

Battle looms over Maret Islands

THE Kimberley Land Council (KLC) has criticised environmental groups for misrepresenting traditional owners in a protest directed at Japanese gas company Inpex.

KLC executive director Wayne Bergmann said he was disappointed by events.

"The KLC is engaged by the traditional owners of the country which includes Maret Islands, to represent them in negotiations related to Kimberley gas developments.

"Neither Albert Wigan nor Neil McKenzie is a traditional owner for the Maret Islands.

"It is not excusable for anyone, including environmental groups, to claim representation from traditional owners, when they in fact know that individuals do not represent the proper and authorised position taken by the area's traditional owners as a whole.

"We criticise developers who try to pick off individual Aboriginal people and claim they represent traditional owners," he said.

However, the chairwoman of the Kandiwal Aboriginal Corporation at Ngauwudu Mitchell Plateau Catherine Goonack has denounced statements made by Mr Bergmann regarding the Save the Kimberley campaign and the claim that the KLC 'spoke for all North Kimberley Aboriginal people'.

Ms Goonack was joined by the senior traditional custodian for Ngauwudu, Mitchell Plateau John Goonack in a joint statement denouncing the KLC as not representative of all Wunambal traditional owners or their countries.

Mr Goonack said the Ngauwudu people had been given no rights in KLC dealings and the KLC had set up the Wunambal and

Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation to take control over the North Kimberley and bypass the views of groups of traditional owners who did not agree with them.

Ms Goonack said that as the one and only Wunambal community living on Wunambal countries that will be most affected by industrial development, neither their people nor their corporation had been included in the secret business discussions between the State Government, the mining interests and the KLC.

Mr Goonack said that Mr Bergmann did not act or speak for the Ngauwudu custodians because Ngauwudu people spoke for themselves.

"We don't want this mining or the bauxite money; we only want our lands back Mr Goonack said.

"That mining will kill everything."



KLC executive director Wayne Bergmann said he was disappointed in the misrepresentation of traditional owners.