

Retail therapy

The Shire is abuzz with talk of shops closing on and around the iconic Port Douglas Macrossan Street strip, but is this simply a natural part of the retail cycle in Tropical North Queensland? Special report, Pages 4 & 5

Helping hand on first day



Kenna is starting school this week, with a little help from her big bro Griff. Page 6

Picture: Shaun Hollis



Shire Oz Day winners - P3



Slice of heaven, anyone? - P8

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SATURDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2026
26/9 GRANT STREET PORT DOUGLAS

Newsport Print welcomes your community story submissions. Submissions can be emailed to editor@newsport.com.au. Please include the what, when, why and how and, preferably, with a picture. Please also include a direct phone number and a full name so we can verify and confirm any further details when required to do so. Please keep your submission or story to no more than 200 words and as succinct as possible. Newsport reserves the right to edit, modify, change and re-write your submission for clarity, brevity or legal reasons. The publishing of all contributed submissions is at the sole discretion of the editor. Newsport Print also welcomes your story ideas, tips and leads.

Who is our new tycoon?

Shaun Hollis

New plans for a 40-home estate have been unveiled on the more than 2ha block at 71-85 Port Douglas Road where a luxury resort was once meant to go, but who is the man behind the latest development announcement?

Brisbane multi-millionaire Kevin Seymour and his family came in at number 190 on the Australian Financial Review Rich List last year with a net worth of \$794m.

Property developer the Seymour Group has already made a small investment by its standards in Port Douglas in 2021 in the form of the 15-home Beach Estate on Langley Road near Four Mile Beach, but this is a mere drop in the ocean compared to the alterations it has made to the Brisbane skyline since the company was first formed in 1976.

The group has built some of the Brisbane CBD's major precincts including Post Office Square and Queens Plaza and has constructed a host of residential developments including The Oxlade and The Peninsula at New Farm.

In 1995 the group built the first



Kevin Seymour runs the Seymour Group. Picture: Supplied

high-rise residential tower in the Brisbane CBD, the 150-apartment Admiralty Towers, which soon included two more towers and more than 300 more homes. Other projects across Queensland include at Noosa and Airlie Beach.

One latest mega-project is Newstead Green, which takes up an entire block and includes more than 800 apartments, eight tow-

ers - some of which may end up being more than 30 storeys high - and a retail precinct.

Seymour Group PR states Kevin has "shaped Brisbane's central business district through his prestige developments" and has "introduced the apartment tower concept to Brisbane".

"He is a leader with real vision," the group states.



Douglas Shire News
Newsport

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Lifetime of giving

Byron Filmer

A packed Port Douglas Community Hall crowd on Friday witnessed long-time volunteer and educator Bev Gwynne crowned Douglas Shire's Citizen of the Year.

Other major award winners on the night included Forever Reef Project founder Dean Miller (Environmental Achievement Award) and recycling legend Bruce Ferguson (Senior Citizen of the Year).

Bev has committed much of her life to providing for the Shire community through her support of schools, sports clubs and health-support groups, giving countless hours of service.

"I am very honoured for this



Citizen of the Year Bev Gwynne

award, thank you to the people who nominated me," she told Newsport.

Living in the area since 1971, Bev said Douglas Shire was one of the best places to live in the world.

"It is a wonderful community and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

Bev's community service includes: Committee work with the Cancer Council; More than five years as a Cardiac Challenge support driver; Organising the region's first Breast Cancer Classic Walk, and; Coordinating multiple Biggest Morning Tea events. She spent nine years as a TAFE childcare teacher, eight as a daycare and kindy teacher, and taught at local schools.

Other Awards: Volunteer – Terry Summerell; Arts and Culture – Cody Lundstrom-Postlewaigh; Junior Sports – Kai Wall; Senior Sports – Josh Harris, and; Young Citizen of the Year – Sophie Hamilton.

News in Brief

FLOOD ROAD WARNING

Far North Queensland commuters are being urged not to attempt to cross flooded rivers and creeks following ongoing heavy rains across the region in the past week.

Crossings prone to flooding this week include Bushy Creek Bridge near Mount Molloy and the Wenlock River near the Moreton Telegraph Station and at Portland Road on Cape York.

