

## Engineering Week

Engineering Week 7

# Gas platform takes shape in WA workshop

**LOUISE BURKE**

Most city dwellers rely on utilities to arrive on demand at the flick of a switch.

We know our electricity and gas is coming from somewhere, have a vague notion of big chunks of steel sitting off the coast up north, thousands of kilometres of pipelines and outlying industrial areas.

But rarely does the average person get to see this infrastructure up close and get an appreciation of the amount of work and resources that go into creating the structures behind our energy supply.

"You know some people would pay a lot of money to see all of this," Ausclad business development manager Mark Sawyer said as we surveyed the offshore gas platform being

constructed at the Australian Marine Complex's main fabrication hall in Henderson, 23km south of Perth.

And he's probably right, it's quite rare now for something like this to be built in Australia when most companies import their major hardware from overseas because of cheaper labour costs.

However, Mr Sawyer said Ausclad was still able to compete economically and the notion of having something Australian made was still attractive.

The unmanned wellhead being built is for Eni's Blacktip natural gas project in the southern Bonaparte Basin in the Timor Sea and construction has been under way since the start of the year.

The Blacktip platform will be shipped directly to the field for installation later this year.

Gas will then go from the



**Big job:** Mark Sawyer with the Blacktip gas production platform being built at Henderson. Picture: John Mokrzycki

platform, 100km west of the Northern Territory coast, via a pipeline to an onshore processing facility near Darwin. From next year, the Blacktip project will supply gas to the Power and Water Corporation in the Northern Territory for at least 25 years.

The topside platform, jacket structure and piles weigh about 3000 tonnes.

Some 60 people are working on different elements of the construction.

The different parts required for

the platform, which consists largely of big pipes, start their life in Ausclad's fabrication facilities up the road in Kwinana, where the company has its main industrial grounds and about 600 workers bringing it all to life.

More than 30,000 tonnes of piping and structural products are fabricated by Ausclad for the resources industry each year.

The facilities themselves are gigantic and continuously expanding, according to Mr Sawyer, who points out that a

20-person team is required just to manage recruitment. There were 49 apprentices throughout the organisation, and more on the way — a program management had persisted on maintaining because it ensured a high standard of training and gave something back to the labour force that sustained the company, Mr Sawyer said. Finishing touches are going on to a subsea manifold in one of the warehouses and it will soon be trucked via an oversize route to the wharf.

Ravensthorpe Nickel Project



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