



The fastest LNG project in the world' . . . Woodside Petroleum CEO Don Voelte at the WA plant site.

Photo Erin Jonasson

A quick trip to Pluto

Report Andrew Burrell

The Pilbara sun was scorching and the flies unbearable but Woodside Petroleum chief executive Don Voelte could not have been happier as he oversaw the official start of construction of the company's \$12 billion Pluto liquefied natural gas plant.

At a ceremony on Friday to mark the opening of the project, to which the federal government gave the green light last month, Mr Voelte revelled in showing key customers and state officials around one of Australia's biggest resource developments.

West Australian Premier Alan Carpenter, senior bureaucrats and representatives of Pluto's Japanese customers, Tokyo Gas and Kansai Electric, attended the ceremony.

"This is the future; this is what the North-West Shelf was 20 years ago," Mr Voelte said, while standing on the Pluto site on Western Australia's Burrup Peninsula adjacent to Woodside's North-West Shelf project.

Mr Voelte praised the WA and federal governments for working with Woodside to ensure that construction could begin just two

KEY POINTS

Woodside has begun construction of a liquefied natural gas plant. The project needed 450 approvals. The company is working with the traditional owners of the area to preserve indigenous rock art.

years after the company discovered Pluto gas.

He said Woodside had required 450 separate approvals or agreements from governments to get to this point.

"Pluto is on schedule to be the fastest LNG project in the world from discovery of first gas and the start of construction," he said. "It is a very exciting time for Woodside.

"This project would not have been possible without the professionalism of the commonwealth and West Australian governments."

Mr Carpenter said the project was expected to inject \$28.6 billion into the state economy over its 30-year life.

He rejected recent industry criticism of his government's approvals process, pointing to Woodside's ability to work closely

with the Office of Development and Approvals Co-ordination to fast-track approvals.

Mr Voelte said Woodside was working with the traditional owners of the area to ensure that indigenous rock art, which is prevalent on the Burrup Peninsula, was preserved.

He said 150 rocks had been moved so far without any damage and a further 50 needed to be relocated.

He said preservation of the rock art was one of the most important aspects of the Pluto project.

"This is one report I send to the board of directors all the time," he said. "These rocks are the most valuable rocks in the world and we are the custodian of them."

It came at the end of a week in which Woodside announced that Taiwan's Chinese Petroleum Corp had signed as the second potential buyer of LNG worth up to \$45 billion from its mooted Browse Basin project.

It followed a similar deal signed in September with Petrochina.

Woodside shares climbed 72¢ to \$47.70 on Friday, compared with record highs of more than \$55 in October.