



Transcript

Traditional owners reject Woodside offer

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Reporter: David Weber

ELIZABETH JACKSON: The West Australian Government has indicated it will do everything possible to get a Woodside gas project into the Kimberley despite objections from Indigenous people.

The Kimberley Land Council has rejected Woodside's \$500-million offer for a site, saying the figure amounts to just 13 cents in every \$100 the company will get.

The Council also says Woodside wanted Indigenous people to sign an agreement that heritage issues would not restrict development.

But the WA Premier has said that while he hopes Woodside can reach an agreement with the land council, his Government will move to acquire the land through legislation if necessary.

David Weber reports.

DAVID WEBER: Woodside wants a site in the Kimberley to process gas from the Browse Basin.

The Kimberley Land Council's Executive Director Wayne Bergmann says Woodside's offer was an insult.

WAYNE BERGMANN: By not having a through-put fee, that is compensation based on the amount of gas processed, Aboriginal people aren't part of the economic gain.

They don't share in the rewards of the company. All the rewards go towards the company, the Commonwealth and the State. All modern day agreements now have a royalty payments based on production.

DAVID WEBER: Mr Bergmann says the land council's advice is that Woodside's offer was equivalent to 13 cents out of every \$100 the company would make.

He's rejected any suggestion that heritage issues should be signed away.

WAYNE BERGMANN: There are four locations still on the map. We do not have any information to know what the impacts will be. We do not understand what the layouts of marine facilities would look like, or on the land.

DAVID WEBER: And Mr Bergmann has given a scathing assessment of any government proposal for the compulsory acquisition of land.

He's used a land clearing analogy to describe what he believes the legislation does to Indigenous rights.

WAYNE BERGMANN: The compulsory acquisition laws to bulldoze and override Aboriginal people takes us back 30 years.

It's the most draconian law in Australia, and for governments to bulldoze some of the poorest, most disadvantaged people without ensuring they participate on equal footing in this project is outrageous.

It will be a shame on The Commonwealth if they sit by and let this happen.

DAVID WEBER: Compulsory acquisition of land is exactly what the Premier Colin Barnett wants to do. Mr Barnett says he doesn't want the state to lose another Browse Basin project.

COLIN BARNETT: When Western Australia lost the Inpex project to Darwin, at that point I said the State Government would use the Public Works Act to compulsorily acquire that land, as is done throughout the State.

DAVID WEBER: Colin Barnett says Indigenous people don't own the resource, and shouldn't demand a slice of the royalty stream.

COLIN BARNETT: The resource belongs either to the Commonwealth or the State Government on behalf of all people. So they don't have a position of demanding royalties.

But what will come out of this hopefully will be a broader community benefits package which will include jobs, training, housing, improved health care.

And basically for the future an opportunity for young Aboriginal people to have worthwhile productive careers in the petroleum industry, in all aspects of it, and that's what I want to see happen.

DAVID WEBER: Woodside says its proposal has been based on a list of sites worked up in consultation with the Kimberley Land Council.

The company says it still hopes to reach agreement with the KLC.

ELIZABETH JACKSON: David Weber reporting from Perth.