



Inpex wraps up public meetings

By Matthew Brann

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The Japanese company Inpex has wrapped up a series of community forums across the Kimberley. The meetings were the first open consultation Inpex has had with the general public, and reactions ranged from protesters in Broome, to a small and very quiet gathering at the High School in Kununurra.

The forums were designed to provide general information about the proposal, a project update, and to address individual questions and concerns.

The Ichthys Project involves a plan to pipe gas from the Browse Basin, 400 kilometres north of Broome, to a processing plant on the Maret Islands off the Kimberley coast.

If Inpex gets the all clear for development, construction is due to begin on the Maret Islands in 2009, and whilst it's over 630km from Kununurra, there were still plenty of questions for the Inpex reps when they arrived into town.

Lee McIvor says she had very little knowledge of the project because she was new to Western Australia and wanted to learn more about it, and better understand how the development would impact the region and to what capacity.

"Quite a few concerns in the fact that this is a pristine environment that basically is going to be destroyed by a gas exploration company and I was quite concerned that they (Inpex) seem ok with it" she said.

Jan Ladhams says she was originally only at the meeting to do the catering but ended up learning a lot about the project.

"I tend to be fairly naive, but whilst I'm excited that we do have some pretty good natural gas fields off our north coast, I'm very concerned that those environments are going to be spoilt and I would like to see us look at alternatives to gas".

Inpex's joint venture coordination manager, Bill Townsend described the meeting in Kununurra as a much "friendlier" reception than Broome, but says he appreciates that even in the East Kimberley a big project such as this has its implications.

Inpex has already spent \$400 million, but is at the mercy of the Kimberley Land Council and the traditional owners of the Maret Islands. The company needs a native title agreement before construction can begin.

A final investment decision will be made in 2008.

For more information on the project go to www.inpex.com.au/about-project.aspx

In this report: Lee McIvor, Kununurra; Jan Ladhams, Kununurra; Bill Townsend, joint venture coordination manager, Inpex