The Hann River and the Peninsular Development Road across the Laura River have also been flooded this week.

MACKEREL BAG LIMIT

The Spanish mackerel recreational boat limit has been raised in Queensland waters to four fish per boat from two.

And, for commercial fishers, the annual catch limit has increased to 250 tonnes per year from 165 tonnes.

The State Government Primary Industries Department announced the change Monday, saying stock assessments had found the "population is likely to have increased to 34 per cent of un-fished biomass," which, it said, "allows for increased fishing".

MORE NIGHT ROADWORKS

The Kuranda Range Road is set to be closed on weeknights from the middle of next month as work to fix the key arterial road following Cyclone Jasper damage in 2023/24 ramps up again.

The closures will go from 9pm to 4am on Sunday to Thursday nights from Sunday, February 15, until the end of March, weather permitting.

Traffic will be let through once in each direction at midnight every closure night.

Huge g'day for our newest Aussies



Wendy Lang, Mayra Fairlie, new citizen Belen Bianchini, Beau Guthridge, Khairatun Nisa, Sofia Ferrari and Anaclara Bazan celebrated Belen's citizenship in Port Douglas on Friday night. Picture: Shaun Hollis

Galentine's Day High Tea

Friday 13 February ♥ 1:30pm to 4pm ♥ Daintree Bar & Lounge ♥ From \$89pp

Gather, sip and celebrate life's sweetest friendships. Savour a decadent High Tea buffet accompanied by live music from award-winning artist, KiKi Courtidis. Enjoy an espresso martini or glass of French Champagne on arrival, or indulge in an 2.5hr wine package. Scan the QR code to book!



One door shuts,

Changing face of business

Shaun Hollis

The number of Australian businesses grew by 2.5 per cent in the 2024/25 financial year, with sole traders and large corporations the main areas of growth, according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures.

The figures, however, paint a mixed picture, with close to 430,000 new businesses starting up, but more than 370,000 closing down - a churn rate of about 30 per cent.

Australia had about 2.7m businesses at the end of last financial year, but more than 1.7m of those were sole traders.

"It represents a fundamental shift in how Australians are



Sportscraft and Just Jase Hair are two Port Douglas shops that have closed this month. Pictures: Shaun Hollis

choosing to structure their working lives, and the trend is accelerating," according to the ABS.

"Perhaps the most significant finding in the latest data is the decline of small employing businesses."

The ABS data shows a boom in new businesses after Covid-19, followed by a crash in 2022/23, then a stabilisation from 2023-25.

"The challenging middle ground of 1-19 employees is increasingly difficult territory," the ABS states.

"Costs are high, complexity is significant, and margins are tight.



"The data suggests businesses need to either stay lean or scale quickly through this range."

The service economy is the growth sector - such as health-care, transport, financial services and professional services - while retail, agriculture and manufacturing are either stable or declining.

"We're seeing more people choose to stay solo indefinitely, enabled by technology and platforms. Those who do hire face a much higher bar to make it work economically."

Healthcare and social-assis-

tance businesses increased by 6.6 per cent compared to the previous year, while the industries with the largest decrease were retail, with a drop of 0.4 per cent to about 156,000 businesses, and agriculture, forestry and fishing, with a decrease of 0.8 per cent to about 171,000 businesses.

A KPMG report from the end of 2025 financial year found, however, visitation to shopping centres has been climbing steadily despite the higher cost of living.

This trend has led to steady year-on-year increases in income and trade for the retail sector, the report found.

"The outlook for retail sales continues to improve as some of the pressures on household budgets start to ease," it reads.

But total returns for the retail sector remain low at 3.7 per cent as shop owners continue to invest in more capital. Deloitte Access Economics forecasts retail sales growth of 2.3 per cent in 2026 and 2.6 per cent in 2027.



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a new one opens

Cheap online shopping hits the bottom dollar

Shaun Hollis

The chief executive of the Australian Retail Association is calling for more to be done to even out the retail playing field as bricks-and-mortar shops continue to close across the country, including in Douglas Shire.

In the wake of the recent closure of at least six retail shops in the Port Douglas shopping strip, ARA chief executive Chris Rodwell told Newsport last week cheap online shopping and the high cost of living were impacting everywhere.

