

Protest, plaudits for gas plan

By DALE MILLER

CONSERVATIONISTS turned out in force last week in Broome to protest against plans for an LNG gas plant as the project received fresh support from local government.

The protest was held at Lotteries House last Wednesday just prior to the second of two public information sessions in Broome run by Japanese company Inpex about plans to build the plant on the Maret Islands off the Kimberley coast.

About 60 people with banners written in both Japanese and English bearing slogans such as "Hands off the Maret Islands" and "Hub it, don't snub it" protested the Inpex proposal.

Kimberley Marine Tourism Association president Kevin Blatchford said there was no mistake that people's passions were burning over the issue.

"It's a big ask for us to accept any industrialisation in this incredible region but if there is to be any it should be in one single place and

that's obviously not the Maret Islands," he said.

Environmental groups have collectively backed the creation of a single industrial hub for all companies looking to exploit resources in the Browse Basin, about 400km north-west of Broome.

Inpex joint venture co-ordination manager Bill Townsend said the company had submitted an application and would be proceeding with the Maret Islands concept. "Today's discussion is really about progressing the Maret Islands concept and anything beyond that for today is sort of hypothetical ... we were far down a process well before there was any discussion of a hub," he said.

The protest was held just 24 hours before the Derby/West Kimberley Shire council confirmed its support for Inpex's proposal.

Shire president Elsia Archer said the local government pursued goals leading to greater social and eco-

nomic prosperity for the community and was pleased to support Inpex's present course.

"Inpex has always maintained its intention to support and become actively involved in the community should the Maret Islands location be successful and this will result in increases in population and associated air, health and education services with every likelihood of more industry support services," she said.

But Save the Kimberley chairman Peter Tucker said the Shire's position was not a representation of the general community and claimed there was a big movement in Derby opposed to the industrialisation of the Kimberley.

"It's of great concern that shires will entertain what Inpex are proposing and I think without really looking into the long-term ramifications that would happen with an event like a gas plant going on the Maret Islands," he said.



WE WILL NOT BE MOVED: Malcolm Douglas leads last week's protest against gas development.