

Green groups happy about Kimberley announcement

Posted Tuesday, February 05, 2008

Green groups hope the Federal Government's plans for a development hub in Western Australia's Kimberley region will mean the Japanese firm Inpex's plan to build an L-N-G plant on the Maret Islands is ruled out.



Green groups hope plans for a development hub in the Kimberley region will mean a plan to build a L-N-G plant on the Maret Islands (pictured) is ruled out. (ABC TV)

The Government is searching for a site suitable to build the hub and for the first time Federal environment laws are being used to do a sweeping study of the entire Kimberley region.

The Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, says assessing the whole region is a bid to avoid having projects scattered throughout the area.

The conservation group World Wildlife Fund (WWF) says Mr Garrett's announcement marks a shift in national development planning.

WWF's Paul Gamblin says it is a big win for the environment.

"Instead of looking at individual developments you'll look at a whole range of development proposals and you'll look at how to reduce the overall impacts rather than just individual impacts," he said.

"So it is a significant step forward and a paradigm shift really in how Australia goes about looking at major developments, so it's a very important day.

Maria Mann from Environs Kimberley hopes the announcement marks the beginning of a strong working relationship between the Commonwealth and the West Australian Government on the issue.

"This promises to be a fantastic opportunity for the two governments to work together," she said

They've obviously got different powers, different jurisdictions and all hands need to be on deck for this one."

Industry wants to be consulted

The Chamber of Minerals and Energy says given current demand for L-N-G, gas from the Browse Basin must be commercialised and in the global market as quickly as possible.

The Chamber supports the co-operative approach of the state and federal governments, but the Director David Parker says investment in the Kimberley should not be lost in the process.

"What we're looking for from our industry point of view is that the process is a timely one in terms of identifying sites and making sure we're not dragging our heels too long in terms of making those decisions"

Mr Parker says the industry also wants to ensure that it is closely consulted in determining the final decisions.

The Japanese firm Inpex says it's reviewing the Federal Government's announcement.