"Ultra-cheap platforms like Temu and Shein are pushing many local retailers, especially smaller and mid-sized businesses, to the brink because they simply can't compete with cheaper imports," Mr Rodwell said.

"While local retailers welcome competition, this is not a level playing field.

"The retailers that back Australia create local jobs, contribute taxes here and are committed to safety, anti-slavery, and sustainability.

"It's critical the government and regulatory agencies hold all retailers to the same standards."

An ARA small-business focus group late last year also found the cost-of-living crisis meant customers were cutting back on discretionary spending and focusing only on essentials, fundamentally

impacting business viability and profitability, he said.

Other Douglas Shire residents spoken to by Newsport have also placed some of the blame on "greedy landlords" driving shop owners out with unnecessary rent hikes.

But the shop owners spoken to by Newsport gave a variety of different reasons for closing their doors. One said they were closing to return to study, while another said they only intended to be open for three years, and that time frame was now up.

The Port Douglas CBD retail shops to close recently include Millie and Me, Tahitian Lime, Sportscraft, Bahnuk, Jay Jays and Happy Herbs.

The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows, while the number of businesses across the country grew last financial year, retail was one of only two sectors which shrunk significantly (see separate story).

The ABS figures paint a picture of a highly volatile market where sole traders and large corporations are some of the main growth areas, while those employing less than 20 workers are struggling with many cost-of-living pressures and government charges.

Some business sectors increased by 6.6 per cent in a year, while retail decreased by 0.4 per cent.



Wellness consultant Charlotte Furley at Happy Herbs. Picture: Shaun Hollis

Dear Port Douglas community!

After nine years we are closing our doors at the end of January. It is with a heavy heart, and we are very grateful for all your support over the years, the connections and special moments.

Please come say hi, goodbye and get a bargain from our 40-60 per cent sales.

For any questions, and if you want to stay in contact, please reach out on 0459 324 241 or portdouglas@thehappyherbshop.com.

Blessings to all.

-Happy Herbs owner Janja Peschel



So much on first week in

Five-year-old Kenna is starting school at St Augustine's Primary in Mossman this week, and has she got a packed program ahead of her.

The first thing to take care of is what she is most looking forward to learning about in class.

"Probably about babies," she says with authority. Brother Griff, 7, who is an experienced hand at school after attending St Augustine's for the past two years, clarifies his little sister's answer.

"She loves babies," Griff explains.

During this chaotic interview, which includes pointing out her brand new waterbottle, drawing pictures of Father Christmas, and listening for the dogs barking out the back, Kenna soon expands on some of the topics she has already been studying during her brief time in the education system.

"I'm learning about toys," she



Siblings Griff, 7, and Kenna, 5, are going to St Augustine's this year.

says. Or did she say "toilets"? (While majoring in super cute, the new prep student still has some work to do in terms of speaking clearly, or is that just this reporter's failing hearing?)

Griff volunteers his favourite part of school: "Probably Chrome-books."

Kenna then chimes in about another key link to her schooling: "And this is my pencil."

She also says she is looking forward to going to her first day with a trio of kindy friends, as well as her brother and cousins.

"I've got a new drink bottle," she

adds. I try one more time: What is she looking forward to the most?

"Toys." Yes, not toilets.

Kenna has just had a birthday, and more of the focus at this stage of our chat may be on the upcoming pony party.

"There's gonna be horsies there and everyone gets to ride them," she says.

"I get to ride one."

"There might be lots."

Newsport would like to wish good luck to all the Douglas Shire students starting and returning to school this week across the district.

Large crocodile caught on film off Four Mile

A large crocodile has been filmed in the waters off Four Mile Beach this week by a walker passing by.

Nicolas L'Eveille said he spotted the croc, which looked to be at least 2m long, roughly halfway along the about 4km-long beach, and he issued a warning for people to keep a close eye on their dogs.

"It was around 8.30am (on Sunday)," Mr L'Eveille told Newsport.

"We spotted it on Four Mile Beach, moving toward the Mowbray River.

"It was a big one."

The State Government reminds Queenslanders to stay Crocwise at all times.

Crocodiles can stay out of sight, underwater for hours at a time, the Government states, so just because you can't see a crocodile, doesn't mean there isn't one close by.



