



EMPIRE ENERGY WORKERS PREPARE TO DRILL AT BEETALOO BASIN

EMPIRE EXCITED ABOUT OUR GAS-FIRED FUTURE

Australian oil and gas holder Empire Energy believes the Beetaloo Basin will transform the Northern Territory economy.

Chief executive Alex Underwood says shale gas and the associated oil and condensates have the potential to:

- Create hundreds of jobs directly and thousands more indirectly
- Provide the NT Government with enough revenue to pay off its debt
- Boost regional economies
- Provide work, training and business opportunities for Indigenous people
- Serve as a lower-emissions alternative to coal until renewable energy becomes more effective, more efficient and less expensive.

And to prove that this is not all wishful thinking, Mr Underwood points to the Marcellus shale gas field in Pennsylvania, which in 30 years has created three million

jobs – jobs paying on average twice as much as similar non-resources jobs – and made the United States a net exporter of fuel after being the world’s biggest importer.

Average American household power bills have fallen by \$US1100 a year and CO2 emissions have dropped.

“I believe that it wasn’t lower taxes that helped America recover from the global financial crisis but shale gas,” Mr Underwood says.

Just four trillion cubic feet of gas is enough to keep a processing train operating for 20 years.

Beetaloo has an estimated 42tcf and 700 million barrels of oil and condensates, which would justify new trains at the INPEX plant at Bladin Point and the Santos-owned Darwin LNG plant at Wickham Point.

Mr Underwood says: “If we can get our energy prices down we can rebuild our economy and create thousands of jobs.”

The Territory and Federal governments are strongly supportive

of Beetaloo being developed.

Canberra has put up \$220 million to help production start as soon as possible.

“The Government has shown considerable foresight,” says Mr Underwood.

Chief Minister Michael Gunner is lobbying for the gas to be piped north to Darwin – rather than to the east coast – where it could be processed at the two LNG plants and some of it used to power a manufacturing industry at East Arm.

“Our gas should be used for more than just export,” says Mr Underwood. “It should be used to develop a manufacturing centre.”

He says the liquid-rich gases around the edge of Beetaloo would be good for major developments, such as a petro-chemical plant and fertiliser processing hub.

Deputy Chief Minister Nicole Manison toured the Empire Energy drill site in early June.

SEEING EMPIRE’S WORK FIRST HAND, **THEY DEMONSTRATED THEIR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES, SAFETY AND WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS.**

DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER NICOLE MANISON RECEIVES A HANDFUL OF SOIL FROM A FRACKED WELL FROM ENGINEER DANIEL KALININ. PHOTOS: STEVE HOARE



“It was great to see the site and the hard work going on to progress onshore gas in the Territory,” she says.

“Seeing Empire’s work first hand, they demonstrated their commitment to sustainable environmental practices, safety and working with Traditional Owners.

“We look forward to hearing about the results of this project and it’s very good to see they have secured more capital and interest to continue their work.”

Empire Energy is horizontal fracturing at Carpentaria 1, 70 kilometres west of the McArthur River Mine, which will be followed by a horizontal well to test potential production.

If the gas flow rates are as good as expected, planning to go into commercial development will begin. And that means production could start within three years.

A Territory Government inquiry, which took evidence from many world-class scientists and engineers, found that fracking is safe if well managed.

“Our industry is very tightly regulated,” says Mr Underwood.

“I understand people’s concerns about fracking, which is a horrible word in itself. I understand that people want to protect the environment and their aquifers.

“But the fracturing occurs at 1000 metres below the aquifer, so there’s a deep barrier of impermeable rock.”

The aquifer is also protected by concrete casing around the well.

“And water monitoring equipment will tell us if anything is wrong.”

Empire has bought Pangaea’s tenements and now holds the largest acreage of any explorer at Beetaloo.

Mr Underwood describes Beetaloo and its potential economic and social benefits as “special on a global scale”.

But it’s not just the big picture of manufacturing and debt reduction.

The Territory is also reaping rewards in many small but appreciated ways from shale oil and gas.

Small regional contractors such as Tim Pratt’s Borroloola-based KD Machinery have carried out civil works at the Empire drill site.

Energy Club NT head Sonia Harvey has been recruited as the company’s community and government engagement chief in the Territory.

And the drill teams are packing out the Heartbreak Hotel at Cape Crawford.

Mr Underwood says: “They do a mean steak and serve a good cold beer. Perfect.”

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