

Govt urged to consult KLC in Kimberley gas talks

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The Western Australian Opposition leader says the Premier will create a social tragedy if he disregards the views of local Indigenous people in relation to the development of a gas processing precinct in the Kimberley in the state's north.

Colin Barnett has not ruled out using the Public Works Act to acquire the land needed for the development, a move that the Kimberley Land Council (KLC) says would set race relations back 30 years.

Eric Ripper has urged Mr Barnett to return to the consultative process established by the previous Labor government.

Mr Ripper says as representatives of the owners of the land earmarked for the development, the KLC must be included in the decision making process.

"One thing that really concerns me is Mr Barnett's promotion of the view that Indigenous people are somehow an obstacle to development. They are not. Indigenous people in the west Kimberley support this development," he said.

The KLC is seeking support from the Federal Government to ensure that the WA Government does not compulsorily acquire the land for the development.

Executive director Wayne Bergman says that the KLC will remain a relevant organisation regardless of whether it negotiates a deal with the State Government over the development of the Browse Basin.

"We have a statutory responsibility under the Commonwealth Native Title Act to protect native title interests. So it won't matter what the Premier does, it's the statutory responsibility of the land council to represent native title interests," he said.