

WORK ON HELIUM PLANT BEGINS



Infrastructure Minister Delia Lawrie (C) with Global Helium's Steve Penn (L) and BOC Managing Director South Pacific Colin Isaac launches the helium project.

CONSTRUCTION of the southern hemisphere's first helium plant began this week at Wickham Point.

The \$41 million BOC facility will take an inert by-product of the LNG plant to produce helium.

The plant will produce 150 million cubic feet of helium each year, about 3 per cent of the world's supply.

"The new plant underwent a thorough environmental assessment process and shows that gas development and protecting our pristine harbour can go together," said Infrastructure Minister Delia Lawrie at the project launch.

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.

Common user area opens

A NEW multi-user, multi-purpose assembly yard and lay down area has opened for business at East Arm to help ensure that Darwin continues to benefit from the growing Timor Sea oil and gas industry, mining and export industries.

The Darwin Common User Area will provide access to a wide range of industries and companies and can be utilised for a range of activities including –

engineering, fabrication and assembly of a range of buildings, equipment and modules for the resource sector, oil and gas support and services, mining support and services, and transport and logistics.

The Common User Area is the result of cooperative research between the Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development (DBERD), the Land Development Corporation, the Manufacturers Council of the Chamber of Commerce NT, Darwin Port Corporation and Industry.

NT business confidence up

NORTHERN TERRITORY small businesses are again the most confident in Australia according to the latest Sensis® Business Index released today.

More than 5800 new jobs have been created in the Territory in the last year and we have the fastest growing economy and the highest retail spending growth in the country.

Retail figures this week show that the Territory also has the strongest consumer confidence in the nation, leading in retail spending growth with an increase of 10.3% compared to 7.2% for Australia.

Barkly phosphate to be mined

BARKLY PHOSPHATE junior Minemakers has secured full ownership of Australia's largest known rock phosphate deposit.

The Wonarah deposit contains an estimated 2 billion tonnes of rock phosphate ore 230km east of Three Ways on the Barkly Tableland.

Rock phosphate, a fertiliser, sells for about \$400 per tonne at an ore grade of about 32 per cent, making the Wonarah deposit potentially worth billions.

Alice Springs economy profiled

THE FIRST economic report about Alice Springs has revealed business confidence in the town is high. The Alice Springs Economic Profile is the result of a survey conducted in November 2007 to obtain information on Alice Springs' current economic position and provide information to investors about key existing and future projects in the region.

The survey results indicated -

- 79% of businesses were confident of business prospects over the next 12 months;
- 74% expect an increase in value of sales;
- 80% of businesses source goods and services from Alice Springs;
- 97% of the customer base is in Alice Springs.