

KLC opposed to leasing to govt

THE KIMBERLEY Land Council (KLC) says it has serious reservations about the proposal to lease Aboriginal land to the State Government.

The lease arrangement is favoured in new terms of reference for development announced by State Development Minister Eric Ripper last week.

The terms of reference for the taskforce assigned to identify gas development hubs in the Kimberley propose the WA Government takes on the role of direct negotiations with companies instead of Aboriginal people.

KLC executive director Wayne Bergmann said that his people would fight to maintain their right to negotiate directly with companies over resource deals on their custodial lands, because that would create the best outcomes for indigenous people, the environment and cultural heritage. "Sustainable

long-term development for the people of the Kimberley is dependent on traditional owners being able to negotiate directly with companies," said Mr Bergmann.

"We are the ones who are best equipped to negotiate packages that produce long-term social and economic benefits whilst protecting cultural and environmental values.

"The Kimberley Land Council has already successfully negotiated numerous multi-million dollar packages.

"We do not want another Burrup Peninsula, where indigenous cultural sites have been destroyed.

"Gas developments can have lifetimes of over 50 years and a direct relationship between traditional owners and the companies involved is vital," concluded Mr Bergmann.