

# Aborigines angry over WA port plan

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November 24, 2008

AS AUSTRALIA'S pristine Kimberley region is shown off to the world via Baz Luhrmann's film *Australia*, some of the area's traditional owners say it is about to be ruined for good.

The West Australian Government plans to push ahead with building an enormous sea port to funnel the Kimberley's stocks of liquid natural gas and other minerals offshore, and has indicated it may strip the local Aboriginal community of its previously granted right of veto over the development.

"The industrialisation of the Kimberley is a continuation of government policy of the past," said Neil McKenzie, chairman of the Jumbarrngunjul Aboriginal corporation, which administers land close to the Government's preferred port site at North Head, on the Dampier Peninsula.

Mr McKenzie is with a group of indigenous representatives in Sydney to highlight their case against the 1000-hectare development in conjunction with the release of the film. They believe the port would trample cultural heritage and damage the eco-tourism industry, which has flourished in the past decade.

At issue is the WA Government's recent departure from a long-term negotiating strategy between local stakeholders, business and the Federal Government.

The Premier, Colin Barnett, has said compensation would be paid but indigenous inhabitants would not be able to stop the development if the Government activated its legislation.

An indigenous community leader, Albert Wiggins, said: "There are a lot of people opposed to the harbour, not just the traditional owners, because many of the people there have seen the damage of industrialisation comes without benefits.

"Why should we see this beautiful place, with global significance, with its cultural heritage in every rock and tree, be destroyed for a promise of 30 or 40 indigenous jobs and at the cost of even more jobs in the eco-tourism industry?"

The federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, said it urged Mr Barnett to abandon the plan and return to negotiations.