

Fight over gas hub heats up

By STEVEN HOUNSOME

A VOCAL crowd of more than 250 concerned residents took to the streets of Broome last week, to protest against a proposed LNG hub on the Kimberley coastline.

In the same week Premier Colin Barnett made comments supporting the compulsory acquisition of land and development at either North Head or James Price Point.

After impassioned speeches from Neil McKenzie, Save the Kimberley's Kevin Blatchford and Beagle Bay resident Albert Wiggan, the crowd chanted "Gas free Kimberley, hands off country".

Mr Blatchford mocked Premier Barnett's assertion that neither of the favoured sites were of value for tourism.

"We already have an industrial precinct, it's called the Pilbara," he said.

"And I'm more interested in eco-tourism than eco-terrorism."

Albert Wiggan said a price could not be put on an area with such traditional importance.

"They say there's no heritage left on this place (North Head) but we all know that's a lie," he said.

He called on the group to reach out to the wider community, saying they could not win this fight alone. Coinciding with the Broome protest, concerned community members gathered outside Woodside's Perth office.

Woodside is heading the group of resource companies planning to process LNG in the region.

The Wilderness Society also wrote to the company, indicating due to the economic downturn there was no need to fast-track Kimberley development.

Two days earlier, Colin Barnett told about 500 Chamber of Commerce and Industry members that James Price Point, 50kms north of Broome, and North Head, a fur-

ther 75kms north, were the only sites still being considered.

He also confirmed land would be acquired through the Public Works Act and leased out to users.

"That may sound radical, I assure you it's not," he said.

"That is the way that most industrial land in Western Australia has been acquired and operated."

The Greens and Australian Conservation Foundation have both slammed the acquisition of land as an outdated approach which ignores Aboriginal rights.

The Kimberley Land Council recently rejected a \$500 million offer from Woodside in return for traditional owners giving up their cultural heritage rights for the development of a gas hub in the area.