

## Oil and gas groups face Kimberley title claim

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**KIMBERLEY** Aborigines have signalled they will aggressively use their native title rights to force the oil and gas industry into respecting their wishes.

As a consultation process begins across coastal Kimberley communities about where gas processing plants might be located, the Kimberley Land Council warned that traditional owners had bargaining power that didn't exist when the state's earlier resource projects got the go-ahead.

At a meeting in Broome, land council executive member Frank Sebastian said two

decades of iron ore and Northwest Shelf gas production further south in the Pilbara region had seen few real benefits flow back to Aborigines.

But he said native title rights, introduced in the intervening years and already granted over 45 per cent of the Kimberley land mass, had given local people a stronger bargaining position. "We've got a voice now and some of the best lawyers in the land," he said. "We're gonna use them."

Australia's rise to number two world supplier of liquified natural gas by 2020 depends largely on exploiting Browse Basin gas, a vast gas resource

about 400 kilometres off the Kimberley coast.

West Australian development minister Eric Ripper has told parliament that a shortlist of sites for an onshore gas hub facility, preferably to be shared by international gas companies, will be completed by next year.

Meanwhile, starting this week, every Kimberley community along the coast — some barely accessible by road — will be consulted in coming months about whether they are willing to host one or even two multi-billion-dollar industrial plants in their backyard.

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