



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

*Australian Government Minister for the
Environment, Heritage and the Arts*
Peter Garrett

Acting Minister for State Development
John Kobelke

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BIG PICTURE STUDY OF AUSTRALIA'S KIMBERLEY

The Australian and Western Australian Governments will embark on a 'big picture' strategic assessment of the Kimberley to ensure that future development does not spoil the area's rich natural and cultural heritage.

The Australian Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett and WA's Acting Minister for State Development John Kobelke said the joint strategic assessment was a major leap forward in resolving the tension between development and conservation.

"For the first time, a federal and state government have agreed to undertake a strategic assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*," Mr Garrett said. "We are making sure we understand in advance the region we wish to protect, before choosing a site for future industrial development.

"The Kimberley has outstanding landscapes and wildlife, glorious coastal stretches, and invaluable Indigenous and historic heritage.

"It also contains massive reserves of oil and liquefied natural gas, of huge economic value to the nation and offering financial benefits to local Indigenous communities.

"Neither government wants piecemeal project development, with multiple ports and processing plants along the Kimberley coast.

"So rather than dealing with a growing number of development proposals in an *ad hoc* way and risking the slow destruction of our environment and heritage, we will proactively use federal environment law to ensure that any future development has a minimal impact on the things we love and value."

WA's Acting Minister for State Development John Kobelke said the first part of the assessment would identify a site for a single common-user LNG hub for the Browse Basin. The area to be studied stretches from south of Broome to Cape Londonderry on the Timor Sea.

"We are trying to minimise the impact of development on the natural and cultural environment by finding the most appropriate location for a common-user processing hub. We will also consider locations outside the West Kimberley region," Mr Kobelke said.

"The identification of a hub will be followed by a wider strategic assessment of the Kimberley, in consultation with conservation groups, industry and Indigenous landholders. This will give us a detailed picture of all the region's environmental assets including national and international heritage values.

"It will be the most comprehensive study of the region's values ever undertaken. We will know what we need to protect, which will in turn provide greater certainty to industry, governments and the community."

Mr Garrett said the historic agreement between the two governments marked a new phase in Federal/State cooperation.

“This is truly a milestone for development planning in Western Australia and Australia generally,” Mr Garrett said.

Media Contacts: (Minister Garrett) Margot Marshall: 02 6277 7640 or 0418 624 847
(Minister Kobelke) Trevor Robb: 08 9222 8788 or 0438 952 475