



Theresa Creek Dam, Clermont.  
Image courtesy of Isaac Regional Council.

Story: Sheryl Allen

**LOCATION:** Clermont  
11.5 hours northwest of  
Brisbane

**POPULATION:** 2,000

**INDUSTRIES:** Agriculture, coal mining,  
services

**CLIMATE:** Temperate  
Summer: 21.6°C – 34.3°C  
Winter: 6.7°C – 23.1°C  
Rainfall: 662mm average

Clermont, a mid-sized agricultural town in the Queensland Central Highlands, is sometimes likened to a barometer that has faithfully reflected the economic and social climate of the entire country.

Clermont can claim early gold rush beginnings as one of the oldest inland settlements in tropical Queensland and today reaps the benefits of a 21st century resources boom thanks to its location in the coal-rich Bowen Basin.

In 1891, the infamous Shearer's Strike saw hundreds of troops rallied to Clermont to separate shearers and non-union labour. Just a few years before, when thousands of Chinese worked the gold and copper fields, locals witnessed bloody racial riots.

In 1916, a flood devastated the town. With typical Aussie resilience the remaining townsfolk used a traction engine to relocate their surviving town buildings to a new site on higher ground.

Though its quiet pace of life belies its turbulent past, today Clermont continues to hold a mirror up to the broader economy.

"Like most of rural Australia, the property market has come off its peak of two or three years ago," explained Landmark's Terry Ray. "There is still a correction going on. But one factor has kept the market alive. As the large coal companies pay premium prices for resource country, well-compensated farmers can afford a reasonable outlay for replacement properties."

Twenty kilometres from town, the Blair Athol open-cut coal operation has been underway since the late 1970s.

Rio Tinto Coal Australia's newest operation, the Clermont Coal Mine, is just 12 kilometres northwest of town and is expected to reach full capacity in 2013.

Above the ground, Clermont is clearly cattle country. It is one of the few regional centres from which cattle are transported by rail to the large meat processing plants on the coast.

According to Terry, "there are about sixty trains a year equating to some 50,000 head of cattle annually. The monthly Clermont cattle sales put through on average 1,500 head."

The agricultural sector also includes dryland farming. The predominant summer crops are sorghum, sunflower seeds, with mung beans making a recent entry as an opportunity crop. In winter, wheat and chickpeas are the crops of choice.

Clermont businesses provide all the service its agricultural catchment requires – fertilisers, chemicals and farming equipment plus retail shopping and government, education and

medical services.

"Over the years, the major mining companies have contributed to developing community infrastructure. The economic flow-on from mining has boosted activity right across this region and provided new opportunities for people to make a livelihood," said Terry.

There are plenty of reminders of the past in Clermont – the famous Piano in the Tree recalls the 1916 flood and the museum boasts a collection of gold rush relics.

But a sense of "now" is also very apparent. Guided tours of the Blair Athol mine let visitors explore a large-scale, modern-day mining operation. A recreational sporting ground, a supermarket, a hospital, a racecourse and a golf course... all the trappings of contemporary, rural town lifestyle are here.

Clearly, Clermont continues to be a reliable gauge for the Aussie economy and way of life.

#### CONTACT:

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#### PROPERTY GUIDE:

**Residential:** Median house price \$297,000

**Rural:** 12,000-plus freehold acres with excellent improvements and abundant water \$3,900,000