

Aboriginals want \$2m more to continue gas talks

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The Kimberley Land Council has asked the State Government for another \$2 million to consult traditional land owners on a site for a gas processing precinct on the coast.

The Government confirmed it is negotiating with the KLC over the request for more money, which would be in addition to the almost \$7 million already paid to the group by the Carpenter government.

The West Australian revealed recently that taxpayers paid almost \$7 million to the KLC in two instalments in February and June under an agreement with the previous government.

The funding enabled the KLC to consult traditional land owners on whether they supported any development and then to produce a shortlist of potential sites.

Industry sources told *The West Australian* that in addition to the \$7 million, the KLC was paid \$3.5 million by development proponent Inpex as part of negotiations over a site.

The KLC selected four possible sites for the processing hub in September after eight months of consulting traditional owners.

KLC executive director Wayne Bergmann said yesterday his group had requested \$2.2 million in new funding to consult traditional owners in relation to the selection of a single site for developing gas resources off the Kimberley coast.

"There are some in the mining, oil and gas industries and Government who would prefer that Aboriginal people did not have enough resources to represent their rights when negotiating with multi-national companies," he said.

A spokesman for Colin Barnett said negotiations were under way on whether the KLC would be given the extra money.

He said once that decision was made, the Government would determine how much the KLC would get.

It is understood the additional funding would be for two months work, but the KLC would not confirm

this yesterday.

Last month the Premier named North Head, north of Beagle Bay, as his preferred site for the gas precinct in the Kimberley.

Last week, a group of Aboriginals who live at Beagle Bay set up a roadblock to stop senior bureaucrats from the Government's Northern Development Taskforce entering the community to discuss the plan.

But *The West Australian* understands the KLC held a meeting yesterday with traditional owners of the area who voted in favour of continuing negotiations with the Government's task force.

Asked about the vote numbers, a KLC spokesman said the group could not confirm anything in relation to decisions taken at the meeting of traditional owners.

The KLC will meet traditional owner members of a task force from the four native title groups from the shortlisted areas on Wednesday.



Wayne Bergmann



No go: Local protesters blocked the road into Beagle Bay last week.