

Kalgoorlie Miner

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First gold at Tropicana expected late next year

THE new Tropicana mine – hailed as Australia's most significant discovery in a decade – remains on track to pour its first gold bar late next year, according to the world's third-largest producer AngloGold Ashanti.

The *Kalgoorlie Miner* flew to the isolated \$740 million Tropicana project – 330km east-north-east of Kalgoorlie-Boulder – on Thursday to view progress at the joint venture between AngloGold (70 per cent) and Independence Group (30 per cent).

Mining began in July, with Tropicana general manager Duncan Gibbs estimating about 50 per cent of overall construction, including a 5.8Mtpa plant, is complete.

“The construction timetable we've been communicating is the fourth quarter (of 2013) and we're pretty confident of hitting that target,” Mr Gibbs said.

“At the moment it's about executing the contract works.” Another milestone was achieved on Tuesday, with the first Fokker 100 jet touching down on the Tropicana tarmac.

The jet service will utilise four aircraft from Network Aviation's fleet, carrying up to 100 people and reducing flying time from Perth to just over an hour. Contractors Macmahon, which won the 10-year, \$900-million contract with AngloGold, has invested \$130 million in a new Caterpillar fleet. Five 793F trucks are already on site and WesTrac expect to deliver another 10 by June next year.

JARROD LUCAS



On site: Tropicana gold mine general manager Duncan Gibbs in front of a Caterpillar 793F truck, one of five currently on site. Photo: JARROD LUCAS