

Best in the **Business**

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Xstrata project metallurgist Simon Gregory.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

# Advance in production

THE State Government will fund a new Queensland project destined to transform the world's copper production.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Regional Development and Industry, Jan Jarratt announced a \$469,812 Smart State Innovation Project Fund (IFP) grant to Xstrata Technology to develop a more efficient way to produce copper.

"The company plans to develop a new polymer reagent known as XTEW to be introduced during the final "electrowinning" phase of production - when liquid copper is plated out as solid metal," she said.

"It helps to minimise the impurities trapped in the solid plated copper, producing a high purity saleable copper cathode."

Xstrata project metallurgist Simon Gregory said the grant would bring the company's work closer to commercialisation.

"The funding also allows us to build on our positive and growing relationship with James Cook University, which has been instrumental in the development of the reagent," he said.

"Two new PhD fellows will work to further enhance our understanding of the technology and we are targeting to have a marketable product within the next two to three years."

Ms Jarratt said the project had potential to deliver significant returns to the Queensland-based technology company and to the region.

"Xstrata Technology (a subsidiary of Xstrata plc) was formed upon Xstrata's acquisition of MIM in July 2003 and the Townsville group has become an important contributor to the local economy, earning over \$100 million in technology and equipment sales last year alone," she said.

"Upon successful commercialisation, we expect a high level of international interest in this new technology because of the combined quality and economic benefits and I look forward to lucrative overseas licensing agreements on the table."

Ms Jarrett last month announced State Government funding of more than \$2.3 million for four projects designed to enhance safety and efficiency in the industry.