

Bass Strait, Long history, bright future DVD transcript

For 40 years, Bass Strait has provided the energy ordinary Australians rely on every day. Since 1969, almost 4 billion barrels of crude oil and over 7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas have been produced.

It began over a cup of tea when eminent geologist, Lewis G. Weeks, said to BHP, "I know where you will find oil". Those prophetic words led to the birth of the offshore oil and gas industry in Australia.

With no experience in oil exploration, BHP found itself in uncharted waters.

Esso was selected from over 20 other companies to become part of a 50-50 joint venture with BHP and to serve as the operator.

Esso wasted no time and began exploratory drilling with the drill ship Glomar III.

Good news came quickly.

Natural gas was discovered in the first well Barracouta 1.

Achieving such a feat in the first well, in a new region like this, defied all the odds. More success followed with the discovery of the Marlin field, the largest gas field in southeastern Australia.

But here the explorers on board the Glomar III found something else.....indications of oil - that were confirmed with the next discovery, Kingfish, Australia's biggest oil field, containing over 1 billion barrels.

The American geologist examining rock samples on board the Glomar III could not believe his eyes. "Take a good hard look at this." he said, "because as long as you live, you'll never see anything like it again".

Ongoing exploratory drilling programs brought success after success.

The focus turned onshore, to getting the oil and gas to market.

And between 1967 and 1986, fourteen offshore platforms were constructed at Barry Beach Marine Terminal.

The Barracouta and Marlin platforms were the first, and construction of the Longford and Long Island Point processing plants was already well under way.

Heralding a new era in energy security, the supply of Barracouta gas began to Melbourne consumers in 1969.

Two weeks later, the Longford Gas Processing and Crude Oil Stabilisation Plant was officially opened.

On October 8 1969 Esso and BHP celebrated the first oil production from Barracouta.

In 1970, the commissioning of the Long Island Point Fractionation Plant paved the way for crude and LPG exports and Altona Refinery was expanded to process Bass Strait oil.

New platforms continued to be built, transforming Australia from complete dependence on oil imports, to substantial self sufficiency.

Over the last 40 years, Bass Strait has underpinned the economic growth of the nation by producing 2/3 of our oil and 30% of our gas to date.

And by contributing \$200 billion to Australia's GDP, while creating 50,000 jobs in Victoria with 14,000 of them in Gippsland alone.

New seismic acquired in 2001 has led to a successful round of new drilling programs that continue today.

And the announcement of almost \$3 billion dollars of investment in the Kipper/Tuna and Turrum development projects in 2007 and 2008, will ensure that Bass Strait will continue to share its many riches for generations to come.

Today with an estimated 30 years of gas and more than 20 years of oil and gas still to be produced, Bass Strait's star shines brightly into the future.