The Project

Known as the giant that never sleeps, Queensland Alumina Limited (QAL) has been part of Gladstone’s social fabric for over 40 years and was the first industrial plant to appear on the city’s landscape. As one of the world’s largest alumina refineries, QAL is situated at Gladstone on the central Queensland coast, 550 km north of Brisbane. The refinery has supplied stable employment for the residents of Gladstone and today employs 1070 employees and up to 400 contractors. There are several families with three generations working onsite and the refinery is the region’s largest employer as well the state’s largest apprentice employer.

In 2007, 40th anniversary celebrations were focussed on the community which helped establish the refinery. With the assistance of former employees, namely members of the QAL Retirees Club, over 1,000 former QAL employees and contractors involved in the construction of the refinery were contacted. With the assistance of new technology, the networking web quickly spread all over the world, and before long enquiries about the celebrations were received from around the globe.

This initial contact started the flow of stories of living in Gladstone during the construction period and QAL recognised that the 40th celebrations had to be something that had not been done before. It had to be an event that was memorable, valued and also captured the essence of living and working in Gladstone during this time, before the stories were lost forever.

A corporate history of QAL had previously been published in conjunction with the 25th anniversary; therefore QAL commissioned a publication highlighting the relationship with the Gladstone community. Utilising the skills of a professional historian, Bronwyn Roper, the project brief was to capture the spirit of living and working in Gladstone during a time of significant change. The project also served to fill a large gap in the history of the region. Focussing on mostly the construction period of QAL, stories were gathered from current and former residents of Gladstone. QAL retirees were approached and asked to submit handwritten accounts of this period and extensive research was undertaken on the city’s historical collection housed at the Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum. Utilising the background information and handwritten accounts, oral history interviewees were selected based on the different perspective which they could contribute. Interviewees included a union representative, manager, local hairdresser, surveyor, office girl, boarding house
Roper & Case – When QAL came to town

operator and high school teacher. Local residents were interviewed as well as those who relocated to Gladstone specifically to build QAL. This allowed an insight into what long-time residents thought of newcomers and what newcomers thought of this sleepy little town.

With assistance from Arts Queensland and the Gladstone and Calliope Regional Arts Development Fund the publication, *When QAL Came to Town: Living through the Construction Years 1964 – 1967*, was printed and launched during the 40 year celebrations. In conjunction with the publication a historical exhibition, *The Giant that Never Sleeps: Celebrating 40 years of Queensland Alumina Limited*, was presented at the Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum.

Focussing on QAL’s progress to becoming the world’s largest alumina refinery, the exhibition displayed items and images from the early days to present, many of which were shown for the first time. A series of interpretation panels were produced based on the publication and incorporated direct quotes from the oral history interviews. Augmenting the display was a selection of personal items and memoirs from members of the community. The focus point of the exhibition was the showing of *The Gladstone Project*, a documentary filmed in 1967 during the establishment of QAL, sourced from the National Film & Sound Archives.

Liz Cunningham, MLA, officially launched the exhibition, book and a special 40 page historical liftout printed in the local paper, the *Gladstone Observer*. It was standing room only at the launch with many members of the community turning up to see ‘their’ story on display. Oral history interviewees were also spotted autographing copies of the publication.

QAL retiree, Alec Scrivener at the exhibition and book launch.
Photo: Mellissa Case.
The celebrations, held in October 2007, marked a significant milestone for both QAL and the community. Apart from the exhibition and book launch, a number of events were organised including an employees picnic, cocktail evening, formal dinner, a harbour cruise and mystery tour for former employees.

The weekend was a great success with people travelling from all over the country and the world including a contingent of twenty from America. Some had left Australia once construction was complete and were pleased to see the legacy of what they had created for the development of Gladstone. Over 3,000 people attended the various events, the highlight of which was a formal dinner where four past and present managing directors addressed the audience with stories from their QAL and Gladstone experiences.

