

# Woodside drilling raises hopes of huge gas find in NW Shelf

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Energy writer

WOODSIDE believes it will find significant new gas reserves in the North West Shelf following recent drilling activity.

The company is expected to go after targets estimated to contain up to 5 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of gas — up to 10 times recent pre-drill calculations.

If the drilling program meets new expectations it will force a rethink on the potential of the Carnarvon Basin as a gas province.

Woodside chief executive Don Voelte won't give figures, but the results of the Belicoso-1 well are understood to be startling. Woodside took the unusual step of providing a stock exchange announcement on Belicoso-1.

The well is northwest of ExxonMobil's Jansz discovery — Australia's biggest known gas reservoir, containing an estimated 20 trillion cubic feet — and to the northeast of BHP Billiton's Thebe find.

“Belicoso-1 did not encounter hydrocarbons. However, the well intersected reservoir thickness and quality better than anticipated and analysis is ongoing,” Woodside's statement said.

“The result reinforces the exploration potential of the area

and the company intends to fully explore the region,” it said.

Woodside said Belicoso was one of many prospects in the Cazadores area of the Greater Carnarvon Basin.

At a ceremony on Friday inaugurating construction of the \$12 billion Pluto LNG project in the Pilbara, Mr Voelte was very upbeat.

“We are pretty excited about

**‘The result reinforces the exploration potential of the area’**

**Don Voelte, Woodside CEO**

the area. We found more quality sand there and bigger thick sands there than we thought,” he said, while playing down suggestions the Belicoso target might have been as big as Jansz.

“There's possibly (of) another Jansz out there,” Mr Voelte said. “Right now we don't see it, but we are looking at smaller type opportunities.

“But the explorers have told me what Belicoso would have been, if there had been gas in it, and it was a little bit different to what we thought.

“It is all smiles on our part, so we want to go and look for more out there,” Mr Voelte said.

The pre-drill target for Belicoso was between 0.5 to 1.5 tcf, but results from the drill indicates that the reservoir could have been three to four times this, if it had contained gas.

Woodside said earlier this month the 100 per cent-owned Belicoso-1 well was targeting a discovery of as much as 1.5 trillion cubic feet of gas and had “multitrillion cubic feet” follow-up prospects in the Cazadores area.

Recent drilling by Apache in deeper water than its traditional targets has encountered bigger than predicted reservoirs.

Woodside's acreage further south could do the same.

Mr Voelte reiterated that Belicoso-1 was not critical for the expansion of the Pluto facilities and that the company was continuing to assess multiple options for obtaining gas for future Pluto trains, including exploration success in the Carnarvon basin, third party gas and gas from other areas.

“There's a lot of gas out there, (though) what we don't know is how much gas there is. I'm confident, very confident that we have enough gas, over time, with exploration, to fill this site up,” Mr Voelte said.