

Anger at heritage plan

By STEVEN HOUNSOME

SEVERAL months after a proposal for national and world heritage listing of a big section of the West Kimberley was announced by the Federal Government, Broome Shire president Graeme Campbell says he has still not been told of its implications for Broome.

A heritage study will cover 22.5 million hectares including Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and the entire West Kimberley coast.

But in a town already starved of housing, Cr Campbell said he feared the shock announcement could hold up land releases and development.

"The Shire recognises there are areas that should obviously be protected but we'd like to see further studies," he said.

"We can see no justification for listing the whole area."

Cr Campbell said a blanket listing would cause considerable problems for the Shire.

"It would necessitate further approvals before any decisions are made," he said.

The Shire council examined the matter at a recent meeting

but was unable to consider it further due to a lack of information.

Heritage listing can only proceed with the endorsement of State Government and Cr Campbell said he would soon raise the issue with the relevant minister.

Pastoralists and Graziers' Association president Rob Gillam also called for exclusions to the heritage study area and said widespread listing was unjustified and would hurt industry in the region.

"Such a massive area can only be regarded as an ambit claim by the Federal Government for control of most of the Kimberley," he said.

"It goes well beyond including the features that may justify listing such as gorges, bays and Aboriginal culture along sections of the coast.

"There is absolutely no justification to extend the study area to working pastoral leases that have been part of the landscape since the Kimberley was first settled in the 1800s."

Premier Colin Barnett said while he welcomed the PGA's

viewpoint he was not ready to back its call.

"The issue relating to the proposed national and world heritage listings in the Kimberley has not yet been discussed by Cabinet, therefore no decision has been made on the new Government's approach to the issue," he said.

Association of Mining and Exploration Companies public affairs manager Darren Brown said the scale of the proposed heritage area would have a devastating impact on mineral exploration.

A spokesman for Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett said the Government recognised the region's economic importance and the study would involve lengthy consultation with all stakeholders.

He said listing was not likely to affect pastoral land use but was unable to rule out any impact on development in towns such as Broome and said it would depend on the nature of the development being proposed.

The heritage assessment is due for completion by June 2010.