

Shire waits on gas Broome wants more details to back LNG

By DALE MILLER

A STAND has been taken by the Broome Shire council over Japanese company Inpex's plans to build a gas plant on the remote Maret Islands.

Both Shire president Graeme Campbell and deputy Shire president Chris Mitchell acted on a determination from council by not supporting Inpex's proposal at a Kimberley zone meeting held in Darwin on November 25.

Inpex is proposing to build a liquefied natural gas plant on the islands to service the Browse Basin, located about 400km north-west of Broome.

Reasons given for the Shire's stance included that Inpex had not provided any information for the council to support the project at the zone meeting and of the local government's need to assess the benefits and costs to the community.

The council said it could also not make an informed decision because the State Government's Northern Development Taskforce had not yet reported on its research into the development of a gas processing hub in the Kimberley.

State Development Minister Eric Ripper said in WA Parliament last month it was his intention that a shortlist of sites for any hub be identified by early next year.

Consideration of supporting Inpex's development at the Maret Islands has been deferred until the next Kimberley zone meeting to allow the company to further brief the Shire.

Inpex declined to comment on the

Broome Shire's decision not to support the company's project at the meeting.

The zone meeting was also attended by representatives from the region's other Shires including Derby/West Kimberley, Halls Creek and Wyndham/East Kimberley.

The Derby/West Kimberley Shire council first confirmed its support for Inpex's proposal in October with Shire president Elsia Archer claiming the success of the Maret Islands project would result in increases in population and associated air, health and education services.

Save the Kimberley spokesman Kevin Blatchford congratulated Broome Shire councillors on not bowing to pressure from Inpex.

"It's a sensible decision in relation to the fact that the Northern Development Taskforce is looking at finding a site for a hub and it looks like the Derby Shire have just succumbed to the lobbying of Inpex," he said.

Mr Blatchford agreed Inpex was keeping details of the project under wraps and claimed it was likely the company would release its environmental impact assessment on the gas plant just prior to Christmas in a bid to fly under the radar.

"It's a bigger decision than a couple of small Shires and the decision needs to be made by the whole State and the country," he said.

Stakeholders are expected to have 28 days to comment on the environmental impact assessment from the date of the document's release.