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Dragline shutdown at Meandu unearths benefits for the region

The Meandu Mine dragline, known as Hannibal, is currently undergoing an overhaul and unearthing a range of benefits for local hoteliers, shops and businesses.

Stanwell's General Manager of Mining Operations, Bob Rutten, said the current shutdown was part of a long-term \$52 million program set to keep Hannibal working efficiently.

"The principal contractors have told us that this has been a dream shutdown because the planning has been excellent and the day-to-day management has been open and transparent," Mr Rutten said.

Stanwell Project Manager Margot Logan said the project had resulted in 240 extra people in the district earning and spending money.

"Not only is it a good outcome for Stanwell's productivity at Meandu Mine, it gives local businesses a significant shot in the arm as well," Ms Logan said.

"The shutdown has been very successful and has shown the industry that a complex project of this nature can be delivered on time by planning and collaborating closely with the contractor.

"The contractors bring a specialised skill set to Meandu Mine which we don't have on site. They have been very keen to share and explain the 'ins and outs' of their trades and tasks and we have all learned a great deal during this time."

Burke and Wills Motor Inn proprietor Danny Loone said many of the contractors had stayed at his establishment and would be welcome again any time in the future.

"Not only have we had heads on beds for the past month and a half, but we've served more than 2,500 meals to the shutdown guys," Mr Loone said.

"That's just a huge boost to local food suppliers, which we constantly source, as well as our own cooking and cleaning crews.

"We've tried to make it feel like home for the contractors, and many of the guys will also have a nose about the area looking at the other tourist attractions on days off, so it's a big lift for the wider South Burnett economy."

Still in the hospitality sector, Carrollee Hotel Publican Ben O'Callaghan said the shutdown workers had "a very respectable and noble thirst".

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“You can tell when there’s an influx of people, because there’s an influx of dollars which is good for us and good for the district if we’ve got to call in extra shifts, order more food, order more kegs and so on,” Mr O’Callaghan said.

“It’s not at all like the old days when you might be sweeping up teeth on Sunday morning. Instead it’s about lots of counter meals, some soothing drinks and some very good jokes told at the bar. It should happen a lot more often,” he said.

Business Support and Training Coordinator at Kingaroy’s ESCO engineering firm, Brian Binstead, said the dragline shutdown had resulted in “thousands of dollars” worth of on-demand work for his company.

“We quoted on some engineering items, fabricated them and I believe they’re installed now, and later on provided some guard rails which we delivered recently,” Mr Binstead said.

“It’s bread and butter work for us, in that it’s not a technical stretch, but that’s what we survive on. If it’s any part of mining work, we’re keen to be involved and we always appreciate the income that comes our way.

“It’s part of the lifeblood of the town. Without these industries, the town’s not going to thrive to the extent it does.”

It hasn’t all been plain sailing, though. Danny Jones, Field Services Engineer with one of the major contractors, DCS, said this Kingaroy winter would be one that would stay in the memory of many of the shutdown workers.

“Where I’m from we have lovely warm days every day and I was in a lot of pain when we first got here. What it [the cold] does do is make you get up and walk around,” Mr Jones said.

“You don’t stand still for long because you get frozen to the spot. To be honest, I’ve never felt so fit, but it’s been a fun job and we’ve enjoyed ourselves here.”

ENDS

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Background

Stanwell Corporation is Queensland's largest power generator, with the installed capacity to supply more than 45 per cent of the state's peak power needs. Established on 1 July 2011 and owned by the Queensland Government, Stanwell is the owner and operator of:

- 1400 MW Stanwell Power Station (coal) near Rockhampton
- 1400 MW Tarong Power Station (coal) in the South Burnett
- 443 MW Tarong North Power Station (super-critical coal) in the South Burnett
- 385 MW Swanbank E Power Station (gas) near Ipswich
- 120 MW Swanbank B Power Station (coal) near Ipswich
- 345 MW Mica Creek Power Station (gas) near Mount Isa (not connected to the NEM)
- 86.4 MW Kareeya Power Station (hydro) in Far North Queensland
- 60 MW Barron Gorge Power Station (hydro) in Far North Queensland
- 32 MW Mackay Power Station (gas) in Central Queensland
- 7.3 MW Koombooloomba Power Station (hydro) in Far North Queensland
- 4.3 MW Wivenhoe Small (hydro) located at Wivenhoe Dam

Stanwell sells energy from the 195 MW Collinsville Power Station in North Queensland, through a Power Purchase Agreement with its owners Transfield Services Infrastructure Fund.

Stanwell owns Meandu Mine, which has the capacity to supply up to seven million tonnes of coal a year to the adjacent Tarong power stations. It has a coal supply agreement with Wesfarmers Resources' Curragh Mine that includes the sharing of revenue from coal exports. Stanwell also has gas interests including an equity stake in Blue Energy Limited.

Stanwell is an active competitor in the National Electricity Market (NEM). The Corporation sells electricity into the NEM spot market pool and provides ancillary services to the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) to ensure the secure and reliable supply of electricity throughout Queensland.

Stanwell employs more than 1100 people across its various sites.

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