Scan here for a link to the video



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Little piece of secluded paradise

Shaun Hollis

Mackay Coral Cay off the coast of Cape Tribulation has made a list of the top 10 most-searched-for secluded Queensland Beaches.

Coming in at seventh, the remote beach in the middle of the ocean near the popular Agincourt Reef takes some effort to get to.

“This beautiful cay is what could be described as a tropical paradise, just a little ring of sun, only accessible by boat that gives visitors a sense of privacy,” the research by aeromedical service LifeFlight states.

“Mackay Coral Cay is perfect for those wanting to admire protected reef flats and colourful fish, while enjoying the calm waters.”

Beaver Cay near Townsville came in at number one, with Lucinda Beach, also near Townsville, and Chalkies Beach at Haslewood Island, rounding out the top three.

The research looked at information such as monthly Google searches and TikTok popularity to determine the winners.

Mackay Coral Cay had 1600 monthly Google searches in the months leading up to November.



Mackay Coral Cay is one of Queensland’s most sought-out secluded beaches. Picture: Visit Port Douglas

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GUN BUYBACKS FIRE UP NEWSPORT READERS

Bradley Cregan
Guns weren't and aren't the problem. RADICAL ISLAM IS.

Isidore Sveticic
Good on the Queensland Libs.

Ian Kling
Hopefully David Crisafulli MP stands up to Albanese and his rubbish government and it's rushed in and no consultation changes to gun control.

Fivep Wolf
It will cost billions and achieve nothing.

Jesse Ladd
Smart decision.

Wayne McCormack
This is so dumb, how many criminals will hand in guns!

Leonie Walter
Good. Illegal firearms should be the focus. An audit of those on terror watch lists as well.

Lillian Kennedy
Thank you David Crisafulli MP for standing for responsible gun ownership!

Ross Cali
Hold the line, we already have tough gun laws.

Neville Pearce
I support the gun buyback from the terrorists and criminals. The problem is not with the law-abiding citizens.

George James Walton
Let's hope so for the sake of our country.

Tim Dwyer
This can't be compared to Port Arthur. In those days you just went and bought whatever you liked. Now you apply for a licence

and then you apply for a permit to buy a particular gun. It must be kept in an approved gun safe and the police do call around and check. The current system is just fine BUT non citizens should not be able to get a gun.

Melinda Taylor
No one's going after farmers' guns, or hunters, or sport shooters.

Frank Castle
Good. Maybe improve communication between law-enforcement agencies and actually do something about people on "watch lists".

E-RIDERS FACING EVER GREATER SCRUTINY

Geoff Field
A friend of mine who's a nurse in Brisbane told me the amount of time and resources treating victims of e-scooter crashes is staggering. I'm not surprised.

Michele Xuereb
I've seen a lot of reckless adults on them too.

Gav Hardy
This isn't an e-bike problem, it's a parenting problem.

Bike Shop & Hire - Port Douglas
We have laws in place right now that are simply not enforced. Changing laws will have little effect until law enforcement starts enforcing them.

WHO IS THE LATEST DEVELOPER IN PORT?

Luke Norris
Would like to see a new version of what originally was.

Naomi Taylor
Seymour group have done several projects in port Douglas and



From the Holster



Shaun Hollis brings you a lighter look at local news.

completed them. If anyone will do it, they will.

Corey Seaton
I won't believe it until the houses are actually built and lived in; until then it's just another gunna-do.

Michelle 'Midge' Simone
Ask them WHEN development is going to actually start and how long is the full build expected to last? The site has been neglected for far too long.

DOUGLAS HEPTATHLETE CHAMPION OF STATE

Sara Harris
She unstoppable.

Kathleen Lester
Congratulations! What an amazing achievement.

Robyn Perry
Congratulations Unity. Here's to an awesome 2026. Go for gold.

Amanda Scanlan
Woohoo! Go Unity!!

Rick Weimar
Coach Greg Hamilton and Unity are a great combination. Good luck climbing the rankings Unity.

Kathleen Smith
You go girl!!!
Congratulations.

WHIRLWIND CAMPAIGN FOR TONES AND I GIG

Elizabeth Ryan
Yes!!! Rex steal Park would be a great venue!!

