

Kimberley whale nursery under threat, says green group

Article from: PerthNow

Narelle Towie, environment reporter

August 13, 2008 06:45pm



PLAYGROUND: A humpback breaches at the nursery at Camden Sound. Picture: **Annabelle Sandes**/ The Wilderness Society WA

A NEWLY discovered nursery for humpback whales will be destroyed if industrialisation of the Kimberley goes ahead, an environmental group claims.

The Wilderness Society said the whale playground recently discovered at Camden Sound off the coast of Broome would be in grave danger if proposed gas projects for the area are developed.

Japanese company Inpex are pushing for approval to build a Natural Liquid Gas processing plant on Maret Island - an area 300km from where whales to teach their young to feed, breach and navigate currents.

“You can be guaranteed if the proposals go ahead the use of barge tankers in the area will have a significant impact on humpback whales and it would interfere with their breeding, their calving and general migration,” The Wilderness Society’s WA state coordinator, Robert Robertson said.

“There are all sorts of concerns about blasting and seismic testing interfering with the whales as well.”

Today Inpex reiterated that Maret Island is “the best location” for mining

gas from the Ichthys gas fields - 150km from Maret Island - estimated to be worth \$10 billion a year in revenue.

The WA Government is being encouraged to approve development of the LNG processing hub and unlock the potential wealth, along with 4000 new jobs.

But the Premier Alan Carpenter wants to minimise environmental damage by merging other gas projects also awaiting approval and build only one hub.

While the decision is being made on where a new processing plant will exist, the Northern Territory is urging Inpex to move operations north to Darwin.

Mr Robertson said the Kimberley marine ecosystem was similar to the Great Barrier Reef but without any of the protection.

He said that talk of turning the Kimberley into WA's new Pilbara was dangerous and ill-informed and ignored the many strong environmental reasons why such a move would be a disaster.

"We are calling on both major parties to commit to protecting the globally significant natural and cultural values of the Kimberley and to ensuring that the region's indigenous communities gain far greater benefits and opportunities from existing Kimberley industry including tourism and sustainable fishing," he said.