



## Exmouth – home of the latest resource boom

The West Australian Mining, Oil and Gas Industries are moving to Exmouth, not with mining equipment and gas plants, but as a home for their employees. Exmouth is the new resource town of the Pilbara. It is being mined for its human resources who want to live and play in this World Heritage listed location with its abundant natural attractions and comparatively milder climate.

Exmouth started life as a prawn fishery (still is) followed by the construction of the Harlod E Holt naval communication base. Of major importance to both U.S. and Australian defence forces this base is now under the control of the Australian Defence Force.

The Exmouth Shire Council and the Chamber of Commerce pushed the wonders of Ningaloo Reef and Cape Range National Park and successfully ignited tourism as a serious industry which has been enhanced with the recent development of the 4 star Novotel Ningaloo Resort and its gold plate restaurant, and the Exmouth Marina Canal development.

Formerly serviced by one airline, Skywest, Qantas earlier this year commenced a Perth-Exmouth service three times a week and has just announced an increase in this service to four times per week as a result of demand. Similarly, Bristow Helicopters was the only company servicing oil and gas off the Exmouth coast but have now been joined by CHC Helicopters.



Of the mining and oil and gas companies, Rio Tinto is having the largest impact on Exmouth. Rio Tinto will start flying two Focker 100's each week from Exmouth to Paraburdoo airport at the end of November 2011. They have already held an information evening in Exmouth promoting their initiative to an enthusiastic standing room only audience of 200 people. Other mining companies such as Sino Iron and Northern Star Resources (Paulsens Gold Mine) are also drawing people from Exmouth on both a fly-in fly-out and drive-in drive-out basis. A number of Exmouth residents have been picked up by oil and gas companies to work on the rigs and floating production, storage and offloadings (FPSOs) just 20 – 30 kilometers offshore from North West Cape.

Exmouth Limestone has commenced the first stage of its barge load out facility and full blown quarrying is due to commence in November 2011. This will supply rock to Gorgon, Wheatstone and for undersea oil and gas pipeline ballast. It is expected that this will grow further into a marine supply base subject to approval for extensions to their 650m causeway.

MG Kailis, the initiators of Exmouth's prawn fishery, have changed their fish processing from onshore to on-vessel and have cleared the way to turning their 28 hectare site at Learmonth to a low impact marine supply base for oil and gas. The site will be used for warehousing and lay down for materials used on FPSOs and

in drilling operations offshore, and will host an expansion of their already existing marine engineering business. Kailis have entered into a joint venture with Ezion, an Oil and Gas infrastructure company, and will utilise a system of barges both fixed and moving to transfer equipment and supplies from land to large supply vessels 1.8 kilometers



offshore. Work on this proposal is now well advanced and they plan to commence operations mid 2012. These latter activities are well south of town and apart from creating a diverse range of additional employment opportunities and significantly boosting the local economy they will have little or no impact on the town amenity other than to increase the town's capacity to grow its community infrastructure.

In other words the town is set to grow strongly, but in a way which will still allow residents and tourists alike to enjoy the natural beauties of the World Heritage listing that it so richly deserves.

This eclectic mix of conservation, resource industry support and tourism is not replicated anywhere else in Australia. The Exmouth Chamber of Commerce have been working to achieve this mix for several years and Chamber President, Jon Warren, says "it is very exciting to see all this work come to fruition".

You can expect to see a lot more news on employment growth and investment in this town in the near future. Already Rio Tinto employees are seeking to move from the East Pilbara mine sites to Exmouth when their skills align with work opportunities on the Exmouth roster.