

Bauhinia Regional Rail Project News

FACES AND PLACES – THE PEOPLE BEHIND BRRP

With more than 20 per cent of the track laying now complete, the Bauhinia Regional Rail Project is well on schedule for the November completion date. Delivering 110 kilometres of rail through relatively untouched bush is a significant engineering feat, one which would not be possible without the dedicated, skilled people who have taken on this challenging task. This month's newsletter profiles some of the diverse and interesting people who have taken on the BRRP challenge.

PROJECT UPDATE

Abigroup is now in the final stages of earthworks and bridge construction, with most of the team expecting to be leaving the site from mid June, according to Jim Barry, Abigroup's Project Director.

"We still have a couple of sites where we are completing culvert construction and landscaping, but we're on the home stretch now," he said.

"The completion of the Dawson Highway Bridge will see the end of John Hollands' role in this project. The bridge team really have done an outstanding job, in often difficult conditions."

"And with the completion of the earthworks, the geotech team from Bowler will also be packing up the lab and heading off to the next project. The excellent work of the technical team has been instrumental in ensuring we have delivered a first class project."

"Once the current team begin vacating the north camp, the Infrastructure Services Group from QR, who are laying the track, will begin to move in."

For further information contact Chris Artym on 0428 182 971



Dawson Highway Bridge, view from the south.

Simon Lo (pictured right)

Manager, South Camp (Bowler)

Derek Crane

Project Lab Manager (Bowler)

As geotechnicians, or "soil mechanics", Simon and Derek are responsible for earthworks' quality control on the Bauhinia Regional Rail Project.



They've been on the project since Day 3, and so far, have conducted more than 10,000 tests on more than 2.5 million m³ of soil!

While playing with dirt all day seems like every child's dream job, it's the wide variety of work that has attracted Simon and Derek to the industry.

"Over the last 40 years, I've worked all over the world – in Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea," Simon said.

"Every new job is another challenge."

"This project has been very interesting, with the significant variations in the soil types."

North of the Comet River, the ground is stronger sandstone and basalt while south of the river, the material has proved particularly hard to handle.

"For example, in the cuts, the quality soil has been on the outside with the poorer material underneath. Usually you'd expect it the other way around."

"The whole area is sedimentary rock. This is because originally the area was a forest, then an inland ocean."

"It's these conditions that created the vast coal reserves, but also left weathered basalt and other igneous rocks that prove tricky for construction."

Bernie Sitton

*Superintendent Bridges
(John Holland)*

Although he's been building bridges for more than 40 years, Bernie Sitton still gets tremendous satisfaction from his work. Bernie has been with the construction team from day one.



"In fact, I've been here even earlier as I was involved with tendering for the job," Bernie said.

"When we started here, on the Comet River, there was nothing here but the scrub. It was even hard to find with the map."

"We went to meet with the landowners, and they were very helpful. They are terrific people around here."

Bernie said his biggest challenge on this project has been the Comet River bridge.

"The ground conditions made it very tricky. But our work here is nearly finished now."

Bernie is a Manager with John Hollands for Toowoomba and Brisbane. During the project, John Hollands has had between 35 and 50 people working on the job – 12 people from Brisbane and Sydney and the rest employed locally.

Bernie moved to Australia from Italy in 1960. He has worked on some of the largest projects in Queensland, including Dalrymple Bay port, the Queen Street Bus Tunnel, Gateway Bridge, Captain Cook Bridge, and Merivale Street rail bridge.

One of the challenges for project workers is family life. Bernie's family is based in Brisbane.

"I go home to see my wife and family every three to four weeks. It's too difficult to move your family around from project to project."

John Hooper

*Survey Manager
(Abigroup)*

Ever wondered how the construction team manages to build a train track from point A to meet exactly point B 110 kilometres away? That's where the great work of the surveyors comes in!



John Hooper is the Survey Manager for Abigroup and has been overseeing the 10 local contractors undertaking the surveying since early last year.

"The survey for this project actually commenced two years ago, and we've been on site since April 2004," John said.

"We began marking the global positioning system (GPS) points for the centre line when it was still all bush."

The Bauhinia Regional Rail Project is one of only a handful of jobs in Australia using this type of GPS for surveying.

"We've broken the 110 kilometres into 200 metre sections, each with its own GPS point," John said.

"The graders and other earthmoving equipment are fitted with receptors which use satellites to guide them to ensure accuracy along the route. For surveyors, it's a tremendous advance in technology."

John's been in surveying since 1979, and prior to joining the BRRP was in Thailand working on the 350 kilometre upgrade to rail lines which were established prior to WWII. He's moved to the North Camp for the project, leaving his wife and five children in Brisbane.

"There's a lot of pressure on families during these types of projects," John said.

"On some of the really large projects overseas, that can go for three to four years, families will relocate and the companies will set up schools for the children."

"I've been working away from home for the past six years. My youngest is now 12 and the others are grown up so it's not so hard these days."

Les Tilley

*Safety and Signage
(Abigroup)*

As a member of the Garingbal and Kara Kara people, the lands around the Bauhinia Regional Rail Project have a special significance for Les Tilley. However, Les has particular interest in preserving the cultural heritage in this area.



Until 1938, his grandmother hunted and gathered in and around Springsure and Rolleston until her family was taken from the land and she was moved to the Woorabinda mission. Les' grandmother was the last of her people left to speak her traditional language and Les and his sister have recorded her stories for posterity.

Les originally joined the project in October 2004 in an identifying and monitoring role to ensure important aspects of the local indigenous community's heritage were preserved and maintained. John Slight from Abigroup saw his potential, and offered him a position in workplace health and safety.

"I saw this as a chance to do something different," Les said.

"It was important for me to have a role in shaping this project and finding and protecting the cultural heritage artefacts. We found a significant artefact scatter near Rolleston and these will be kept safe for future generations."

Prior to joining the project, Les was a youth worker with the Woorabinda aboriginal community, and has worked on radio in Woorabinda and Rockhampton. He now hopes he has a future with Abigroup.



Gail Hawkins

*Administration Manager
(Abigroup)*

Gail's been with the Bauhinia Regional Rail Project from Day One, one of the first occupants of the north camp.

This is Gail's first job with Abigroup, joining the project after several years at the Newmount Copper and Gold Mine in Indonesia.



According to Gail, these jobs get into your blood.

"Once you're in construction, it's hard to think of working a regular five day week. 21 days on, 7 off becomes a way of life" Gail said.

Although Gail says it's not the right job for those looking for exciting night life!

"You work long hours so most nights it's dinner, shower, bed. There's a wet mess with a pool and large screen TV if you'd like to relax at the end of the day."

Gail said camps used to be predominantly male but now they need to cater for males and females.

"Every year I see more and more women working on these projects. This job has quite a lot of women, as engineers, truck drivers and operators as well as administration."

"In fact, the women are great with the large equipment – they treat it with a little more TLC."

Gail moved into site administration 20 years ago after working in the personnel industry.

"This job's terrific. It's varied – looking after the camps, administration, accounts, whatever comes up."

"I'm now working with people I've worked with on different jobs over the years.

"Every job's different but it's amazing how people go round and round in this business."



Flashbutt welding near Horseplain Creek Bridge



Ballast train, just out of Kinrola



Track laying machine in action



Early track laying before ballast...

...and with ballast



Track laying machine working across Horseplain Creek Bridge