

LANDMARK POSTCODE

4405



Dalby Main Street.
Image courtesy of Ross Murray.

Story: Sheryl Allen

LOCATION: Dalby
2.5 hours northwest of Brisbane

POPULATION: 12,000

INDUSTRIES: Mining, energy, agriculture, services

CLIMATE: Sub-tropical
Summer: 18.5°C – 32.0°C
Winter: 4.1°C – 18.7°C
Rainfall: 676mm

Dalby is a place on the move – but it's not going anywhere! Trend-defying population growth and a dynamic rate of commercial development prove that Dalby is simply shifting its focus.

Dalby is strategically located on the national highway linking Brisbane to Darwin. For the region, it's a commercial and administrative services centre. For residents, it offers an invitingly relaxed rural lifestyle with all the trappings of modern community living – shopping, schools, government services, healthcare, recreation and more.

Not so long ago Dalby was totally reliant on a cotton-centric agricultural base. Now the resources sector (coal and coal-seam gases) is the driving force behind the economy, along with some intriguing newcomers like bio-fuel production.

"When I first arrived 10 years ago, there were around 350 dryland cotton farmers on the downs," says Landmark's Ross Murray. "Falling cotton prices, exchange rates and water security

has changed the focus. Today, regular cotton growers number about 75."

Grain production is still a major player with cereals and course grains the mainstays. But sorghum has emerged as a booming summer crop.

Australia's first greenfields grain-to-ethanol production facility, the Dalby Bio-Refinery has an annual demand for around 200,000 tonnes of sorghum. Production commenced in late 2008 and the facility employs 50 personnel.

Dalby is home to one of Queensland's largest grain receival and transfer centres and the Dalby-Warmbo Saleyards, which come to life each Wednesday with an average weekly through-put of 4,000-6,000 head of cattle.

Western Downs Regional Council is investigating a program to treat and reuse the waste water produced by the district's active coal-seam gas industry.

"The council's additional reverse osmosis water treatment plant means a confident future for Dalby," confirms Ross. "The treated water will supplement our domestic water supply and support the tremendous growth in the town."

Proximity to the rich Surat Basin coal reserves has brought economic prosperity to the region and the dynamic energy sector promises Dalby a vibrant future.

"Within just a few kilometres of Dalby we have two gas-fired and one coal-fired power station and another three facilities in construction phase," says Ross. "These and the existing mining and extraction activities create jobs, incomes and opportunities that flow on to the Dalby community."

Some 600 businesses operate in and around Dalby and the area enjoys an unemployment rate well below the Australian average.

"Dalby is close to the regional industrial development while offering all necessary goods, services and facilities, and a welcoming, friendly community," says Ross. "Residential and industrial property demand is strong with several new estates opened up in the last three years."

"Good rural property is always in demand, but we've come back from the highs of 18 months ago due to general market uncertainty. The gap's broadened between vendor and buyer expectation. That's likely to narrow again when (if) interest rates rise and commodity prices remain where they have been."

In the meantime, Dalby continues to buck the trend of these changeable times. "There is no recession in Dalby," assures Ross.

CONTACT:

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PROPERTY GUIDE:

Residential: Quality three/four bedroom home, close to CBD \$400,000

New residential development: by the golf course \$180,000-\$300,000 a block

Quality dryland farming property: \$2,000-\$2,500 per acre

Quality grazing property: \$700- \$1,200 per acre