Work on $41 million Helium Plant Begins

The Northern Territory Government today welcomed the start of construction of the new $41 million helium plant at Wickham Point.

Infrastructure Minister Delia Lawrie, said the plant will create jobs and boost the economy, and show more companies that the Territory has the capacity for major gas development.

“This is great news for Territorians, it means more jobs and increased investment in our local economy,” she said.

“The Henderson Government is working to make the Territory a major gas hub and the new BOC plant will make the Territory the leader in helium production in the nation.

“Chief Minister Paul Henderson is currently on his way to meet Inpex’s joint venture and developer partner Total in Paris in an effort to secure a $12 billion gas proposal.

“Darwin will have the only helium plant in the southern hemisphere and produce 150 million cubic feet of helium each year - 3 per cent of the world’s supply.

“The plant will be located adjacent to the ConocoPhillips site and is another example to major gas players across the world that we’re open for business and have capacity for new development.

“Gas and resources are the biggest contributors to our economy, and the Territory Government is working to attract more business.

“The new plant underwent a thorough environmental assessment process and shows that gas development and protecting our pristine harbour can go together.”

The new plant is aiming to commence production in July 2009 and will employ 15 – 20 people during construction and 10 people once it becomes operational.

Helium is currently imported into Australia and the Darwin plant will meet the nation’s helium needs. Helium has a range of uses including MRI medical scanning, optical fibre production, breathing mixtures for diving and more.

“The Henderson Government is working to attract more gas industry investment including the $12 billion Inpex development,” Ms Lawrie said.

“Major developments in the gas industry will build on our strong economy and create more benefits and opportunities for Territory families.”

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