

ICN Gateway the short path to Ichthys

Natural gases are soon to flow through the longest subsea pipeline in the southern hemisphere: 889km from the Ichthys gas field to Darwin. The gas will then be processed at INPEX's historic Ichthys LNG plant. The local knowledge of one of Darwin's oldest architectural firms was critical in its design. ICN Gateway is the surest path available for other local firms to get involved in LNG projects in the Top End.



Ichthys onshore plant layout

The US \$34 billion Ichthys LNG Project will boost the Northern Territory economy by an average of almost 18% each year, during its construction and operation. It is the largest oil and gas development in the Northern Territory, and one of the biggest LNG projects globally. Its being developed by INPEX, a Japanese oil and gas company that has been part of the Australian industry since 1986 in partnership with French supermajor, Total.

As with other large resource and infrastructure projects, the Project has agreed with the Northern Territory Government and Australian Government on a Local Industry Participation plan.

The aims are for Australian industry to participate in the Project and to develop long-term relationships that support innovation, for more local people to gain the skills to work in the oil and gas industry and for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain employment and business opportunities.

To meet these aims, INPEX has contracted ICN to identify local suppliers, primarily using ICN Gateway. Any suppliers and contractors interested in opportunities with the Project are directed to ICN Gateway, rather than engaging initially with INPEX.

"The Project will run for 40 years, with a range of industrial and professional resources needed", says ICN Consultant David Ewing. "We have to have an efficient, transparent way of telling potential suppliers what the Ichthys LNG Project needs. That's what ICN is delivering."

ICN Gateway is the most effective way for the Project to let suppliers know of upcoming opportunities. On it, the Project can post request-for-tender information and other details for existing needs, while contractors can lodge expressions of interest for future needs in their areas of expertise.

One of the first firms to register on ICN Gateway was Peddle Thorp WKM. Peddle Thorp WKM is actually the first commercial architectural practice in Darwin, starting life in 1968 as Wilkins, Klemm and Morrison before becoming a foundation member of Peddle Thorp International.

Peddle Thorp WKM and its Director, Bruce Baldey had an eye on the "off-plant buildings", those that are an essential part of the enterprise, but were not the actual processing plant. These support buildings include warehouses, laboratories, training centres, administrative centres, contractors' offices and the main control building.

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As anyone who lives in Darwin knows, especially anyone who lived through Cyclone Tracy in 1974, the city can get more than a little windy. Peddle Thorp WKM cut their teeth by helping to rebuild Darwin after Tracy, and the firm has kept developing its knowledge of high-wind design and building principles.

ICN Consultant David Ewing knew Peddle Thorp WKM and its director Bruce Baldey well. He introduced them to the Project and short-listed them for the tender for the off-plant buildings, along with a number of national architectural firms.

“Knowledge of post-disaster and disaster-resistant infrastructure is essential for any project based in Australia’s north”, agrees Mr Baldey. “This was some of the local knowledge that I could bring to their planning.”

Peddle Thorp WKM also had experience in designing similar buildings for the Department of Defence, which set extremely rigorous standards for its buildings to withstand whatever the weather could throw at them.

INPEX recognised the value of this local knowledge, on top of demonstrated capability, and awarded Peddle Thorp WKM the contract to design the off-plant buildings. That was in competition against some very fine national firms. The Project reached its final investment decision in January 2012 and construction is due to commence in mid April 2012.

Part of the challenge for INPEX was that Ichthys is the first gas plant it has designed. Though it has more than 70 projects in 26 countries, this is the first time it has had to build the plant and its associated infrastructure from scratch.

For Peddle Thorp WKM, this gave the freedom to conduct a lot more research on the building briefs than they normally would, before moving onto the technical specifications and designs.

“Designing buildings for high-wind conditions is always a challenge”, says Mr Baldey. “But for Ichthys, our firm was able to contribute to the scope of works as well, providing technical services for the preliminary designs, and also advice to the Project’s Yokohama and Perth engineering teams.”

The Peddle Thorp WKM buildings are designed to last for the full 40 years of Ichthys operations.

“ICN Gateway is working well for a host of Australia’s major projects in oil and gas, rail and other key infrastructure”, says David Ewing. “It’s now recognised as the easiest and most effective way for suppliers and contracts to stay on top of the opportunities, and for project managers to tap into those suppliers.”

ICN is Australia and New Zealand’s innovative industry matchmaker. If you’re a major project developer, ICN can put you in contact with the best suppliers. If you’re a supplier we will connect you with the best projects for your business. With ICN’s 28 years’ experience, more than 100 technical experts and ICN Gateway on your side, you’ll never miss an opportunity to make the right connection.

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