

KLC appeal over permit

By PHILLIPA PRIOR

THE Kimberley Land Council has appealed a State Government decision to issue a permit to gas giant Inpex to clear native vegetation on the Maret Islands, claiming the move would destroy the land.

However, Inpex public affairs coordinator Sean Kildare stood firm on the decision to do so, saying the company had met every environmental, conservation and management obligation before carrying out its assessment.

He said Inpex had only engaged in no-impact environmental survey work to date.

KLC executive director Wayne Bergmann claimed Inpex had failed to reach agreement with traditional owners before pushing ahead with the work and if it was allowed to proceed unchecked, the work would destroy a significant environmental site. He said further investigations should be halted until the long-term effects could be properly assessed.

"It is not appropriate that the EPA issue a native vegetation clearance permit for a pristine area with such high environmental, cultural and heritage values," Mr Bergmann said.

However, Mr Kildare said the KLC and others were perfectly entitled to lodge an appeal and it was "quite common" during the native vegetation clearing assessment process.

He refused to speculate on whether the appeal would be successful, saying only that the company would continue to fulfil all environmental and heritage expectations.

The appeals process puts a temporary halt on further clearing. If the appeal is found to be valid, Inpex will have 21 days to respond to the issues raised.