

Thunderbird project far from stalled

There seems to have been some speculation Sheffield's Thunderbird project, midway between Broome and Derby, has stalled.

Representing the businesses of Broome, we felt it important to set the record straight.

The mineral sands project continues to make good progress as it works towards the start of construction.

In the information void over the holiday period, some have come to think Thunderbird has stalled.

Nothing is further from the truth. The Broome Chamber of Commerce and Industry board has met team members from Sheffield for an update on progress and the good news is the project is forging ahead in many areas.

The conditions required for a final financial investment decision by the Sheffield board and the start of construction are progressing very well, with \$US200 million of funding secured.

Binding sales agreements have been executed for project revenue for the first five years of production and the Environmental Protection Authority's approval of Thunderbird is expected in coming months.

Areas of Aboriginal heritage have been identified and zones of exclusion agreed by traditional owners. On the back of a 16-week Aboriginal

work-ready program, Sheffield has launched a group training program with trainees working towards a construction role on Thunderbird.

When things dry out after the rains, Kimberley-based contractors can continue with approved early works, paving the way for the start of full construction.

As reported, native title is subject to a decision of the full Federal Court, meaning in effect the matter will be reconsidered by the National Native Title Tribunal, with a result expected in the next few months. This project will have huge benefits for Broome, the West Kimberley and the State.

Sheffield has pledged 280 long-term jobs for 42 years, \$1 billion in regional salaries and local business, more than \$700 million to the State in royalties and taxes, and substantial opportunities for Aboriginal people and the broader community through jobs, training, business and royalties. Thunderbird is advanced and going through the normal, but rigorous, processes to get a mine up and running.

Let's hope Sheffield can reach agreement with respect to native title as soon as possible, and the whole community can then enjoy the benefits and opportunities of this project.

**Peter Taylor, president
Broome Chamber of
Commerce and Industry**