The QAL 40th celebrations received accolades from around the world and was awarded the Gladstone City Council Australia Day Community Event of the Year Award. The event brought the entire community together and from a community relations perspective, provided ‘money can’t buy’ recognition for the significance of QAL’s contribution to the community, the region, Queensland and the nation. To mark the success of the celebrations, QAL donated the entirety of its historical collection, consisting of over 1,500 images of Gladstone during the 1960s, to the city. The collection is now housed at the Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum.

Copies of the commemorative publication, *When QAL Came to Town: Living through the Construction Years 1964 – 1967*, were sent around the world to former employees and residents of Gladstone. It is also included in induction kits for new QAL employees and used as a teaching aid in the delivery of oral history workshops throughout central Queensland.

The History

The following history is based on background research completed before the oral history project and subsequent publication *When QAL Came to Town: Living through the Construction Years 1964-1967*.

Long-term residents of Gladstone often speak of ‘when QAL came to town’, dividing the town’s history into two distinct eras, before and after the arrival of QAL. The turning point for these two eras did not happen overnight, but lasted four years while QAL was under construction from 1964-1967. Not only was the world’s largest alumina plant being created but an established community was being melded with an itinerant one. The existing community had to adapt and learn to accept outsiders and those outsiders had to come to terms with their new environs, which for many became permanent.

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1 Copies are available from QAL Community Relations or can be accessed online at www.qal.com.au.
The established community in Gladstone pre-1960s depended on the local meatworks for employment and this income flowed throughout the town. The closure of the meatworks sent the town into turmoil and a cloud of dread hung over the residents. In 1963, QAL was announced and construction began creating an atmosphere of hope and excitement; however, this town, with a population of around 7,000, was not prepared for what was to come. In the next five years the population would nearly double with construction workers from all over Australia and internationally. Local infrastructure could not keep up with this rapid growth and many social implications arose due to living conditions and soaring prices. Pub brawls and domestic violence were a common occurrence and women did not venture out on their own after dark. Gladstone became known as a ‘frontier town’.

Settled in 1853 and declared a municipality in 1863, Gladstone is situated in Central Queensland in the Port Curtis region between a deep water harbour and the dominating peaks of Mount Larcom. The community was mainly a farming one; however, as railway lines were forged through the area several industries, such as a dairy company and a meatworks, were established to service these farms. The harbour was ideal for shipping goods and eventually the meatworks, with its own wharf and loading facilities, became the lifeblood of this small community with nearly two-thirds of the town being directly or indirectly dependent. One former worker, Bernard Curran, stated about the meatworks: ‘Apart from cuts and injuries, the point was this. There was no other work in Gladstone; the meatworks were it.’

The work was seasonal with many meatworkers coming to town for six months and then finding work elsewhere for the remainder of the year. Another former meatworker, Cliff Boles, found work further north in Mackay where he would load sugar at the wharfs. Other residents stayed in Gladstone waiting out the months for the new killing season to begin. Cliff Boles remembered the excitement each year when the meatworks started up again:

> All the people who lived out there in the paddock hadn’t seen the colour of money for months and months, and they became excited - cheers would go up like happy kids.

The meatworks also gave a great deal of security to the residents of Gladstone: “Every year when the meatworks started, your job would be there. It was an understood thing that you would go back to the same job every year ...”

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3 R Bonnin, ‘Why I’m a retired millionaire: fifty years at the meatworks!!!’, [personal memoir of Cliff Boles], in *Recollections and reflections*, Gladstone, Gladstone Area Writers Group, 1990, p. 46.

4 Bonnin, ‘Why I’m a retired millionaire’, p. 46.

5 ibid.

6 ibid.
Working conditions at the meatworks were fairly basic in the 1930s. Source: Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum collection.

