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## The extraordinary is becoming commonplace in WA

Article by James Pearson CCI, West Australian column

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Last week, I led the annual CCI tour of the North West. Two dozen businessmen and women, investors and analysts, from WA, the eastern states and overseas, joined us to visit gas plants, iron ore mines, building sites, ports, supply bases and businesses large and small in the Pilbara and the Kimberley.

We spoke with managers, technicians and workers in their high vis jackets.

We saw some of the most sophisticated remote control technology and some of the largest mobile machines on the planet.

We experienced the sense of inspiration and achievement that draws capital and people from around the country, and around the world, to WA.

And, in a remote bay north of Broome, we heard how a family business that started three generations ago in a house with bark walls on a mangrove beach, had grown to supply cultured pearls across the world.

Passion and determination. You have to have them in full measure, to match the vast landscape in which Australia's wealth is being created, day and night, in the north of WA.

Whether they are in iron ore or liquefied natural gas, salt or gold, diamonds or pearls, businesses in the region, and the firms that supply them, are overcoming obstacles in their quest to succeed.

The high cost of doing business in WA, the red tape that has to be untangled, the difficulty of attracting and retaining good staff – they're just some of the challenges that international corporations and local enterprises have to deal with.

Thank goodness the federal government recognizes the need to support training so that local people can be ready to take up jobs, and acknowledges the need to bring in more workers to get projects up and running in time to take advantage of demand.

Less welcome is Canberra's bitter cocktail of a mining tax, carbon tax and inflexible industrial relations laws. They're distracting investors and threatening increased costs for industries that need both hands on the wheel in order to compete in the international market.

Small local firms in the region, and in Perth, will be collateral damage if our national government doesn't set policy to encourage fully the growth of small, as well as large, businesses and ensure that the cost and supply of labour meets their needs.

At the State level, government is investing in much-needed social and economic infrastructure in key towns, which should make it easier for local firms to set up in the Pilbara and Kimberley and compete for work.

Reducing the tax and regulatory burden on business and industry, and ensuring the private sector can grow to its full potential, must be the WA government's next step to help WA businesses to become more competitive.

If we can make it easier to do business right across WA, the more certain we can be that the remarkable spirit and energy that is driving the North West will benefit the State and the Nation.