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MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Industry Offers Vacation Destination for University Students

While some university students are relaxing by the pool this summer, a group of 20 students have converged on Gladstone to gain valuable work experience, relevant to their degrees at Queensland Alumina Limited (QAL).

Providing 12 weeks of paid employment, the QAL Undergraduate Vacation Program allows students to work alongside professionals in their field to assist with projects and gain valuable real work experience. With six local students on board, the remainder have travelled from far and wide, just to get some hands on refinery experience.

QAL Managing Director Phil Campbell said the vacation program had been going for over 30 years and provided students, both locally and nationally, with the opportunity to be part of a team and work on projects that value added to the refinery operations.

"The students are employed in the areas of human resources, environment, information technology, community relations, and engineering including chemical, civil, mechanical and electrical. During their 12 week placement, they will complete a project which contributes to the refinery operations in some way," he said.

"The project may be stand alone or subset of a larger project, though either way the outcome benefits both the student and QAL. Ultimately the program provides hands on opportunities for learning, which is something you can never get from coursework alone," Mr Campbell said.

"Another benefit is that many of our students return as graduate employees once their studies have been completed."

James Cook University (JCU) electrical engineering student Jordan Williams has swapped home town of Ayr for Gladstone this summer.

Jordan said there had not been a dull moment since coming to Gladstone, thanks to the large number of students in the program and the employee benefits offered by QAL.

"Gladstone is quite similar to Townsville. It's a very nice city with plenty of things to do and places to see. QAL has also been very helpful in assisting with the move to Gladstone by providing accommodation during the placement," he said.

"I enjoyed my first week at QAL and am looking forward to the rest of the program. The staff are very welcoming and eager to help when I need assistance with any task."

Jordan's major project will focus on checking and installing safety devices on numerous general power outlets around QAL.

"Working on a real project allows me to apply some of the knowledge I have learnt at university to actual problems, while learning new skills which are helpful to my degree and the rest of my career," Jordan said.

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) student and former Gladstone local, Grace Duckham, has one year left of her dual-degree in journalism and business (public relations). After gaining journalism experience Grace applied to the QAL vacation program to obtain practical public relations experience.

Grace will spend 12 weeks working as part of the community relations team and said it was great that the program was also in her home town.

“Working for a business such as QAL helps you gain the practical understanding and knowledge that you never could by sitting in a classroom,” Grace said.

“The motivation and sense of worth you get from knowing your project really adds value to QAL is fantastic. It makes you work harder.”

“It’s only been one week and I’ve already learnt so much. The knowledge that is passed on from your supervisors is invaluable,” she said.

Although the major focus of the Undergraduate Vacation Employment Program is on engineering disciplines there are also opportunities within science, chemistry, commercial, business, human resources, community relations and accounting fields. The students will be working on site until 11 February 2011.

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QAL has 20 university students on site, completing three months of vacation work during a break in their studies.

About Queensland Alumina Limited:

Queensland Alumina Limited (QAL) commenced operation in March 1967 with an annual production rate of 600,000 tonnes of alumina. Today QAL is one of the world’s largest alumina refineries, producing 3.95 million tonnes of the world’s best smelter grade alumina per year. With an average workforce of 1050 employees, QAL one of the region’s largest employers and annually contributes approximately \$300 million directly to the local economy.

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