

Govt says yes to gas

By ELIZA BORRELLO

CAMPAIGNS to stop large-scale industrial development along the Kimberley coast have been dealt a blow with the State Government coming out in favour of mining and processing gas in the region.

Several resource companies are pushing ahead with plans to extract gas from the Browse Basin, about 450km north-east of Broome, and hope to build facilities to process the lucrative resource along the Kimberley coast.

Japanese company Inpex has confirmed the Maret Islands as its preferred site while Woodside has short listed six onshore sites and Scott Reef.

Opponents of the industrial push last week launched a nationwide radio and television advertising

campaign to raise awareness of what they say would be the devastating impact of the proposed developments.

State Development Minister Eric Ripper acknowledged there was resistance in the community but said the Government supported the development of LNG plants in the Kimberley.

"The Government does support LNG processing in the Kimberley ...," Mr Ripper said.

"The Government will be working with all stakeholders to secure the right balance ... it will be possible to strike a balance."

He said there was merit in proposals that resource companies share a single processing hub, rather than each company build its own in separate locations. Mr Ripper also argued gas production would create

jobs for indigenous people, an idea refuted by opponents.

Peter Tucker, chairman of anti-gas development lobby group Cultural, Heritage and Environmental Advocacy for the Kimberley, said any new jobs would be skilled positions.

"There's evidence available that all of the people in LNG gas facilities, once they're up and running, are experts in their field and a good percentage of them are going to be brought in from overseas," he said.

"All of these jobs will be two weeks on and one week off, they will be fly-in, fly-out. Aboriginal people from Kalumburu and Derby, can you imagine them doing that? I don't think so.

"We're totally against the large-scale, industrial-scale development of the Kimberley and that's what they want."

Mr Tucker said it was estimated the Inpex project would emit 12 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually while the Woodside plan would generate 10 million tonnes.

Mr Ripper acknowledged LNG plants created greenhouse gases but said the global environmental benefits of substituting gas for coal needed to be considered.

"We can't look at greenhouse gas emissions as a regional issue, it's a global issue," he said.

Mr Ripper said the Government would stand by its policy of reserving a portion of gas production for use in WA.



PROTEST: Anti-gas development campaigners Peter Tucker and Kevin Blatchford launch a national campaign last week.