

# Inpex pushing ahead in NT

By CHRIS HINGSTON

JAPANESE multinational Inpex has stepped up plans to use Darwin instead of the Kimberley's Maret Islands as an alternative site for their gas processing plant, with the company formally declaring its intention to begin an environmental assessment of the site in the NT.

However, an Inpex spokeswoman said the Maret Islands option was still alive and a decision on which site to use was due to be made by mid-year. Inpex representatives had previously stated a preference for processing Browse Basin LNG off the Kimberly coastline, but named Middle Arm in Darwin Harbour as a potential alternative site.

The Inpex spokeswoman said the company had issued a notice of intent to the NT Government and last week announced plans to the Commonwealth to undertake an

assessment of the environmental impact of developing a gas processing plant.

Considerable finances and resources had now been committed to completing the assessment, which would look at the potential gas plant's impact on social, cultural and physical environments, the spokeswoman said.

"This is what has been done for the last two years on Maret Island," she said.

Environs Kimberley director Maria Mann said it was too soon to know what the Darwin activity meant for the Maret Islands.

"It appears they are now at least prepared to consider another location," she said.

The news comes after Broome was the only Kimberley shire to vote against granting Inpex conditional

support to develop the Maret Islands gas project.

The conditional approval was supported by the Shires of Wyndham/East Kimberley, Derby/West Kimberley and Halls Creek and granted by the Kimberley Country Zone.

Conditions on the approval include that Inpex establish a \$50 million-a-year for 10 years Kimberley fund, that all State and Federal government environmental requirements are met and an assurance 80 per cent of Inpex workers and contractors are based in the region.

Broome Shire president Graeme Campbell said his Shire was waiting for more information on the environmental and social impact the plant could have on the region.