

Year in Review

Big retail comes to the city

GLADSTONE'S retail precincts are continually developing as the city grows.

The Woolworths Shopping Centre on Kirkwood Rd opened early this year in April with about 15 specialty stores including a Priceline, cafes and restaurants, and clothing store Divine Avenue.

Stockland Kin Kora continued to be well patronised by the Gladstone community. Some shops opened and shut and most topical in the community was the questioned need of a fourth jewellery shop opening in the centre.

Stockland just this month announced that the Kin Kora centre might be the site of future development, with the company announcing it had submitted a development application for a \$150 million redevelopment.

If approved, it will include two redeveloped discount department stores, a redesigned supermarket and a vibrant new mix of specialty retailers and restaurants.

New store Jarckadeh's Hippy Shop opened next to the IGA, and Boyne Island's Saltt Clothing expanded with a new store in the centre.



CONNECTED: The new Kirkwood Rd shopping centre has been fitted with landline telephone and EFTPOS connections.

PHOTO: KARA IRVING

Properties in hot demand

House prices drop but rentals were hard to get

IT WAS a big year for Gladstone housing in 2012.

Renting, buying and selling properties were in hot demand in the mining town, with council rates and holding deposits also adding strain to the hip pocket.

The median price to buy a house in Gladstone fluctuated throughout the year, dropping from \$440,000 in June 11 to \$410,000 a year later.

The outlook wasn't so sweet for renters in March with the REIQ vacancy rate for Gladstone properties sitting below 3%.

Rates were also a big issue with some Central Lane, Gladstone residents paying upwards of \$2000 a week.

In June a Central Lane resident told The Observer the rates she paid for living in a body corporate unit block had increased significantly in the past few months.

A number of new housing estates also opened across the region, with Kirkwood Rd acting as a gateway to Little Creek, Vantage and Hillclose estates in New Auckland.

Construction of the stage one and two of Riverstone



TIGHT MARKET: Aerial view overlooking Kin Kora residential area, Gladstone. PHOTO: BRENDA STRONG GLA040712VIEW

Rise, Tannum Sands was also in full swing.

Demand for Gladstone's rental accommodation was still high in the first part of 2012, with pressure easing following the opening of worker camps on Curtis Island.

A predicted flow-on effect was expected to see a reduction in the cost of rent for pe-

ople on the mainland.

In July the authenticity of LJ Hooker was called into question after prospective renters were asked to pay a holding deposit to secure a property in Gladstone's chaotic housing market.

The Residential Tenancy Authority later launched an investigation into the matter.

Roadworks lead way in projects

THE big win for the Gladstone region this year was the construction of the Calliope Crossroads project which began in July.

Dogged with accidents and near-misses, the \$150 million upgrade will see a 64m overpass bridge constructed for the Bruce Hwy.

The project is expected to take about two years to complete.

Construction around Gladstone has continued with multiple housing estates commencing or continuing, including Devine's Riverstone Rise and Peek's Vantage Estate.

Work commenced in December 2009 on the \$25.3 million federally funded Kirkwood Rd and construction of Stage 3 finished in April 2012.



ACCESS BOOST: The Kirkwood Rd project was completed in April.

The new 2.3km road connects Gladstone-Benaraby Rd with the Dawson Hwy and was designed as a heavy traffic route bypassing existing routes through the centre of Gladstone.

It will also cater for increasing traffic volumes dur-

ing the city's future anticipated population growth and provides access to several major industrial areas as well as linking Port Curtis Way with the Bruce Hwy.

The official opening of the bridge on Dixon Dr, Telina, in April linked Dixon Dr to Kirkwood Rd, connecting southern and western suburbs.

Developers of the Forest Springs Residential Estate invested more than \$3 million to complete the Dixon Dr extension, which creates quick access to the Woolworths Shopping Centre on Kirkwood Rd.

The Gladstone cycling community also continued to push for more bike paths in the region and plans to campaign into 2013 to expand the network.

NBN early rollout hopes dashed

GLADSTONE'S chances of receiving the National Broadband Network were shattered in 2012.

In February Gladstone was excluded from the initial rollout stages of the network with Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Townsville all guaranteed to get connections by 2015.

Although Gladstone didn't make the shortlist, alternatives were provided to ensure residents stayed connected.

The first was NBN Co's introduction of making two Gladstone housing estates compatible with NBN-ready greenfield infrastructure.



IT BID: NBN rollout in Coffs Harbour.

Greenfield infrastructure allows for optic fibre and wireless connections and aims to eradicate the use of existing copper infrastructure.

In June Nationals leader Barnaby Joyce was given a tour of Gladstone with Fed-

eral Member for Flynn Ken O'Dowd. Mr Joyce labelled the NBN a "joke" and a "national disgrace" during his visit. NBN Co and Via Sat also formed a business partnership in July to allow for remote and rural communities to tap into the NBN.

In October NBN Co CEO Mike Quigley said a national rollout was several months behind schedule as a result of disputes between the company and Telstra.

It was also found that homeowners would have to pay to connect their homes to the fast-speed network. Construction has begun in Rockhampton's CBD.