Unfortunately, over the years the meatworks, now owned by the American company Swifts, did not keep abreast with modern technology and started to decline. In 1960 they employed 900 workers and in 1963 this had declined to 600 employees. After the 1963 season, rather than spend the dollars to upgrade the facility, a decision was made to cease all operations. This move sent workers and the town into a downward spiral, creating a great deal of unrest amongst the tight-knit community. Many local businesses were in the practice of giving meatworkers and their families goods and services 'on tick', tiding them over until the next killing season began. All of a sudden in 1963, there was not going to be a 'next killing season'. The announcement came as a complete surprise to many in the town and there was a great deal of ill-feeling amongst residents. Cliff Boles had been employed at the meatworks for 50 years and was one of many who were shocked by the decision:

I was due for my gold watch, and a golden handshake. I got neither. The president of our union had to go out to the firm that owned the place and ask whether they had sold out. They said yes.

Bernard Curran recalled the devastation amongst the men at the time:

I worked with men who had been there for fifty years, some of them sixty years. I could see them; their hearts were broken for they had nothing else. They knew nothing else but the meatworks and we never got a farthing out of it.

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8 Bonnin, 'Why I'm a retired millionaire', p. 52.
The demolition of the meatworks chimney in 1964 signalled a new beginning for Gladstone.
Source: Queensland Alumina Limited collection.

At the closure of the meatworks many rumours spread around the township. Marshall Gunston worked at the meatworks for several seasons and believed they closed due to industrial disputes. Bernard Curran believed another company was looking at taking over. Finally, on 18 April 1963 it was announced in the local newspaper, the *Gladstone Observer*, that the site had been purchased for construction of the world’s largest alumina plant by an international consortium operating under the name Queensland Alumina Limited. The

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international consortium was made up of five different parties, Alcan Aluminium Limited (Canada), Conzinc Riotinto Limited of Australia, Kaiser Aluminium & Chemical Corporation (United States), and Pechiney Compagnie de Produits Chimiques et Electrometaallurgiques (France). The design, construction and operation of the plant were managed by Kaiser.¹²

Although many were surprised at this announcement it did not come as a shock to everyone as a great deal had been going on behind the scenes. Gladstone was not initially looked at as the site for the alumina plant which would process bauxite mined at Weipa in far north Queensland. Initially both Papua New Guinea and the south island of New Zealand were considered as well as Weipa itself; however, Gladstone had several important aspects.¹³

There was the sheltered deep water harbour, the nearby coal at Moura which is vital for the production of alumina and there was a ready workforce due to the closure of the meatworks.¹⁴ In the end, the Queensland State Government insisted the plant be located within the state.¹⁵ Secret trips had been made to the area with representatives from Kaiser being met by local councillor, WR Golding, who would later become the Mayor of Gladstone. Golding played tour guide leading the party around various possible sites including that of the former meatworks and nearby South Tree Island.¹⁶ Afterwards the Gladstone Harbour Board, of which Golding was chairman, went to extraordinary lengths to obtain South Tree Island from the Austin brothers who had settled there many years before. The decision to acquire the land went all the way to the Supreme Court before being officially handed over to the Board.¹⁷

Eventually the consortium chose Gladstone and bought the meatworks site from Swifts. More secret trips were made to Gladstone, this time with the purpose of buying land for housing before prices started to soar. Something big was about to happen in Gladstone.

Construction of QAL commenced in 1964 and hundreds of workers, many with families in tow, moved into town. ‘Gladstone was the buzz word in Australia at the time’, local resident Marshall Gunston recalled. ‘There were many who were hard working law abiding people and there were also many who came from the big cities who were used to living by their wits

¹⁴ Gladstone Observer, ‘£35 Million Alumina Plant for Gladstone’.
¹⁷ Harbour Board Acquires South Tree Island’, Gladstone Observer, 13 April 1963.
¹⁸ Gunston, Typescript – personal memoirs.
One story of a newcomer is that of Herbert and Marilyn Haertel. In 1964 these Tasmanian residents heard about the construction of QAL in central Queensland prompting Marilyn to write to the Gladstone town clerk. They received a glowing reply about the town and its facilities, and in 1965 decided to move to Brisbane to be closer when the call came for more workers. In early 1966 Marilyn and Herbert packed their belongings into a Kombi van and drove to Gladstone where they joined a large queue at the construction site to sign up for work. From here they had to find accommodation and were sent to the Corones Caravan Park at Barney Point where they stayed for a short time before moving into the Boles Street Caravan Park in West Gladstone. Marilyn is still residing in the area 41 years later.  

