



Opening of the BOC Darwin Helium Plant

03 March 2010

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Chief Minister, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today to officially open the BOC helium production facility - a first for Australia and a first in the southern hemisphere.

As Minister for Resources and Energy I have had the pleasure of seeing first-hand the progress of industrial development, underpinned by the Darwin LNG plant and access to natural gas, here at Wickham Point in Darwin.

I might also say I am a regular visitor to Darwin in my other capacity as Minister for Tourism.

Tourism has long been a key part of the Northern Territory's economy, but projects such as this provide a new industrial base that is so important for providing sustainable job and business opportunities for Territorians in the long-term.

BOC is one of Australia's top 100 corporations and it is a very important part of our business community.

It is also a vital supplier of essential gases to Australian industry, hospitals and households.

This \$50 million investment by BOC in Darwin represents a welcome long-term commitment to the Northern Territory.

Darwin is becoming a hub for the processing of offshore gas resources in the Timor Sea and Browse Basin and I hope we see further opportunities for BOC to invest over time.

Gas is not only a source of energy for industry, it is the building block for many chemical processes and manufacturing opportunities.

Darwin - a gateway to Asia-Pacific markets and a new gas hub for northern Australia - is perfectly situated to become a major regional industrial centre.

That is why I am supportive of this innovative project.

It is a great example of minimising waste and using resources more efficiently - and above all, it is an economic opportunity.

Sources of helium are relatively rare and this project will use waste trace gases from the Darwin LNG plant to extract helium for both domestic and export markets.

It will replace about 30 per cent of Australia's imports - from the USA and the Middle East - and earn valuable export dollars for Australia as well.

Until today, I knew very little about the importance of helium in industrial and medical applications.

But I now know Australia is very fortunate to have secured this new industry and I am sure it will lead to further opportunities in the future.

With 165 trillion cubic feet of identified Australian gas reserves available for energy and as chemical feedstock, gas-based industries will be central to both the national and NT economy for many decades.

This is why it's so pleasing to see progress on projects such as the Inpex LNG plant, which will further increase Darwin's LNG export capacity and potentially, its industrial opportunities.

I congratulate BOC on this ambitious project and wish you every success for the future.

Thank you.