

SE News
HD Thiess scores contract for Roper iron project
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THE Northern Territory's largest new miner in almost two decades has awarded a \$135 million contract to Leighton subsidiary Thiess to lead mining operations at the Roper Bar iron ore project.

Western Desert Resources said the three-year contract which starts on Monday would see iron ore exported to China from the Bing Bong loading facility.

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WDR managing director Norm Gardner said Thiess had been working with WDR for some time, providing on-the-ground mobilisation and project support since last November. "We are delighted to award our mining services contract to a Tier 1 contractor with an experienced management team and proven track record in order to manage and deliver our mining, load, haul and dump operations over the next three years," he said.

Thiess said the contract marked a return to iron ore mining for the company. Thiess said central to the relationship between it and WDR was a joint vision to provide opportunities to indigenous Australians.

"We have a shared strategy with WDR to offer indigenous Australians training and employment opportunities and this includes a partnership with Rusca Bros Mining, which has a well-established connection with local communities," Michael Wright, Thiess' executive general manager of Australian Mining, said.

WDR marked its entry into the ranks of Australia's iron ore producers in December when it trucked its first shipment of iron ore from the Roper Bar project ready for delivery to China.

Its board boasts some corporate heavy hitters.

WDR director, Gold Coast lawyer and former Billabong director Scott Perrin – who has joked his desire to find an excuse to spend more time fishing in the Territory led to the mine's rapid development – was crucial in bringing many of the high net-worth individuals to the table.

He introduced pubs billionaire Bruce Mathieson to the company. The pair previously held an 18 per cent stake in the company through investment vehicle Permat but Mr Mathieson is so confident of the company's future he recently joined the board and is now WDR's biggest shareholder.

Adelaide-based Rick Allert, former chairman of Coles Myer, chairs the company. Reserve Bank board member and former Woolworths chief executive Roger Corbett is also an investor.

Nathan Blair, manager of Ord Minnett Gold Coast, said: "Norm Gardner and his team are very focused on ensuring their entire logistics chain runs smoothly and efficiently and securing Thiess to lead the mining operations is another example of this." The Roper Bar iron ore project is located 600km south-east of Darwin. It's expected to produce up to three million tonnes of high grade iron ore per year for eight to 12 years but WDR believes up to two billion tonnes of iron ore could be in the province.

Shares in WDR closed up 1¢ or 1.41 per cent to close at 72¢. Shares in Leighton shed 18¢ to close at \$16.20.

CO wesde : Western Desert Resources Limited

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