Some workers came because they already had employment lined up but there were many who arrived looking for work. Those who already had work with QAL were allowed accommodation at one of the company owned caravan parks such as the one located at Boles Street and those eligible were housed in single men’s quarters built at Barney Point. Those without had to find their own accommodation in hostels, limited caravan sites or in the suburban backyards of Gladstone residents.

Construction continued regardless and there was plenty of work for the men. Bevin Newitt, a former construction worker and QAL employee painted a good picture of the work conditions and pay:

During the construction of the first stage of the QAL plant it was a condition of employment to agree to work a six day week. My hourly rate of pay in 1966 as a rigger was $1.15 per hour for ordinary time plus penalty rates for overtime. We were required to work 10 hours from Monday to Friday and 8 hours on Saturday. Over the years the wages progressively increased but so did the cost of living.20

Marshall Gunston, who worked as a contractor onsite after owning and operating a men’s hostel wrote of how busy the site was:

There was such a large number of contractors, men and machines operating in a confined area, it must have been difficult for management to cope. Each contractor had their own colours for their equipment, including the workers hard hats.21

At its peak in November 1966 there were 2,800 jobs representing no less than 14 unions. As well as staff at the site over 70 contracts for materials and building were awarded.22

Plant Tours held on opening Day.


21 Gunston, Typescript – personal memoirs.
22 Fogarty and Wootton, Breakthrough, p. 19.
In March 1967 the first alumina was successfully processed at the refinery and big celebrations were planned. Because Gladstone did not have enough adequate accommodation for the VIPs, it was decided that the celebrations would begin in Brisbane at a formal dinner with guests being airlifted into Gladstone the following day to tour the site before heading back to Brisbane. Guests sported colour-coded rosettes to know which flight and bus they would be on. As a practical joke a shark had been placed in the landscaped pond at the administration entrance to greet the VIPs on arrival.\textsuperscript{23}

QAL was now officially in operation with many of the construction workers finding permanent employment onsite or moving on to build stage two of QAL or other local industries.

**Living Through the Construction Years**

In 1964 Gladstone was not prepared to nearly double its population nor were the newcomers prepared for Gladstone as suggested by the first impressions of Roy Swenson in 1964:

> The footpaths were broken and uneven in the main streets, gutters overflowed with waste water, murky slime lingered in broken sections and the building at the heart of the municipality, the town hall, flaunted peeling paint.\textsuperscript{24}

The state of Gladstone and the influx of people created many social problems including a housing crisis, unsafe environs for women, inflated prices, lack of entertainment and growing pressure on the local council.
One major issue facing the Gladstone community during the construction of QAL was the shortage in housing for the workers and their families. Although 400 houses were built for QAL employees this was not nearly enough for the amount of workers needed to build the alumina plant.\textsuperscript{25} Newcomers to town found accommodation in hostels and caravans; however, conditions were extremely primitive and cramped as Gladstone had no sewerage or water treatment and entire families were crammed into one small caravan parked within two metres of the next crammed caravan.\textsuperscript{26}

Single men’s quarters were erected at Barney Point with barrack style accommodation housing up to 1600 men.\textsuperscript{27} The men had 3x3 metre rooms with a bed and fridge and meals provided.\textsuperscript{28} For many it was only a place to sleep because of the long hours worked on the construction site. There were many different nationalities and by all accounts the quarters were extremely rough as the description by British migrant Geoffrey Wynne who lived there for six months shows:

\begin{quote}
At the barracks we had our own sly grog shop. We had gambling, housie housie, crown and anchor. We had police bribery. We had gangsters. We had suicides. We had murders. We had everything imaginable!\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

The quarters were only meant to be there for two years, but were still there eleven years later.\textsuperscript{30}

