

NT's early poll to secure gas plant

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NORTHERN Territory Chief Minister Paul Henderson says he has called an early August election in order to secure a \$12 billion Japanese gas plant.

Mr Henderson had until this time next year to send territorians to the polls and had said his Labor Government would not call an early election without "good reason".

Asked today why he had decided on an August 9 poll, Mr Henderson said he wanted to give Japanese oil and gas giant Inpex "certainty" on its proposed project.

Inpex is weighing Middle Arm, in Darwin harbour, against a site in Western Australia for a liquefied natural gas plant.

"There will be many aspects to this election but the reason for calling it today is that I am determined to give the companies that will be making this decision a government that is 100 per cent committed to this project," he said.

"This is a golden opportunity not to be missed."

Country Liberal leader Terry Mills initially opposed the building of a gas plant at Middle Arm but backflipped earlier this year following an assessment of the site.

Mr Henderson said voters needed to choose "between a secure future for the Northern Territory or placing the Northern Territory's future at risk".

"Every vote in this election will be vital for securing the Inpex gas plant and the territory's future."

Mr Henderson today visited Government House to ask Administrator Tom Pauling to dissolve the government, leaving 19 days for electioneering.

The territory will be going to the polls three years after Labor won the last election by securing 19 of 25 seats.

The Country Liberals have four seats and there are two independents.