

Gas could go south

By DALE MILLER

WOODSIDE Energy has given its strongest indication yet it could pipe gas from the Kimberley to the Pilbara for processing rather than build a controversial plant in the region.

Engineering and construction company KBR announced this month its subsidiary had been awarded a contract by Woodside to complete a concept and definition study on piping gas from the Browse Basin, about 400km north-west of Broome, to the Burrup Peninsula.

Greens candidate for Kalgoorlie Robin Chapple said the investment indicated piping gas to the Pilbara was Woodside's preferred option.

"This looks like the remote Point Perpendicular is now saved from the ravages of being turned into a giant LNG processing hub," he said.

The revelation came despite State Development Minister Eric Ripper questioning the financial viability of piping gas from the Kimberley to the Pilbara during a recent visit to

Broome.

"I myself doubt the economics of taking the gas very long distances like that but ultimately that's a commercial decision for the companies," he said.

"I think if we want to see the Browse Basin gas developed and we want to see benefits for the Kimberley, we've got to find an LNG processing site in the Kimberley because if the gas goes to the Pilbara or if the gas goes to Darwin, what benefits will there be for traditional owners and indigenous people in the Kimberley? They will have missed an opportunity if the gas goes to those places."

The State Government's Northern Development Taskforce has been charged with finding suitable locations for one or more LNG hubs.

Woodside Browse LNG development government and community relations manager Annalisa Grubisa said no preferred development

option had been chosen.

She said the company had awarded several contracts including looking at the option of an offshore LNG development.

Save The Kimberley chairman Peter Tucker said an alliance of environmental groups believed an LNG hub could be built south of Broome and still deliver benefits to traditional owners in the Kimberley.

"We don't buy in on the argument that it's not feasible, it's not viable, it's not profitable to push a pipeline down to the Pilbara," he said. "It is, without a doubt."

But Kimberley Land Council executive director Wayne Bergmann said there was no legal framework under the Native Title Act for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley to receive any benefits if LNG developments were built outside the region.

He also questioned what effect another gas plant on the Burrup would have on Aboriginal rock art.