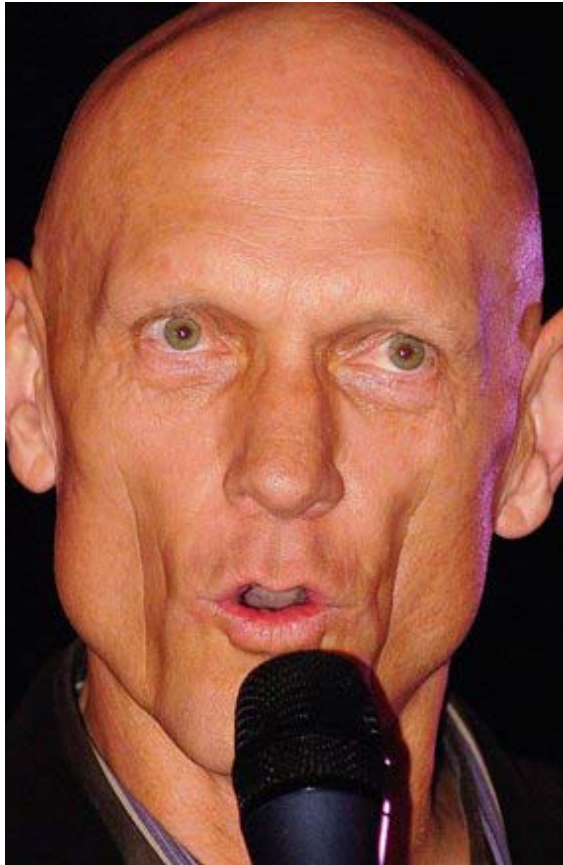


Garrett won't rule out Maret Islands gas facility

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The Environment Minister Peter Garrett will not rule out allowing a gas processing plant on the Kimberley's Maret Islands, or damming the Fitzroy River. (Getty Images: Paul McConnell)

The Federal Environment Minister has refused to rule out allowing Japanese gas company Inpex to build a processing facility on the Maret Islands in northern Western Australia.

Peter Garrett visited the West Kimberley yesterday to further investigate a state and Commonwealth proposal to build a gas processing facility in the region.

Inpex has not ruled out being part of the multi-user hub, which would process gas from the Browse Basin, but its preferred option remains the Maret Islands.

Mr Garrett says the Federal Government is currently assessing the Inpex proposal.

"Any proponent, including Inpex, who makes and brings a proposal forward for assessment and consideration will be treated with due accordance with the law," he said.

"And that's what's happening at this point in time.

"It's not appropriate for me to make any comments about its merits or otherwise."

Mr Garrett has also refused to rule out the possibility of damming the Fitzroy River, saying if proposals are made, they will be considered.

Meanwhile, the Kimberley Land Council (KLC) says mining companies are trying to railroad it into approving projects in the region.

The KLC met Mr Garrett and the State Development Minister in Broome yesterday to discuss suitable locations for a proposed multi-user gas processing facility in the region.

Wayne Bergman from the KLC says the council will not be pressured into approving a location until Aboriginal people are satisfied the long-term benefits will outweigh the negative impacts of development.

"We're feeling the pressure from industry in trying to meet their market deadlines," he said.

"I think there needs to be a relook at this process."