

Barnett takes hardline stance to land for LNG hub

Thursday, 11 December 2008

WESTERN Australian Premier Colin Barnett has said he will forcibly acquire land from indigenous people in the Kimberley region to provide a site for the proposed liquefied natural gas hub.

He told about 500 business leaders yesterday that while the plan "may sound radical" it was necessary to ensure there would be an LNG development in the Kimberley that would benefit both the indigenous and wider communities.

"I will be doing everything I can to grab that opportunity for the state," the *Australian* quoted him as saying.



Colin Barnett

He also noted that a decision on the site for the hub will be made within the next couple of weeks, adding that North Head and James Price Point were the preferred locations. Both sites are located near Broome.

"We urge the premier to work with Kimberley Aboriginal people to find a negotiated solution. We are committed to responsible development but heavy-handed approaches through compulsory acquisition will not provide any worthwhile benefits," Kimberley Land Council executive director Wayne Bergman said.

"It's no surprise that the most disadvantaged people are being put further under pressure for big business. It's been a consistent message from the premier."

Barnett did little to deny this, saying that his government would be "unashamedly pro-development".

He said provisions in the Public Works Act would be used to acquire the land so that private companies could build gas-processing plants near gas fields in the Browse Basin, which has estimated gas reserves of at least 30 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

"We'll acquire it as government-owned land and we will lease it out to proponents, whether it is Woodside, Inpex or anyone else in the future," he said.

He added this was the way most industrial land in WA had been acquired and operated, and that compensation would be provided to indigenous landowners.

Barnett said the failure of the former WA government to find land in the area for Inpex to build a gas plant for its Ichthys project was "the greatest embarrassment in this state's history" and that it would not occur under his watch.

Inpex announced in October that it was moving its \$15 billion project to Darwin, after years of negotiations in WA with indigenous landowners and the Labor government failed to provide a site.