



ALUMINA GIANT: Rio Tinto Alcan, Yarwun.

PHOTO: TOM HUNTLEY

Gas and alumina projects move on

WHAT a monumental year for the resources sector in Gladstone.

It would be easy to talk about the epic LNG developments underway on Curtis Island, but there are so many other incredible stories.

Rio Tinto Alcan Yarwun alumina refinery commissioned its new \$2.3 billion expansion this year. The achievement means Yarwun now hosts one of the world's most sophisticated alumina refineries. Its size allows it to compete on economies of scale with its biggest compet-

itors around the globe. The company is confident RTA Yarwun will prosper even in the tough new landscape facing Australia's aluminium sector.

The other two major plants in Gladstone's aluminium sector had a year they would rather forget. Boyne Smelter Limited and QAL announced job cuts of 90 and 140 respectively. Some in the region say the carbon tax has worsened the situation, others say global conditions make the damage inevitable.

The \$2.5 billion Wiggins

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Yarwun now hosts one of the world's most sophisticated alumina refineries.

Island Coal Export Terminal Stage 1 has been under construction all year and is starting to take shape. A final investment decision on Stage 2 is still to come and perhaps

WICET will hold off a while.

How can we talk about the resources sector in Gladstone without salivating over the \$60 billion-worth of LNG projects under construction on Curtis Island. There are currently about 8500 workers on the island. The three projects by QCG, APLNG and GLNG have moved along without any major dramas. No major dramas, unless you count the high Aussie dollar and other factors blowing construction budgets out by several billion of dollars between them.

Region was all 'polled' out

BY THE end of April this year, the Gladstone region was well and truly sick of elections.

The state election was held March 28 and while everyone knew Labor was going to lose, it was harder to pick the electorate of Gladstone.

Five candidates nominated, including Russell Schroder (LNP), Glenn Butcher (Labor) and the incumbent independent member for Gladstone Liz Cunningham.

What might have been a close election turned out to be anything but. Mrs Cunningham retained her seat by a country mile. Some observers have suggested her popularity has reached a level now that means she will never be beaten.

Only four weeks later, voters turned up at the booths again for local elections – 22 candidates ran for eight councillor positions.

Of the eight incumbent councillors, two chose to retire and one, Craig Butler, ran for mayor.



CLOSE CALL: The count was on for the local election.

That left five incumbents all aiming for re-election – all of them were successful.

The new councillors were Ren Lanson, Karen Porter and Leo Neill-Ballantine.

The really interesting race was between incumbent mayor Gail Sellers and her challenger, then Councillor Craig Butler.

Most people expected the election to be close, but nobody could have expected the cliff-hanger that took place on election night and was drawn out over a full week.

After a week of vote counting, Cr Sellers was re-elected by one percentage point.

Nightclub strife a worry

WITH more people and disposable incomes coming into the region than ever before, this year saw the Gladstone nightlife erupt. With it came unprecedented levels of unruly behaviour. Throughout the year, Gladstone police reported record numbers of offences including public urination, public nuisance and assault. This occurred primarily on Friday and Saturday evenings.

In a bid to curb the drunken debauchery, representatives from three of Gladstone's most popular night venues teamed up with Gladstone police. In September, management from Bojangles Nightclub, The Reef Hotel and Central Lane Hotel each imposed different restrictions in the hope of reducing patrons' level of intoxication.

The limited number of taxis in Gladstone was viewed by many as a contributing factor to the nightlife situation. As part of its efforts to move pa-



DEATH: Suspected murder scene.

trons out of the CBD faster, Blue and White Taxis announced in November that they would no longer take passengers through drive throughs at takeaway outlets between 1-4am on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

In July this year, the Gladstone community mourned the loss of 38-year-old mother Roxane Jones whose body was discovered in her car in bushland on July 2. For the next two days, police and SES officers combed the area around the car. The next Tuesday, police charged Ms Jones's son Horace with her murder.

HookUp to bounce back bigger in 2013

ANOTHER year, another fun-packed HookUp weekend.

The Observer Boyne-Tannum HookUp is one of the region's great events – possibly the greatest. Thousands of mad-keen fishos and their families flock to the region for a weekend celebration.

This year the numbers were down on previous years. That was almost certainly caused by negative media reports across Australia about sick fish in Gladstone Harbour from September 2011.

But it was testimony to the passion and commitment of HookUp lovers that they saw the real state of affairs, and turned up and had a cracking

weekend. For the record, no one caught a sick fish.

No doubt, with the easing of negative media reports lately, 2013 will see the numbers return to normal, astronomical levels.

As always, the event raised stacks of money for charity.

On top of that, it is hard to think of any event in Gladstone that showcases family values like HookUp. Everywhere you looked, there were kids with grandparents, and every generation in between.

By the end of the weekend, the HookUp committee members all looked exhausted. (They might have chosen a stronger word!)



FAMILY FUN: Fireworks display at The Observer Boyne Tannum HookUp.

Big events mark 2012

2012 kicked off its first major event in April with the 50th Gladstone Harbour Festival.

This celebration looked back on how the city has grown since it began in 1963 and how the event and the city have changed.

Gladstone Entertainment Centre throughout 2012 put on a number of quality acts, from comedy to ballet, to music performances.

It also began its redevelopment and moved to a temporary residence at the marina.

About September 2013 we look forward to its completion and new facilities that will benefit the community.

The opening of Harvey Road Tavern at the end of February was an addition to the Gladstone music scene.

It has featured local artists as well as brought in some

big Australian acts such as Diesel, Ash Grunwald and Butterfly Effect. About the same time LURCH was also started by local Doug Goo-banko, giving Gladstone an appreciation for heavy music.

Gladstone Engineering Alliance (GEA) held conferences focussing on developing and discussing the issues in industry including the Inspiring Women in Industry conference in May, which brought ACP magazines' director of media, public affairs and brand development Deborah Thomas to town as keynote speaker.

There were a variety of rodeos with the 59th Miriam Vale Rodeo, the Mount Larcom Rodeo, Calliope Rodeo plus Gladstone also had its first rodeo in 16 years in early December.