

Get set to go to polls before Wet

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A TERRITORY election is expected to be held by October.

Labor Party sources said Chief Minister Paul Henderson wanted his own "mandate" after taking over from Clare Martin and was unlikely to go the full term.

The election must be held by July next year.

An ALP figure said some party strategists were urging Mr Henderson to wait -- because CLP leader Terry Mills was "bad and getting worse".

But others thought he should go before the next Wet.

Mr Mills said last night he expected an election between late August to early October.

He said Mr Henderson was "new, fresh and untested" -- and wanted to capitalise on Kevin Rudd's victory "before the gloss fades".

The trigger for an early election will probably be the building of a second gas plant in Darwin.

Japanese resources company Inpex will make a decision by October -- but, possibly, as early as August -- about whether to construct the plant on Darwin Harbour or Western Australia.

The \$12billion project would be one of the biggest infrastructure developments in Australian history.

Up to 3000 workers would be employed in construction and hundreds during operation.

The plant, which would handle gas piped from the Ichthys field about 800km northwest of Darwin, would work for about 50 years.

Mr Henderson has not offered Inpex any financial incentive to come to Darwin.

But he has promised that the Government would support the project.

Inpex is known to have been impressed by Mr Henderson's "can-do" attitude at a meeting in Perth.

The CLP wants the plant built at Glyde Point instead of Darwin Harbour.