

Govt trying to clear hurdles for Inpex

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The Federal Court has been told that the Territory Government and gas company Inpex are nervous about a native title claim that covers part of the site earmarked for a new gas plant.

The Territory Government is trying to persuade Inpex to build a gas plant on Blaydin Point, east of Middle Arm in Darwin Harbour.

The solicitor general's office is urging the court to dismiss the claim, arguing that the longer the case is delayed, the more nervous Inpex will become.

But justice John Reeves has given traditional owner Tibby Quall, who has been fighting to secure native title for land around Darwin Harbour for ten years, a month to provide more evidence to support the claim.

The Territory Government has already compulsorily acquired the land, so if the claim is successful it could involve compensation being paid.

The government has also been given the go ahead to file evidence supporting its argument that the matter is urgent and needs to be dealt with in days not months.

Meanwhile, the Government says the plant would not be required to supply gas for domestic consumption.

Western Australia, who are also trying to building the plant, would require Inpex to provide 15 per cent for domestic purposes.

The Northern Territory's Chief Minister Paul Henderson has already lobbied the major project partner Inpex and is preparing to head to Paris to lobby the other partner Total.

He maintains the Territory has less hurdles than Western Australia.

"Certainly, (Western Australia) have got significant issues in terms of making land available for project proponents.

"That's why we've gone in under the radar, we've snuck across the border, we've met with Inpex and said 'Look, if it's all too hard, if you can't deliver your project on time, within the time frame you're looking to in West Australia, well have a look at Darwin'."

But Opposition Leader Terry Mills is unhappy that gas from the Inpex plant will not be available locally.

"The flow of gas into the Northern Territory has long been a dream.

"That is what will assist us in industrialisation, in the building of the Territory."