

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

- **LNG HUB SITE STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT**
Opening address by video to the WWF workshop of NGOs, industry, scientists and Indigenous representatives on Kimberley Coast Natural Values.
Broome, WA
5 February 2008

Transcript

Thanks for the opportunity to talk to you this morning and a special thanks to WWF for hosting this important workshop.

I am very pleased to announce today that the Federal and West Australian Governments will embark on a strategic assessment of the West Kimberley region. I think that's a very important decision that we've made.

The first part of this assessment will identify a site for a single common-user LNG hub for the Browse Basin.

And the second part will assess the cultural and environmental values of the Kimberley, to formally identify its national and international heritage values.

Because you all know that the Kimberley's magnificent, it's very special, it really is unique - strong culture, important environment values, significant economic potential.

So Governments, NGOs, traditional owners, locals, visitors -all want to protect its outstanding landscapes and wildlife, its glorious coastal stretches, and invaluable Indigenous and historic heritage sites.

No one would be more mindful than Kimberley residents and especially Indigenous interests, of the real natural, cultural and economic wealth of this region.

But because the region is resource rich, an energy-hungry world is knocking persistently at its door. It's time for a rational, a considered and holistic approach to planning in the region. And that's what we want to do.

Our challenge is simple: to ensure that future development does not spoil the Kimberley - development must be managed sustainably.

And I don't believe that piecemeal development, with multiple ports and processing plants along the Kimberley coast is in the national interest at all.

So rather than responding to ad hoc developments, the Australian and Western Australian Governments have agreed to look at the bigger picture.

The strategic assessment we have agreed on will ensure that our governments understand the important aspects of the region we wish to protect, before choosing a site for future industrial scale development.

While our search for a single hub will focus on the Kimberley, we will also consider options outside the region.

We'll be looking for a potential hub site with the lowest environmental impact.

We are currently looking at the national heritage values for this area - and we'll be making a further announcement about this work shortly.

As part of the assessment process we will release detailed Terms of Reference.

These set out the sort of information that will be required to underpin our decision on a preferred location.

Your deliberations and discussions over the next few days will help put some flesh on these bones. So obviously we wish you well in that endeavour.

I do want to assure you that officials from both governments will be working with scientists, industry, traditional owners, land councils, conservation groups and the community to come to an agreed outcome.

As I said before, this is the first step towards a comprehensive strategic assessment of the region as a whole - a historic agreement between our two governments.

I do think it's a fair dinkum milestone, a true milestone in development planning in the region, in fact in development planning in Australia.

I wish you well with your work over the next couple of days, it's absolutely critical that we are well informed in our decision making, your efforts will help government's be well informed, and I look forward to hearing and seeing the fruits of your deliberations.

Thanks very much, have a great workshop.