There were several privately-owned hostels in Gladstone providing housing for potential construction workers. One of these was owned by Marshall Gunston at 2 Roseberry Street. A local resident himself, Gunston had worked several seasons at the meatworks with his father and brother before moving out to Calliope just south-west of Gladstone. When QAL was announced Gunston decided to move back to Gladstone and open a hostel to capitalise on the influx of workers needing a place to stay; however, after finding a suitable Queenslander his bank would not give him the loan to buy it. In a story indicative of the small community prior to the boom, Gunston found where another bank manager lived and visited him on a Saturday morning:

\begin{quote}
He was mowing the lawn in a pair of shorts and a tee shirt, I introduced myself and explained my situation, so we went to inspect the house, went up and opened the bank, opened an account, took out a loan and purchased the property.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{McDonald} McDonald, \textit{Gladstone: city that waited}, p. 376.
\bibitem{Fogarty} Fogarty and Wootton, \textit{Breakthrough}, p. 31. Haertel, Manuscript.
\bibitem{Fogarty2} Fogarty and Wootton, \textit{Breakthrough}, p. 34.
\bibitem{Extract} Extract from interview by Sue Pechey with Dave Burns, The Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum collection, 2000.
\bibitem{Miller} J Miller, ‘For better – or worse’, [personal memoir of Geoffrey Wynne], in \textit{Recollections and reflections}, p. 127.
\bibitem{McDonald2} McDonald, \textit{Gladstone: city that waited}, p. 375.
\bibitem{Gunston} Gunston, Typescript – personal memoirs.
\end{thebibliography}
The boarding house was often overflowing with as many as 30 men living there at one time, with several others sleeping in their cars parked in the backyard until a bed was vacated.

Because the men often arrived with little money and no paid employment lined up, Gunston took measures to ensure the men would not leave without paying by taking their belongings as security: ‘Some would leave without their belongings and return to collect them many months later and a few never returned at all.’

Similar to the single men’s quarters, there was often excitement at the Roseberry Street hostel as well: ‘The boarding house experienced everything from theft to arguments, fights, evictions to police intervention and the occasional arrest.’

Many construction workers moving to town came with young families and were not eligible to stay in the hostels. Believing the move to Gladstone to be a temporary one, most chose to live in caravans. Many workers were used to moving where the work was and already owned caravans while others moved into ones already onsite. The council allowed up to two vans to be parked in suburban backyards. Sanitation was a major problem with no sewerage and most houses still had a ‘thunderbox’ also located in the backyard.


Source: Clive Ludlow

32 ibid.
33 ibid.
34 Newitt, Typescript – personal memoirs.
Other families found a site in one of the local caravan parks. The largest and most notorious of these was the Boles Street Caravan Park operated by QAL. At its peak this caravan park had over 300 vans with a thousand men, women and children. It sported a shop, post office, playgrounds and a hall where the women could have Avon parties and dances. It also had bitumen roads which still had not appeared in other parts of Gladstone. There were private-owned caravans and onsite ones. One resident at the park, Pamala Brown, remembered there was a definite social split between those who owned a van and those who had to rent one: 'It was as if I was crossing the Great Divide when I walked past the shop into the private sector.' Two caravans would share plumbing and drainage and were about two metres apart. Each caravan had an annex which could be used for storage and a small patch of grass. Marilyn Haertel remembered taking pride in their outdoor area:

> We planted a garden around the edge of our “lawn”, at the back of the van between it and the wall and also at the front on the road side. We cut our lawn grass with scissors and won a garden competition section once.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{37}\) Haertel, Manuscript.
Living in the caravan park had many social implications mainly due to the cramped conditions. Because of the itinerant nature of these families there was also no immediate support from extended family. There could be up to seven family members living in a van and domestic arguments were common. Pamala Brown remembered most of the action occurred on weekends:

Incidences of men being drunk and chasing their wives or other men around the caravan park with knives and guns. Fisticuffs were commonplace. Kerry and I never needed to go out much of a night, as every show you wish to imagine was outside the caravan.

