



More opt for natural gas

Power price hikes drive record numbers to sign up

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Chief reporter

TASMANIAN electricity power hikes have worked in favour of the state's gas network pushing record new customer numbers to sign up last month.

Tasmanian Gas Network retail manager Russell Reid said yesterday that the blowout in electricity prices was one of the major drivers behind more than 250 new customers signing up for natural gas last month.

"That's the highest level of customer sign-up since we started five years ago," Mr Reid said.

Gas Network's commercial manager Simon Himson said cheaper power prices were also the reason given by many of his new commercial customers

for the changeover.

They include Cascade Brewery, one of the first major Tasmanian businesses identified as likely to take up natural gas by the state government when the rollout started more than a decade ago.

"They are a significant customer to come on board 10 years later," Mr Himson said.

The Cascade hook-up is one of a number of construction projects being undertaken across the state by the commercial arm of the network.

In Launceston, the 250-metre extension of the network from Charles Street to the refurbished Wellington Street Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery site and

the new Polytechnic Drysdale cooking school sites is under way.

Mr Himson said that the others on the go included a Mooreville Road connection at Burnie and another one in Hobart hooking up a number of restaurants and an accommodation house.

The company has tried unsuccessfully for more than 12 months to get the state government involved in funding further rollout of the infrastructure.

"It would be better to do a whole area in one hit and get all the crews lined up to do the job," he said.

"But you need a partnership with government to do that."