

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aquaculture Gladstone fish hatchery welcomes first school based trainee

Gladstone's first ever school-based aquaculture trainee, Dean Vacher, has taken his first steps towards a career in the industry, thanks to a new traineeship program at Aquaculture Gladstone.

Dean, who is currently in year 11 at Chanel College, has commenced a three-year school based traineeship, studying a Certificate III in Aquaculture.

Gladstone Area Water Board CEO Darren Barlow said the milestone was an important moment for the organisation.

"Our traineeship program is key to ensuring the operational sustainability of Aquaculture Gladstone now and into the future," Mr Barlow said.

"Dean may be our first school-based aquaculture trainee but he certainly won't be the last.

"Our desire to get young people into the workforce is underpinned by a long-term objective to develop our own team of high skilled hatchery technicians right here in Central Queensland.

"Learning pathways like traineeships benefit our local economy and support the growth of Queensland's aquaculture industry," Mr Barlow said.

Dean decided to pursue a future in aquaculture following a 12-month structured work experience program last year.

"This traineeship is a dream come true," he said.

"Work experience made me realise aquaculture is the career for me and I hope I can inspire other young people in Gladstone to give it a go.

"I'm excited to begin my studies and keep learning from the team – I wish I could come in five days a week already!"

Dean will work at the hatchery one day a week while completing his senior school studies, before transitioning to a full time traineeship program in 2026. He will work alongside the facility's team of experienced hatchery technicians including another full time aquaculture trainee.

Aquaculture Gladstone has partnered with training and employments services providers MRAEL and Mas Experience to facilitate Dean's training.

Aquaculture Gladstone is a multi-species, native fish hatchery owned and operated by Gladstone Area Water Board.

Opened in November 2022, Aquaculture Gladstone has already reached impressive milestones, with one million Barramundi fingerlings bred at the hatchery released into Lake Awoonga in 2023.

In addition to its successful fish breeding program, Aquaculture Gladstone has recently opened an interpretive display at the hatchery.

The new interpretive display creates an accessible experience for visitors to learn about the different fish species being bred at the Aquaculture Gladstone fish hatchery, the aquaculture industry more broadly, biosecurity and biological pest species.

There is also a live fish exhibit where visitors can watch the incredibly rare Golden Barramundi and White Barramundi.

For more information about Aquaculture Gladstone, including how to visit the interpretive display or book a group tour, please visit www.gawb.qld.gov.au

Gladstone Area Water Board, as a Queensland Government Bulk Water Supply Authority, delivers safe and reliable water services which promote economic development and enhances the lifestyle of regional Queensland. Gladstone Area Water Board owns and operates Awoonga Dam on the Boyne River, along with a network of delivery pipelines, water treatment plants and other bulk water distribution infrastructure.

To ensure long-term water security for customers, the 117-kilometre Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline project is under development. When delivered, the pipeline will form part of the Gladstone Area Water Board network and provide enhanced water security and reliability for the region. For more information about Gladstone Area Water Board and the Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline project, please visit www.gawb.qld.gov.au

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