Lux Living Decor Scentsy
I'll go if she comes here.

Tish Maree Devene
Go check out El Arish pub, they have done a fantastic job there.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Send your letters and comments to editor@newsport.com.au or post comments on our Facebook and Instagram pages.

REAL ESTATE

PROPERTY SHOP Monica Stievano



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SOCIALS

The Douglas Shire Council Australia Day Awards in Port Douglas, a pool party in Mossman, and other cafes and pubs around the Shire, are some of the places the Newsport photographers have visited this month. Pictures: Byron Filmer, Shaun Hollis



Kostya, 2, and Nichole Brown at the Australia Day Awards.



Nichole Moore at the Australia Day Awards.



Nadia Sinkovich, Cheyne Sellwood and Kianna Lafferty at the Australia Day Awards.



Coffee van workers John De Giusti and Patricia Bidart.



Segway tour operator Anthony Wells with Otilie, 8, at the Mossman Pool Australia Day Party.



Santino, 8, Ben, 8, Monty, 11, and Jacoby, 10, at the Mossman Pool Australia Day Party.

WHAT'S ON

JAN 29 TRIVIA NIGHT
Date: Thursday January 29
Time: 6.30pm-8pm
Location: 3Sixteen Bar & Bistro @ Ramada Resort, Port Douglas

JAN 29 Trivia with Supa Sal and Wevs
Date: Thursday January 29
Time: 7pm-8.30pm
Location: Club Mossman

JAN 30 BINGO NIGHT with KSTAR
Date: Friday January 30
Time: 6.30pm-8pm
Location: 3Sixteen Bar & Bistro @ Ramada Resort, Port Douglas

JAN 30 Free TauChi class
Date: Friday January 30
Time: 5pm-6pm
Location: Four Mile Beach Park

JAN 30 Rockin' Rick Karaoke
Date: Friday January 30
Time: 7.30pm-10.30pm
Location: Club Mossman

JAN 31 Paranormal Romance Author Interview
Date: Saturday January 31
Time: 10am-11am
Location: Mossman Library

FEB 2 Wet Season Indoor Golf League - Round 8
Date: Monday February 2
Time: 10am-6pm
Location: Daddyshack Indoor Golf, Grant St, Port Douglas

FEB 3 Icaro
Date: Tuesday February 3
Time: 5.30pm-8.30pm
Location: Ellis Beach Bar and Grill

FEB 5 Bingo with K-Star
Date: Thursday February 5
Time: 7pm-8.30pm
Location: Club Mossman

FEB 6 Rob Longstaff
Date: Friday February 6
Time: 7.30pm-10.30pm
Location: Club Mossman

FEB 7 Working Bee at Mossman Botanic Garden
Date: Saturday February 7
Time: 8am-10am
Location: Garden of Woven Memories at MbG

FEB 12 Trivia with Supa Sal and Wevs
Date: Thursday February 12
Time: 7pm-8.30pm
Location: Club Mossman

FEB 13 Yahdoh
Date: Friday February 13
Time: 7.30pm-10.30pm
Location: Club Mossman

FEB 16 Thomas Lowth
Date: Monday February 16
Time: 5.30pm-8.30pm
Location: Ellis Beach Bar and Grill

FEB 19 Bingo with K-Star
Date: Thursday February 19
Time: 7pm-8.30pm
Location: Club Mossman

FEB 20 Brandon Walker
Date: Friday February 20
Time: 7.30pm-10.30pm
Location: Club Mossman

FEB 21 The Amity Affliction - Cairns Tour + In Hearts Wake + Redhook + Headwreck
Date: Saturday February 21
Time: 7pm
Location: Ellis Beach Bar and Grill

FEB 22 Dreamin' Of Nashville - Country Show!
Date: Sunday February 22
Time: 7pm
Location: Ellis Beach Bar & Grill

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SPORTS DIGEST

Sights set on national championships

From Page 12

Coach Greg Hamilton: "We'd rather she nail it from the start but she composed herself really well and kept the score up there."

Unity's global ranking has recently moved from the mid 700s to 398, with the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics now a real possibility.

