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BUT CAN IT LAST?

HERE'S a simple way to understand just how powerfully Queensland's mining sector has come roaring back to life.

Over the last 12 months, it has added the equivalent of one new job, either directly or in associated industries, every 40 minutes.

Queensland Resources Council boss Ian Macfarlane (illustrated) made that striking point yesterday before a lunch crowd of more than 600 packed in to the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre.

The gravelly-voiced former resources minister couldn't have been more chuffed wheeling out the happy stats before the industry's biggest annual gathering.

He also couldn't resist a few of the usual swipes at the Greens and other "naysayers" sounding the climate change alarm bells as they demand a faster pivot to renewables.

As the value of the sector grew 14 per cent over the past year to \$63 billion, Macfarlane noted that it's poised to tip more than \$5 billion in to government coffers through royalty payments.

"Premier, that's plenty of money for new roads, schools and hospitals and to pay the wages of our valued nurses, teachers and police," he said, pointedly looking out at Premier Anastacia

CITY BEAT WITH ANTHONY MARX

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Palaszczuk, who was seated at the head table.

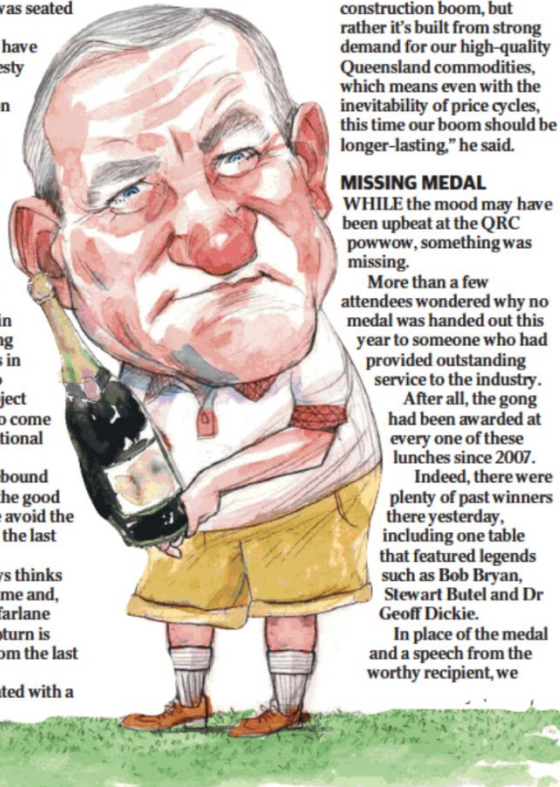
The two camps have had a somewhat testy relationship since she won re-election almost exactly a year ago, sparring over issues tied to the enormous Adani project, mine rehabilitation and other flash points.

But Palaszczuk made plenty of reassuring noises in her speech, winning over some sceptics in the room. She also highlighted the abject failure of COAG to come together over a national energy plan.

As the sector rebound gathers pace, can the good times last? Can we avoid the bust that followed the last mining boom?

Everyone always thinks it's different this time and, sure enough, Macfarlane noted that "this upturn is rather different from the last time".

"It's not associated with a



construction boom, but rather it's built from strong demand for our high-quality Queensland commodities, which means even with the inevitability of price cycles, this time our boom should be longer-lasting," he said.

MISSING MEDAL

WHILE the mood may have been upbeat at the QRC powwow, something was missing.

More than a few attendees wondered why no medal was handed out this year to someone who had provided outstanding service to the industry.

After all, the gong had been awarded at every one of these lunches since 2007.

Indeed, there were plenty of past winners there yesterday, including one table that featured legends such as Bob Bryan, Stewart Butel and Dr Geoff Dickie.

In place of the medal and a speech from the worthy recipient, we

were treated to a Q&A with Rachel Durdin, a Queensland winner of the Rio Tinto Women in Resources Awards.

Asked about the change of tack, a QRC spin doctor responded with a curious bit of rewritten history.

"The QRC Medal isn't an annual medal but its presentation does sometimes coincide with the QRC lunch," she said.

SOLAR POWERED

PERHAPS it's purely coincidental but, as the QRC celebrated its renewed prowess at digging stuff out of the ground, one of Australia's biggest solar projects just won the tick of approval near Ipswich.

The Somerset Council has greenlighted a proposed \$US2.5 billion solar farm on a 2.5ha site east of Harlin and along the D'Aguiar Highway.

Newly-formed company Sunshine Energy Australia, owned by a Hong Kong-based entity, hopes to build a 1500 megawatt complex as well as a 500 megatt battery storage station.

But questions linger about the financing and viability of such projects, given the logistical hurdles of transmitting and storing all that power.

Neither of SEA's directors, Anthony Youssef and Chi Man Li, responded to a request for comment yesterday.