

Colin Barnett
Premier (includes Federal-State Relations; Public Sector Management;
Government Accountability); State Development

Thu 18 December, 2008

Transcript - Premier Barnett's doorstep

Portfolio: Premier

REPORTER

Premier, I understand you're meeting with the Kimberley Land Council...

COLIN BARNETT

Ah, yes...

REPORTER

... and Wayne Bergmann said that the Council's urging... urging you not to engage in compulsory acquisition of their land up there in the process for the... for the exercise. What's the... what's the story there? What's the score?

COLIN BARNETT

Well, the reality is that as it stands at the moment the State has lost the Inpex project. We are doing all that is possible to keep the door open and to try and attract Inpex back. But for the moment they are working on the basis that they will build their plant in Darwin. That means that all of the benefits associated with that project, including Aboriginal benefits, are lost to the people of the Kimberley. The other project is Woodside's Browse project. Woodside and myself and the Government are doing all that is possible to ensure that project proceeds and that the gas comes onshore with the LNG plant on the Kimberley coastline, just to the north of Broome.

Now that is not going to be easy to achieve and what needs to happen is that the site needs to be identified, that will happen before Christmas, and then measures put in place to make that site State property. And that, hopefully, will be done by consent agreement – that would always be the preference. However, the State will, at the same time as identifying the site, proceed with the necessary preparatory work to acquire that site.

REPORTER

So did you ask for the meeting with Mr Bergmann today?

COLIN BARNETT

No, he sought the meeting and I'm happy to meet with him and I'm intending to go to Broome later in the week. There's a cyclone hovering around so depending where that goes will determine whether I go. But that's the plan: to go there and look at the sites and also meet with the Shire and I think also meeting with some of the environmental groups.

REPORTER

So when would you hope to make a decision?

COLIN BARNETT

Ah, the site will be identified prior to Christmas, that's the intention.

REPORTER

Then compulsory acquisition then is not out of the question?

COLIN BARNETT

No. I made that very clear during the election campaign and it is not something unusual. This process... and bear in mind the Kimberley Land Council has been given under the previous government \$7 million. A lot of money, a lot of money. Now I'm not about to hand over more money for a process that doesn't have a conclusion. I would always prefer a consent agreement, that is in the interests of all parties to do that.

But you know, without being dramatic, if this land is not secured by the State and then available to be leased out to proponents of LNG, then there will be no LNG project in the Kimberley and there will be no benefits for the Aboriginal people of the Kimberley, and there will be no benefits for the wider economy of the Kimberley, and that's the bottom line. One project's been lost, I don't intend to see a second one being lost.

REPORTER

And that's effectively what you'll be telling Wayne Bergmann?

COLIN BARNETT

I've told Wayne Bergmann from the time of the last election that was the State's position. The Commonwealth was aware of that, they are broadly supportive of it. All parties would want to see an agreed consent. And can I again stress that the two sites... the favoured sites – North Head and James Price Point – are not on that part of the Kimberley coast that most people identify as that pristine spectacular coast line. It is not that part of the Kimberley, it is the area on One Arm Point to the north of Broome, okay?

REPORTER

So are you hoping to then... to make a recommendation to Cabinet on Monday week? That's really your last chance, isn't it?

COLIN BARNETT

Ah I don't discuss Cabinet, but we will identify the site.

REPORTER

Premier, given these figures, are you still determined to push on with the State kicking in for Oakajee?

COLIN BARNETT

Ah, well I'll talk... I'm not going to discuss it. The Treasurer handles the Budget and that's his... that's his job. Oakajee is... as Troy Buswell said, Oakajee is before Infrastructure Australia. It is arguably the most important economic development project for this State for perhaps the next 20 years. To make sure it happens the State will need to play a role, hopefully with the Commonwealth, and that's what we're about. This is about economic development and developing a whole new region of Western Australia.

REPORTER

Do you accept the loss of our Triple-A credit rating in the next couple of years?

COLIN BARNETT

No, we're not going to entertain that. I'm sorry, I'm not... I'm not second guessing the... I'm happy to answer questions on other topics but I'm not doing a re-run. The Treasurer has responsibility for the State's finances and he is doing a superb job and indicated today his comprehension of the issues and the preparedness to act on them.

REPORTER

Well Oakajee...

COLIN BARNETT

No, I'm not doing...

REPORTER

...Oakajee is your baby, Premier. I mean if you insist on that going through it will put more pressure on the Budget.

COLIN BARNETT

Well I'm not answering the Budget. Oakajee has got a way to go. On Oakajee itself there is a draft agreement between the proponents and the State that is being finalised now and I hope that we will be in a position shortly to sign that agreement, and the Commonwealth will

be provided with a copy of that agreement. The private proponents will then have to go into their detailed feasibility for their part of the project which is basically two-thirds of the total.

REPORTER

Weather permitting you're off to Broome tomorrow, is that right?

COLIN BARNETT

Planning to go to Broome, yep, weather permitting. Okay? All right, thank you, thank you.