"If she can break the top 30 or 40 she could be in the position to compete in the Olympics," Ham-

ilton said. "There are high-status competitions all across the world that will increase her world ranking."

"If she can continue to improve she will be eligible."

Beitzel's focus is now on the Senior Women's Nationals in April in Sydney.

Last year she placed seventh, but her performance at the recent state series would have put her

fourth or fifth. She is training five days a week honing skills across the seven disciplines.

In the lead-up to Nationals she also hopes to compete in individual events to further improve, including at the Queensland State Athletics Championships in March.

Hamilton said it was importance to support athletes from our area given the hardships they often faced to compete.



Heptathlete Unity Beitzel

BRIEFS

CRICKET
Douglas Shire junior cricketer Kai Wall has been having one of the experiences of his young life across the past few weeks playing for the Japanese team at the Under-19 World Cup in Namibia and Zimbabwe.

Wall, who plays for Barron River in the Cricket Far North Third Grade competition, opened the bowling in several matches for the Japan Under-19s, taking two wickets against West Indies in one of the lead-up matches. Japan finished 13th in the 16-team competition, including a drubbing of Tanzania in the final match.

The young quick would have been well primed for the global event after taking three wickets against the Muddies Thirds in the last game before he jetted out.

In the Cricket Far North competition this week, the Muddies Thirds are set to face Mareeba in Mareeba this Saturday from 1pm, while the Fourths are up against Atherton at home in Port Douglas from 12.30pm.



Daddyshack Indoor Golf Centre's Mic Walsh says the Wet Season Indoor Ambrose competition is hotting up, with just a few weeks left until the finals. Competitors recently played the back nine holes of Brookwater golf course, the winners being Doug and Jamie on a countback from league leaders Tim and Peter, with both finishing on 24 points. Joe and Matt came in third on 23 points. Picture: Shaun Hollis

Sails set for fresh waters

From Page 12

And the club has some big plans going forward, with more school and youth groups set to use the centre, and high hopes of attracting some bigger sailing races to Port Douglas, such as the SailGP.

An international race, the SailGP recently took place in Fremantle, with Great Britain winning the prestigious title.

"Four Mile Beach, there's not a better backdrop, is there?" Bretto says.

"And then that'll attract the big kahunas and the big dollars."

Bretto says the Government and Douglas Shire Council have helped the club expand across the past year since he became president, with 58 members now on the books. And there are now sponsorship packages available for businesses keen to get on board.

The club's annual general meeting is this Monday night (February 2). For further details, search Douglas Sailing Club on Facebook.

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SETTING SAIL FOR THE NEW SEASON



Douglas Sailing Club's Vanessa Carey and Brett Wright.
Picture: Shaun Hollis

Shaun Hollis

The Douglas Sailing Club is back in 2026 with a bigger and better events program and some huge future plans.

The community club, which operates about halfway along Four Mile Beach, will double its number of meets to two per month and the clubrooms are getting a revamp with the help of a \$65,000 State Government grant.

"We're going to twice monthly, or fortnightly, so that's the first Saturday of every month and the last Sunday of every month," club president Brett "Bretto" Wright says.

"That way if you can't make it to one of them you've only got to wait two weeks and you can go down and hang out and have some fun (and) meet some other members."

The meets will be less focused on come-and-try days and more on just sailing boats this year, Bretto says.

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Heptathlete crowned the state champ

Byron Filmer

Douglas Shire's Unity Beitzel is officially the best female heptathlete in the state.

Beitzel returned a great result this month at the Queensland Shield Series Combined Events Championship, claiming third place overall, but finishing as the number one Queensland competitor, making her the 2026 state champion heptathlete.

She secured personal-best records in some of the seven events, with her ranking putting her in the top 400 worldwide and bringing her one step closer to her Olympic ambitions.

The event was held on January 10 and 11, with Beitzel scoring 5116 points, just under her overall PB of 5127 achieved in Townsville in September.

She told Newsport that her highlight of this competition was achieving PBs in hurdles and the 800m, where she achieved her goal of breaking the 2min 20sec mark.

While she had an overall good result, she said it was not excellent, with some struggles at the beginning of the field events.

"Things weren't going too great," she said.

"But I pulled out of the hole and did things when I needed it to count."

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