

Historic agreement sets strategic assessment of the Kimberley

The future development of the Kimberley region was discussed at a public forum in Broome on 4 February.



Future industrial development of Western Australia's Kimberley region will be considered in a strategic approach under a joint agreement between the State and Federal Governments.

The 'big picture' strategic assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* will ensure the growing number of development proposals are not processed in an "ad hoc" way and the area's rich natural and cultural heritage will be better protected.

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The strategic assessment will be undertaken in tandem with a broader assessment process by the Northern Development Taskforce (NDT) to identify suitable sites for a single, common-user gas processing hub for the Browse Basin gas fields.

NDT Chair Jim Limerick welcomed the signing of the agreement saying it formalised the process.

"The Kimberley region contains massive reserves of oil and natural gas, of huge economic value to the nation and offering financial benefits to local Indigenous communities," he said.

"This agreement will provide greater certainty to industry, governments and the community because we will have a detailed picture of the region's environmental assets, including national and international heritage values, before choosing a site for future industrial development.

"This will streamline the approvals process for future industrial development because the designated areas will have community and government support."

The area to be studied as part of the assessment stretches from south of Broome to Cape Londonderry on the Timor Sea.

The first stage of the NDT assessment began in Broome on 4 February with a public forum, which was followed by a community forum engaging local government, conservation groups, industry and Indigenous landholders.

"The meetings so far have been very positive and we have had excellent input



Chair Jim Limerick said the agreement on developing the Kimberley region provided greater certainty.

from the parties we have met," Mr Limerick said.

The State Government has also entered into an agreement with the Kimberley Land Council to represent all traditional owners in the region.

Mr Limerick said this would ensure that any potential hub site would proceed with the informed consent of the Indigenous community and that benefits were secured for the Indigenous community. ■