

New title claim for LNG target

By PHILLIPA PRIOR

KIMBERLEY Land Council executive director Wayne Bergmann has accused mining giant Woodside of failing to negotiate with traditional landowners on the Dampier Peninsula, as the area's Nyul Nyul people prepare to launch a new native title claim.

Nyul Nyul spokeswoman Philomena Lewis confirmed a claim would be launched within months over areas yet to be finalised but which would include Beagle Bay and Perpendicular Point, one of seven sites favoured by Woodside for its Browse Basin LNG plant.

"It's not going to stop Woodside – they're just going to go ahead even if we try to stop them," Ms Lewis said.

"It's very heartbreaking and most of the people are upset about it – but there's no way we can ever stop that because government will just walk right over us.

"We have to try and negotiate somehow and maybe try to work closely with Woodside and somehow they'll meet with us halfway."

Mr Bergmann said he was not satisfied the consultation process conducted by Woodside so far had been fair.

"The issue is that Woodside isn't negotiating with anyone – what's really disappointing is that Woodside is not going through any organised structure in negotiating with traditional owners," he said.

However Sue Jones, chair of the Woodside community reference group assessing the technical feasibility of establishing the LNG

plant in the Kimberley, said she believed the indigenous community had been consulted.

"The CRG asked Woodside to provide a briefing to them to satisfy themselves that the indigenous communities were indeed being consulted with and that was provided to the group last week," she said.

"I believe that the group were happy that the consultation process ... was robust, but incomplete (and) from the briefing we got, is lengthier and far more comprehensive than the quite specific one the CRG was doing."

Mr Bergmann said the council was preparing information to launch the Nyul Nyul claim and community meetings would be held soon to advance the process.

"Registered native title claims will give traditional land owners procedural rights in relation to people wanting to access that land – anyone wanting to do stuff within the claim area would have to notify traditional owners," Mr Bergmann said.

He said the KLC had refused to join any of Woodside's reference groups charged with examining the economic, social and environmental impacts of establishing a gas plant in the Kimberley.

"In a nutshell, traditional owners are more than just a stakeholder group – they have a special interest," he said. "Participation in a reference group undermines the KLC's ability to represent that interest group, so we prefer to be given information independent of that reference group."