

City bucking jobs trend

Regional unemployment surges as mining activity slows down

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TOWNSVILLE's jobless rate has dropped below 7 per cent despite the contraction in the coal industry continuing to bite other regional Queensland economies.

The city's unemployment rate has fallen to 6.9 per cent for

April, down from 9.2 per cent in March, although the Australian Bureau of Statistics warns its regional labour force data, released yesterday, is unreliable.

Economist Colin Dwyer said Townsville's unemployment rate averaged 7.9 per cent for the past three months.

He said jobless rates were higher in centres such as Mackay and Rockhampton, which have been hit hard by reduced activity in the

coal sector. "I think these figures are starting to show this," Mr Dwyer said.

"We are seeing the challenges of a very narrow economic base in cities like Mackay and Rockhampton."

Treasurer and Minister for Employment Curtis Pitt said youth unemployment remained a challenge in the regions but added there were encouraging trends in yesterday's figures.

"When compared with the previous 12-month period, the Gold Coast added an extra 14,100 jobs in the year to April 2015, with the Moreton Bay region adding 12,300 jobs during the same period," Mr Pitt said.

"In Greater Brisbane, an extra 10,100 jobs were created and there are also positive signs in Townsville, with 2500 more jobs added over the year to April."

The ABS figures show the

Townsville region's labour force is at 113,500, more than 4000 up on April last year but still well below the workforce peak of 124,400 achieved in July 2010.

Mr Pitt said Queensland's youth unemployment rate was 14.3 per cent in April, with higher rates in Cairns (20.8 per cent), Wide Bay (20.6 per cent), Ipswich (17.2 per cent) and Logan/Beaudesert (16.4 per cent).

Mr Pitt said the Government had reinstated a payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees as part of its jobs strategy.

Mr Dwyer said the Government needed to beef up the Royalties for the Regions program because unemployment was more serious in the regions than in Brisbane.

"The State Government needs to get on board with it," Mr Dwyer said.

EX-COWBOY GETS IN THE SWIM

BIG SPLASH: Former Cowboy Mark Dalle Cort, pictured with son Fox, plans to open two swim schools. Picture: JUSTIN BRIERTY



VICTORIA NUGENT

A FORMER Cowboy is behind a push to turn a Deeragun home into a private learn-to-swim school by adding an indoor pool on to his house.

Former North Queensland player Mark Dalle Cort opened Little Snappers swim school in Cairns four years ago with wife Mai and mother Chris Dellit, and now plans to open two schools in Deeragun and Rasmussen.

An application for a development permit for the Deeragun school was recommended for approval this week by Townsville City Council.

The proposal includes using the existing Geaney Lane house as a caretaker's residence and construction of an adjacent building with a 13.5m x 6.45m indoor pool and 16-car spaces.

The school would provide swimming classes for babies and children, with a maximum of four in each class.

Council's planning committee chairman Tony Parsons said the school would be a great addition.

The proposal will now go before the full council meeting on May 26.

With his mum a long-time swim teacher, Dalle Cort grew up around pools, getting his own teaching qualifications at a young age.

"I always knew that in life after footy it was something I was going to do," he said.

If the Deeragun school is approved, Dalle Cort will move into the house with his family, leaving the Cairns school in the care of his mum.

The family has also applied to build a house and pool on a vacant block on Santal Drive.

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