

BUSINESS\$ WEEKLY

■ SUCCESS STORY

Safety tower a first

By LYNNIS BONANNO

lynnis.bonanno@dailymercury.com.au

IT seems the growth of Mackay business Macs Engineering currently knows no bounds.

Macs has achieved average growth of 20% per annum over the last five years, and is on track to achieve the same result this financial year.

There is a real buzz in the place at present about one of its current projects, an egress (or escape) tower which will stand 76m tall when complete.

The egress tower provides a mines safety solution which is understood to be the first to be constructed in Mackay, and is believed to be a first for the entire Bowen Basin.

"The tower is an exciting project for us as it demonstrates the depth and breadth of capability of our engineering division, and highlights the partnering approach Macs takes with its clients," director Simon Mortess said.

"One of our key areas of focus is an increasing emphasis on innovative design and technology to provide solutions to enhance safety standards."

Macs Engineering director of engineering Shane McNeilly explains how it all came about.

"This project is a result of working closely with our contractors and clients at a site level," Mr McNeilly said.

"Dave Campbell, the head of one of our customer companies Campbell Mining Services, first made us aware of Carborough Downs' need for an

egress tower."

Carborough Downs Coal is 150km south-west of Mackay and 15km east of Moranbah.

"Our understanding is that the Mines Department has been working collaboratively with mining companies such as Carborough Downs to look at ways to further improve safety, particularly in terms of providing means of escape from emergency situations in their underground mines.

"The aim was to put something in place to take personnel quickly and safely out of the vicinity in the event of an explosion

'The aim was to put something in place to take personnel quickly and safely out of the vicinity in the event of an explosion.'

or other underground incident.

"Dave (Campbell) understands our capabilities and asked if we thought this would be achievable."

The result is a collaboration between Campbell Mining Services and Macs Engineering; design and manufacture is by Macs, at an estimated cost of over \$1.5 million, and erection on site will be managed by Campbell Mining Services.

"There were a number of early concepts developed, but some were very costly, not only in terms of construction, but also difficult to transport and assemble," Mr McNeilly said.

"We came up with an innovative modular design to meet Carborough's specific requirements, and which is easier to transport and assemble.

"The design also allows the height of the tower and landing sections and length of the bridge sections to be adjusted, so it can be applied to a wide range of site applications," he said.

The egress tower for Carborough Downs consists of two stages; the first includes six modules rising vertically, and a horizontal bridge section which connects to a bench half way up the pit wall. The second stage is a similar sized section of vertical modules which lands at the safe zone at the very top of the pit wall.

Mr McNeilly said there had been interest in the tower from other mine sites and companies, because it provides a cost effective, purpose designed and built means of escape which will help improve overall mine safety.

"Carborough Downs, which is owned by the Brazilian based global miner Vale, adopted the view that someone has to be the first, and as a result erection of the first stage of the tower is well underway," Mr McNeilly said.

"Vale is one of the biggest mining players worldwide, and continues to make a strong commitment towards investment in safety, and raising standards.

"When it is operational the tower will make Carborough Downs one of the safest mines anywhere."



Some of the Macs Engineering team, from left, manager engineering and design Sid Goodier, project team leader Roy Fielding and directors Shane McNeilly and Simon Mortess.

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The underground egress tower takes shape; above, the horizontal bridge section and, left, part of the vertical component.

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