

KLC denies favour

In response to your article 'Battle looms over Maret Islands' (Echo March 13): two points need to be clarified.

Firstly, the Kimberley Land Council's (KLC) criticism in relation to environmental groups' protest against Inpex was aimed at those environmental groups and their decision to use individual Aboriginal people to represent the views of 'Kimberley Traditional Owners'.

This was a blatant misrepresentation and the KLC is disappointed at the use of such a tactic.

Secondly, the comments in relation to the Kandiwal Aboriginal Corporation need to be placed in proper context.

Native title claims and decisions on what happens on country, are made by the Traditional Owners for the area concerned.

These decisions are in no way made or controlled by the KLC; in fact the KLC at all times follows the instructions of Traditional Owners.

Both customary practice and the provisions of the Native Title Act require the proper identification of the correct Traditional Owners to speak for the area in question.

In the case of the Maret Islands, the correct Traditional Owners are members of the Wunambal Gaamberra Aboriginal Corporation.

The Wunambal Gaamberra Aboriginal Corporation was not set up by the KLC; it

was established by Traditional Owners.

The make-up of the group was based on detailed anthropological studies and discussions amongst the area's Traditional Owners.

Kandiwal members were involved in these discussions. The KLC has offered independent mediation between Kandiwal and Wunambal Gaamberra, but this has been rejected by Kandiwal.

This attitude from Kandiwal is not helpful in resolving what is an internal dispute and one which ought not be conducted through the media.

Neither Wunambal Gaamberra nor the KLC are involved in any 'secret discussions' with the State or mining companies.

The KLC is undertaking a comprehensive and transparent consultation process with coastal Traditional Owner groups to ensure all are well informed and are empowered to make their own decisions in relation to development on their country.

The KLC holds no land on behalf of Traditional Owners.

We act on behalf of Traditional Owners to secure title to their country.

At all times we follow the instructions of Traditional Owners.

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