

BUSINESS\$ WEEKLY

MINING



MACS Engineering project manager Allan Brett, left, and director of engineering Shane McNeilly with Australia's biggest pump.

PHOTO: AMANDA BALMER 280308/327

Taking on the water

By **SARAH CRAWFORD**
sarah.crawford@dailymercury.com.au

MISSION: to design and build two bases which will hold two of the largest centrifugal pumps ever used in Australia as well as electric motors that kick out 3100 horsepower each.

The catch – the massive steel bases must float and be ready in about eight weeks. That was the re-

quest last month from a flooded Central Queensland mine, desperate to move a large volume of water at their site.

MACS Engineering, a Mackay-based company servicing the Bowen Basin, Central and North Queensland mines, took on the task.

The company has nearly completed two steel bases weighing 105 tonnes each for the giant pumps and

motors.

Once completed the two pump units will float on a body of water and work 24 hours a day for months, until the mine is dry.

MACS Engineering project manager for the assignment, Allan Brett said it was a tough task.

“We have moved heaven and earth to get this done and we still are. Staff are working on it Monday to Sunday 12 hours a day,” he

said.

The heavy rains and flooding earlier this year hit Central Queensland's mines hard. At the time, Queensland Resources Council chief executive Michael Roche said the industry was expected to lose hundreds of millions in coal production.

MACS Engineering director Simon Mortess said the company was working hard to help the

mining industry get back on its feet. The two pumps to be used in the operation will each pump 4000 litres of water a second.

The projects engineering director Shane McNeilly said the key to the entire project was to make sure each unit could float on their four pontoons.

“Given the rotational force and the force created by that volume of water being pumped at that

velocity, we aimed for a base with a low centre of gravity because it's going to float on pontoons. Something sitting on solid ground is different to water so we had to add a bigger foot print (surface area) to each unit.”

The first unit is due to be loaded onto a heavy haulage truck and transported to the mine on April 14; the second will be moved on April 24.

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