

## Barnett will lay some of blame for Inpex loss at Federal door

JESSICA STRUTT and  
KIM MacDONALD

Premier Colin Barnett will raise WA's loss of the \$25 billion Inpex gas project at a COAG meeting on Thursday, saying the Federal Government had to accept some of the responsibility for the company's decision to opt for Darwin.

The Premier said the intervention of Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett, who in February announced the Rudd Government would instigate a strategic assessment of the Kimberley to ensure the area was not spoiled by development, did not help.

Mr Barnett said yesterday the Rudd Government's support of Inpex's decision to build a gas plant in the Northern Territory rather than the Kimberley contradicted its policy on climate change.

"I think the Commonwealth has a little to answer for, to be endorsing the location of the plant in Darwin when you get a very large increase in greenhouse emissions seems to me to be

inconsistent with Federal policy on climate change," he said.

"I don't know what Peter Garrett is doing, I haven't spoken to him. But here was a live project, investment about to happen, and Peter Garrett started some open-ended assessment of the environment of the Kimberley.

"The Kimberley is a very spectacular and precious place. But what needed to be dealt with was the site for this project, not an all embracing overview of the Kimberley. The intervention of Peter Garrett as Environment Minister did not help at all."

Mr Barnett said the 800km subsea pipeline from Darwin to WA would increase greenhouse gas emissions by about 10 per cent.

The State Opposition and Kimberley Land Council have called on Mr Barnett to retain a high-level task force set up by the former Carpenter government to investigate a site for a gas processing hub in the Kimberley.

But Mr Barnett remains non-

committal, saying this week that he would examine the work of the Northern Development Taskforce but was still to decide whether he would scrap it. A spokesman for Woodside said yesterday the company wanted the task force retained because it believed the group was close to choosing a location for a hub.

A spokesman for Mr Garrett said the strategic assessment under way in the Kimberley was about the long-term development of the Browse Basin and ensuring the best and most responsible way forward.

"The Minister has always maintained that a decision about proposed location for the Inpex site was a matter for Inpex, who will now be required to submit an environmental impact statement for the Darwin site to ensure potential impacts on matters of national environmental significance can be managed," he said.