

Maui set to last a few more years

New techniques expand reserves

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Taranaki's veteran Maui gasfield has been given a new lease of life and its operators say it will last years longer than originally thought.

Thanks to new-age drilling techniques now being used by the field's operator, Shell Todd Oil Services, numerous pockets of "bypass" gas are being discovered, increasing the field's reserves.

The drilling is proving so successful the life of the field has already been extended by at least three years. And with more drilling to come, experts are confident the life can be extended by more than 10 years.

On Wednesday, the Maui drilling success was officially recognised, being named Energy

Project of the Year at the prestigious annual Energy Excellence Awards held in Auckland.

A jubilant STOS asset development manager Joanna Breare told the 650 guests at the black-tie event the success is all due to a "can do" attitude by staff involved.

"They believed we could undertake this drilling programme safely, on budget target, and with no harm to the environment," she said.

"That's exactly what has been done. Now we are busy getting another rig out to Maui to continue with more drilling - so watch this space."

So far seven wells have been drilled in the Maui revitalisation project, using a lightweight rig positioned on the Maui A and B production platforms. The second campaign will see up to another nine wells drilled.

STOS general manager Rob Jager said he was extremely proud of his team's achievement.

"The life of Maui has been extended - incredibly - via existing

wells using latest innovative technology and low impact drilling techniques.

"This gasfield has already served New Zealand for more than three decades and this award demonstrates our ongoing commitment to squeezing the last drop from the field."

When it was discovered in 1969, Maui was one of the biggest offshore gasfields in the world. At its peak in the 1990s it met 90 per cent of New Zealand's natural gas demand. Now in its twilight years it still meets about 20 per cent of demand.

An article will be published in tomorrow's features section outlining how the Maui drillers are achieving their success.

Maui moment: Shell Todd Oil Services staff celebrate winning the Energy Project of the Year title at the annual Energy Excellence Awards in Auckland.

Photo: ROB MAETZIG/FAIRFAX NZ



IN BRIEF

Iti's funds boosted

Jailed activist Tame Iti now has the funds to lodge a legal appeal after an art auction featuring works from New Zealand artists raised \$80,000. More than 100 people registered for the auction at The Bizdojo Gallery in Auckland on Tuesday, with up to 200 viewing works throughout the evening. Ninety works were sold, including a photo by Jos Wheeler of Iti outside the High Court in Auckland. The highest price, \$10,400, was paid by actor and art enthusiast Manu Bennett for a work by Shane Colton.

Worker injures eyes

A Fonterra worker from the Whareroa site was taken to Hawera Hospital about 4am yesterday morning after getting diluted caustic cleaning solution in his eyes. A Fonterra spokesperson said the employee was released from hospital and had gone home to rest. The fire service was called to attend. Both Fonterra and the Business, Innovation and Employment Ministry were investigating.

MPs tackle media