It was a stressful time for women in the caravan park while their husbands worked twelve-hour shifts. The women had to raise the children, line up to use a washing machine and clothes line, the laundry would often be stained after using the untreated water, and if they wanted to bake anything they had to use one of the ovens in a central hall which had to be watched in case someone stole their dinner.

It was not just within the confines of the caravan park that women struggled. With so many men around town women felt unsafe going anywhere on their own:

In the early days, Gladstone was a place where women weren't game to go on the streets. You would rarely see a woman out after dark. It was a man's town.

Locals were reportedly concerned for the moral well-being of their women and in all likelihood it was unsafe for them to venture out at night in a town referred to as a ‘frontier land’ where the pubs had swinging doors that men were often being thrown through. One construction worker, Geoffrey Wynne, admitted to travelling around with a tough crowd looking for fights: ‘We’d do a ‘pub crawl’ almost every night, and there’d be fights in every pub.’ Jim Gibbins, a local resident, steered clear of the pubs because of the fights: ‘If you thought you could fight, you’d go to the pub and somebody would prove that you couldn’t.’

With cramped living conditions, minimal entertainment, and good wages to spend it is little wonder the construction workers spent their spare time in the pubs, but not everyone living in Gladstone could afford the same lifestyle. When representatives from the international consortium secretly visited Gladstone to buy land before prices soared, they knew exactly what was going to happen, however it was those in essential service industries such as teachers, health care professionals, and retail assistants who suffered the most as they were still on the same wage but were expected to pay the inflated prices. On top of this, they did

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38 Newitt, Ttypescript – personal memoirs.
40 ibid., p. 135.
41 Miller, ‘For better – or worse’, p. 128.
42 Fogarty and Wootton, Breakthrough, p. 34; V Miles, ‘Happy valley pioneering’, [personal memoirs of Mr Jim Gibbins], in Recollections and reflections.
43 Miller, ‘For better – or worse’, p. 128.
44 Miles, ‘Happy valley pioneering’.

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not receive the special allowances for living away from home for example if you registered an out of town address at the Boles Street Caravan Park you were given a living away from home allowance.\textsuperscript{45} Wages for non-construction workers came to the forefront for local Telecom workers in the early 1970s when they went on strike to demand an increase in pay in line with the construction workers.

With soaring prices and worrying about the moral well-being of their daughters, it is not surprising animosity towards the newcomers swelled amongst the established townsfolk. Boles Street Caravan Park resident, Pamala Wilson, remembered experiencing this at the town’s library as she signed up to borrow books. As soon as Pamala wrote the caravan park as her place of residence, the mood changed and her cheque was not accepted and she was informed they would only take cash. Another resident of the caravan park, Kay Glossop, was far more optimistic about the construction period in Gladstone but still noted the divide between established residents and newcomers: ‘You couldn’t get very close to town people, it was only when my sons started to court the local girls we got to know some.’\textsuperscript{46}

The Gladstone Town Council was often at the centre of the social implications present during the construction period. Understandably the council was not prepared for the population to double and struggled to maintain infrastructure and to retain staff when far more money could be gained from working at the construction site. Men would arrive in town without a job lined up and take up a position at council until a construction job came along, which created a high staff turnover, adding to an already stressful situation and hampering attempts to stay abreast of the growth and development of the township.\textsuperscript{47} Supplying the town and industry with adequate water was a major problem, and water had to be rationed. Residents would have to fill up water containers from a reservoir at certain times of the day and the council also had a water truck delivering door to door.\textsuperscript{48} There was no water treatment either and water had to be boiled before consumption, especially after rain. One resident recalled a council car driving around with the occupant calling out, ‘Don’t drink the water! Boil the water! High levels of toxins, boil the water!’\textsuperscript{49}

Many understood the plight of the Council including the former owner of the local newspaper, Margaret Macfarlan:

I felt sorry for the council of the day. It did its best, but the problem was to get the federal government to see the need for a development grant. No ordinary council could meet the

\textsuperscript{45} Newitt, Typescript – personal memoirs.
\textsuperscript{46} Ginty, ‘I just took it in my stride’.
\textsuperscript{47} Gunston, Typescript – personal memoirs.
\textsuperscript{48} Newitt, Typescript – personal memoirs.
\textsuperscript{49} Tittmarsh, ‘Greetings from Gladstone’, p. 135.
demands progress placed on Gladstone. Of course the changes came eventually, but
the town just dawdled on as best as it could until the money came our way.  

