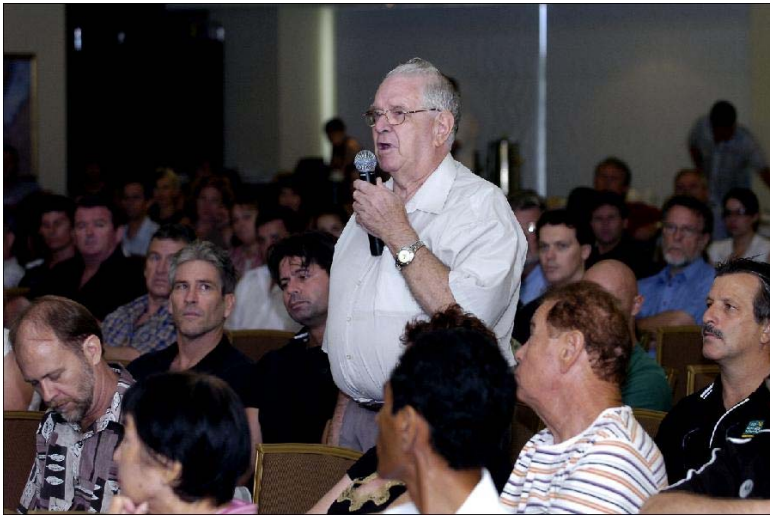


## Financial meltdown won't stop Inpex deal

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**THE Territory's \$12 billion gas plant will not be scuppered by the global economic crisis, resources company Inpex said yesterday.**



INTERESTED: Territory businessman Ken Cohalan at the first of a series of public forums held by gas giant Inpex in Darwin yesterday. BELOW: More than 100 people attended the forum. Picture: Justin Sanson

Chief Minister Paul Henderson admitted rumours were rife in Darwin that the project would not go ahead because of the credit squeeze.

But Inpex external affairs manager Sean Kildare told the first of a series of public forums the gas plant would be built.

"We take a long-term view," he said in answer to a question from the floor by businessman Ken Cohalan.

The gas project will last at least 40 years.

Mr Kildare said there would be great opportunities for Territory businesses and workers during the four-year construction of the plant on Blaydin Point.

"These kind of projects have a voracious appetite for construction resources," he said. "There are real opportunities for local business."

Mr Kildare said the plant would have a "significant effect" on improving the NT economy.

Inpex environmental manager Greg Oliver said dredging in Darwin Harbour to make way for the LNG plant and its jetty would take at least nine months.

In answer to a question from harbour tour guide Jim Smith, he said the dredging spoil would be shipped 38km out to sea to be dumped.

He said a dumping spot had been found that would ensure the spoil wouldn't be washed back into the harbour or on to beaches.

In answer to a question from keen amateur fisherman Colin Hennessy, Mr Oliver said a permanent 100m exclusion zone would be enforced around the jetty. That would be extended to 500m when ships were loading.

Inpex would try to maintain access to the Catalina creeks for fishermen and not move the Catalina flying boat wrecks.

Mr Oliver said Inpex was trying to find the best colour for the building so it would blend in with the background.

"Grey isn't too bad," he said. "But we won't be able to make the plant invisible."

Mr Oliver said corals reefs would be protected and as few mangroves as possible would be removed.

Inpex will hold two public meetings at the Palmerston Golf Club today - 10am-noon and 6pm-8pm. Telephone 8981 6445 for more details.