

KLC knocks back Woodside's \$500M offer

Monday, 8 December 2008

TRADITIONAL landowners in the Kimberley region have rejected a multi-million dollar compensation offer from Woodside Petroleum for the government-backed Kimberley Liquefied natural gas hub.

According to the *West Australian*, the Kimberley Land Council has confirmed the owners would not accept Woodside's \$500 million offer, which would require the owners to give up their cultural heritage rights for the gas hub development.



The Kimberley coast

Council executive director Wayne Bergmann described the offer as one of the worst offered by a resource development company in Australia's recent history.

"Even though we have Premier Colin Barnett's threat of compulsory acquisition hanging over our heads, traditional owners in the Kimberley have decided they cannot accept this proposal," he said.

"Without even specifying where development would go, this proposal would have required owners to agree there are no heritage issues on the final development site.

"This is unacceptable to traditional owners who will not agree to sign away their heritage rights carte blanche."

However, a Woodside spokesman said the package would significantly benefit the region and included annual financial commitments for education, training, compensation for native title owners, the establishment of a regional benefit fund, and funds to support the administration of agreements.

"Woodside is basing its proposal on a shortlist of potential sites drawn up by the Kimberley Land Council, so is working on the presumption these sites do not have significant heritage issues," the *West* quoted the spokesman as saying.

"In any event it is proposed that if a Kimberley site is selected, a comprehensive heritage survey will be conducted."

Barnett had said previously that North Head on the Dampier Peninsula was his preferred site from the shortlist presented by the Northern Development Taskforce.

Other sites include Gourdon Bay south of Broome, James Price Point 58 kilometres north of Broome, and Anjo Peninsula on the far north Kimberley coast.