

MP picks Price's Pt

By STEVEN HOUNSOME

IN A WEEK when the State Government released publicly an evaluation report on potential Kimberley LNG sites, Kimberley MLA Carol Martin has nominated James Price Point, just 50km north of Broome, as her preferred location for a gas processing hub.

North Head, also on the Dampier Peninsula, Gourdon Bay south of Broome and the Anjo Peninsula on the far north Kimberley coast are the other sites being considered.

But Mrs Martin described Price's Point, a popular recreation spot, as "ideal".

"Because it has all that rock it will give them a stable base to develop on," she said.

"There's other places people can go (for recreation) - there's thousands of kilometres of coastline."

The Northern Development Taskforce report described Price's Point as technically viable, leaving Aboriginal lands on the north of the Peninsula free of industry, and offering the potential to share infrastructure with Broome.

But it also said development would impact on sensitive marine areas and the pearling and fishing industries, along with putting pressure on the tourism industry and the character of Broome.

Premier Colin Barnett sparked controversy nominating a preference

for North Head, about 120km north of Broome, when he released the NDT report.

State Opposition leader Eric Ripper said Mr Barnett's action preempted the NDT process.

The report said the North Head site would conflict with Aboriginal tourism, pose challenges for the development of port facilities, may impact on whale migration and presented challenges to the character of Broome.

There had been widespread speculation Mr Barnett would disband the NDT after criticising it for adding uncertainty to the site selection process. But he last week confirmed the taskforce would continue with a narrower brief.

"They will work exclusively on the site selection issue," he said.

"As to the wider issue of the long-term future of the Kimberley, that is something that has to be done across the whole of Government."

Mr Barnett said he did not expect a backlash from conservationists.

"The sites to the north and south of Broome, while sensitive, do not have the same level of sensitivity ... as the most recognisable wilderness areas," he said.

"These projects now have larger production units and occupy smaller areas of land."

The hub is anticipated to occupy a 950ha site, with an additional buffer

zone.

Save the Kimberley director Robert Vaughan said his group would not support development at either North Head or Price's Point.

He said Mrs Martin's preference for Price's Point was "a slap in the face for people who love the natural elements of the Kimberley".

"To tell us to play somewhere else is a bloody disgrace," he said.

"Gourdon Bay is the only one that could stand a chance but to be honest it doesn't feel right for us.

"We should be looking at a floating refinery or piping it to the Pilbara where there is already infrastructure."

Mr Vaughan said the 28-day period for public comment on the report was absurdly short.

Kimberley Land Council chief executive Wayne Bergmann called on Mr Barnett to ensure Aboriginal people were not marginalised in the development of gas resources.

Mr Barnett has said he does not plan to follow the Carpenter Government's promise of giving Aboriginal people power of veto over a development site.

Copies of the NDT report are available at www.doir.wa.gov.au/ndt or by calling 9222 0568. Public submissions can be made until November 11.



GAS HUBBUB: Anti-LNG activists made their feelings known at the Broome Highway-Short Street roundabout last week after a report into the selection of a processing site was released publicly.