Time seems to be one answer to all these problems. Most of the itinerant construction
workers moved to Gladstone with the belief it was only temporary, which is why so many
lived in caravans and hostels, however after stage one of QAL was completed in 1967, stage
two began and soon after that a power station was built, and eventually more industries were
established in the area. There was plenty of work to be had. These itinerant construction
workers became semi-permanent residents and many made the decision to stay, buying
land and building their own houses. An assimilation had been made:

I met many who came to Gladstone with the intention of only staying a few months,
save a few dollars and then move on, but many years later they were still here and
perhaps some may have never ever left.

New schools opened, suburbs slowly crept over the surrounding area and more businesses
were established and local ones expanded creating more jobs especially for women. The
Boles Street Caravan Park was closed in 1973, at which time it was seen as a slum and
needed graffiti removed on a daily basis. Community groups such as the Gladstone
Multicultural Association were established, embracing the different cultures. The council
shouldered the problems during the construction period by taking a ‘one step at a time’
approach. They instigated the building of the Awoonga Weir, and later the Awoonga Dam,
which provides adequate water supply for residents and industry. The council also built a
water treatment plant and sells the treated water to QAL for use in the processing of
alumina. Most importantly, 40 years on, the outsiders have integrated with the established
residents. Their children and grandchildren have or are growing up alongside each other.

Conclusion

In June 2006 Gladstone had 29,288 residents compared to 7,181 recorded in 1961. Today,
the Gladstone region has at least 12 industry providers and the port loaded over 4.1 million
tonnes of coal on 429 ships in 2007. The city has a university campus, five supermarkets,
chain clothing and discount stores, an eight theatre cinema complex and every major fast
food outlet. New housing estates are being built at a rapid pace and surrounding areas in the
Calliope Shire such as Calliope, Tannum Sands and Boyne Island feed into this industrial
city with commuters, shoppers, and those pursuing entertainment and sporting pursuits. QAL
is still one of the largest employers in Gladstone contributing around $200 million dollars

\[50 \text{ S Moodie, ‘Ahead of her time’, [personal memoirs of Mrs Margaret Macfarlan], in Recollections and}
\text{reflections, p. 11.}

\[51 \text{ Gunston, Typescript – personal memoirs.}

\[52 \text{ Australian Bureau of Statistics website, www.abs.gov.au, last visited 10 June 2007.}

\[53 \text{ Gladstone Area Promotion & Development Limited (GAPD), ‘Gladstone region industry providers:
via www.cqpa.com.au on 10 June 2007.} \]
annually to the local community in wages and contracts as well as assisting community
groups and individuals through grants and bursaries. QAL’s production rate has increased
from 600,000 tonnes of alumina in 1967 to 3.9 million tonnes annually. One major
achievement for Gladstone is being awarded Queensland Tidy Town honours ten times
since 1984. This is a far cry from the broken footpaths, gutters overflowing with waste
water and a town hall in need of a coat of paint recorded by Roy Swenson on his arrival in
1964. Another landmark came in 1985 when Gladstone was declared a city. The ‘frontier
town’ was no more.

In just 40 years Gladstone’s landscape has become almost unrecognisable with its industrial
towers and conveyor belts dominating the skyline and the suburban sprawl reaching further
than ever. Many residents do not even know what Gladstone was like before QAL came to
town; however, those who do remember probably hold a similar view to that of Harold
Huependen:

> I must admit, that I miss the old ‘sleepy hollow’ Gladstone of yesteryear when everyone
> seemed to know everyone, but progress has brought so many improvements that I
> shouldn’t complain ... I guess that I'm one of the lucky ones to have been around to
> witness, you might say, the re-birth of Gladstone - the place I still proudly call 'home'.