

# Call to consider environment

By **BIANCA THAIR**

ENVIRONS Kimberley has called on candidates in the coming State election to make a firm commitment to protect the Kimberley environment, including introducing a proposal to have a big part of the West Kimberley world heritage listed by 2012.

EK director Maria Mann said the unique natural and cultural values of the Kimberley were under increasing threat from proposed LNG developments and the expansion of mining and exploration.

"All political parties have the opportunity now to show real leadership and commit to providing long-term protection for the region," she said.

Ms Mann said it would be an "unimaginable tragedy on a national and world scale" if the Kimberley were to become industrialised and developed in the same way as the Pilbara, as has been suggested by Liberal leader Colin Barnett.

The group also wants an addition-

al \$250 million for biodiversity protection initiatives in the Kimberley provided over the next four years, including support for indigenous ranger groups and feral animal eradication and control.

"Caring for our priceless environment must be front and centre of everyone's decision-making and politicians of all stripes should be prepared to make that call if scientific and cultural criteria and community concerns cannot be met," Ms Mann said.

The Conservation Council agreed and said Mr Barnett had been foolish and reckless when it came to issues relating to LNG development in the Kimberley.

Conservation Council director Piers Verstegen said Mr Barnett's comments on how the LNG hub selection process for the Kimberley had taken too long showed his serious lack of understanding of the complexity of environmental and indigenous issues in the Kimberley.

"The Kimberley has outstanding but poorly understood natural and cultural heritage values and world-class natural beauty," Mr Verstegen said.

"The Carpenter Government has been engaging with stakeholders in good faith to decide on a single hub for processing Browse Basin LNG and we are already concerned that this process is rushing the scientific studies and community consultation in order to meet industry timelines."

Mr Barnett said in Government the Liberals would strive to find a balance between environmental values and economic development but offered no assurances on world heritage listing for the Kimberley.

Broome-based Liberal MLC Ken Baston said he was opposed to heritage listing.

"Heritage listing of the Kimberley is, I believe, a concern - it's another erosion of State's rights and another layer of bureaucracy," he said.