their resilience during the recent flooding event.

Whilst we did not suffer the widespread devastation experienced by our neighbouring Councils in the North and West, the Haughton River flooding event did affect a number of properties. Council crews are working to assess and repair damaged Council infrastructure.

I encourage any resident who wishes to report damage to phone our Customer Service Centre on 4783 9800.

I would like to wish all students a successful year in 2019.

Until next time, take care and stay safe

CR LYN McLAUGHLIN

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### Fluoro tubes and lamps recycled

FLOURESCENT tubes and compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) can now be recycled at the Council's Home Hill Transfer Station.

Mayor Lyn McLaughlin said the new system would prevent the mercury contained in the lights from entering the environment.

"Whilst fluoro tubes and CFL's are an energy-efficient way of lighting our world, they both contain mercury, which is a toxic metal that needs to be recycled properly and kept out of our environment," Cr McLaughlin said.

"Through this system, Council will recover not only the mercury but also the glass, aluminium and other metals from the tubes, which will be recycled into new products."

## Councillor comment . .

Cr Uli Liessmann reports on council activities –



BIG question—do you live in Home Hill or the surrounding area or do you even care where you live?

Not so good news!

Do we want to lose the Home Hill Chamber of Commerce that lobbies the Council on all sorts of matters on behalf of the Home Hill district? This is a call for help or, better still, assistance. We as a community need to pull together to maintain the quality of life that we have in Home Hill. To keep this standard or, better still, to improve on it, will take some work.

Some of these standards need to be driven by the Home Hill Chamber of Commerce, but our voices are not loud enough to lobby to achieve any great changes in

road works or drainage, plus any number of changes for the better.

Not too many businesses are left in Eighth Avenue, so I'm asking you, the cane farmer, as you are in the business of cane farming, which is very much part of our business community and so by joining, you will make a difference.

Okay, you don't want to attend the meetings because you don't get anything out of it? Remember, you and



your family live in Home Hill. Good, do not come to the meetings, but how about joining up and being a silent member, as the Chamber needs the numbers to be able to achieve future goals for this side of the river.

A new secretary was needed and Mr Sid Ruskin put his hand up to help out. You might have heard him on a Sunday afternoon on Sweet FM.

The Treasurer's job is filled by Renai and Amanda—both with young families and the Chamber cannot thank them enough for the time and effort that has been put in by both of them.

Please consider helping out. You are desperately needed, even if only as a financial member.

Now for some good news -

The Bendigo Community Bank, showing great faith in Home Hill, approached me in 2018 on how best they could help Home Hill in general. After a few meetings and a board meeting, they accepted my suggestion of a trailer "able five colour VMS LED sign", battery and solar operated.

The Bendigo Community Bank is also looking at a LED fixed flat screen. Either one of these screens can be set up anywhere yet to be decided in Home Hill. This sign will be made available to all organisations and events and can also be used in disasters—in fact it will be used to inform on all sorts of matters related to the public on this side of the river.

Again, I cannot thank the Bendigo Community Bank and its directors enough for showing such a positive attitude towards Home Hill, should this project become a reality.

In finishing, I hope the attitude from you, the Home Hill people, will be positive in obtaining new members for the Home Hill Chamber of Commerce for the betterment for all. Remember this is your town.

These are my views only.

To contact me, please phone (mobile) 0439 822 064 or email [councillor.liessmann@burdekin.qld.gov.au](mailto:councillor.liessmann@burdekin.qld.gov.au) or at [www.uliliessmann.com.au](http://www.uliliessmann.com.au) .

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## Community Grants Program now open

COMMUNITY and sporting groups in Home Hill can now apply for up to \$5000 in funding under the Burdekin Shire Council's Community Grants Program, which opened on Monday, February 4.

Funding is available for the purpose of developing new or existing programs or activities, minor or local festivals or events, projects that promote local sustainability initiatives and projects or events that support civic pride and enhanced social and economic activity.

Application forms are available from the Council's website, [www.burdekin.qld.gov.au](http://www.burdekin.qld.gov.au) or from the Council's Customer Service Centre or the Home Hill Branch Library.

All applications must be received by Friday, March 8, to be eligible for consideration. Applications received outside of the round dates will not be accepted.

More information is available by phoning the Council's Community Development team on 4783 9800.

**The Home Hill Chamber  
of Commerce  
acknowledges and  
appreciates the  
support of  
Wilmar Sugar's  
Inkerman Mill  
with the printing of the  
*Home Hill News.***

# Where and when to find your coffee hit?

ONE of the first things that travellers look for when they arrive at the Comfort Stop in Home Hill is a good cup of coffee (or tea) to settle the dust of their travels.

Unfortunately, many walk the main street looking for a local business that is open at that time to provide for their needs — without success. The loss of two more café/coffee shop types of businesses in recent weeks from Home Hill's main street means that it is going to be that much harder for our visitors to find the drink to please them.

For that reason, we will be making it a bit easier for both locals and visitors to find their favourite brew by looking through a new section we will publish in future copies of the *Home Hill News* advising everyone where they can get a coffee and at what times and days of the week that the shops are open.

**Local businesses that provide that service should advise us of all their details in an email to [ddjacko@bigpond.com](mailto:ddjacko@bigpond.com) by the middle of March and they will be regularly included in future editions of the *Home Hill News*.**

With vans moving through the town providing a mobile coffee service, we aim to keep as much of the business in our town as possible.



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

**Racing at Burdekin Race Club (Boys from the Bush)**— Saturday, April 13 — Enjoy country racing at its best on the Home Hill Track.

**170 Arts on the Avenue**—The Burdekin Artisans Community invite you to inspect their display of various arts and craft forms at the Ashworths Rock Shop complex from 10am to 4pm each day from Tuesday to Saturday.

**Sing Along with the Home Hill Choral Society**—every Tuesday evening at the Choral Society Hall in Ninth Avenue—from 7pm to 8.30pm. Everyone 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.

**Old Time Dancing** at the St Helen's Anglican Church Hall, Tenth Avenue, Home Hill every Saturday evening;

**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.

**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;

**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

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

**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;

**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.

**Home Hill Swimming Pool** (Eleventh Avenue) is open throughout the summer months.

**For the sports man and woman** - Join in the friendly atmosphere at the **Home Hill Golf Course** (4782 1632—amongst the cane fields on Iona Road), at the **Home Hill Bowling Green** (4782 1185—in Ninth Avenue) which has also diversified into soccer; or at the excellent **Home Hill Tennis complex** in the centre of the Home Hill Race Track.

**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.

**Burdekin Toastmasters** hold their dinner meetings at The Crown Hotel on the first and third Thursday of each month.

**Comments on our town or services would be appreciated, Email [ddjacko@bigpond.com](mailto:ddjacko@bigpond.com) or [secretary@homehillchamber.com](mailto:secretary@homehillchamber.com)**