

Native title claim over harbour

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THE FEDERAL Court will examine a native title claim over land proposed for the \$12billion Inpex gas plant today.

Traditional owner Tibby Quall, 59, has been fighting a decade-long battle for land he says is rightfully owned by his Dangkalaba clan.

The claim is over land and waters around Darwin Harbour, including Middle Arm, West Arm and parts of the Cox Peninsula.

It covers not only the existing gas plant but the Middle Arm sites planned by the NT Government for heavy industry in the near future.

In the Federal Court in Darwin today, the Territory Government will attempt to have the case dismissed.

Mr Quall is represented by Robert Welfare Barristers and Solicitors after more than a decade fighting his case on his own.

In March, he was refused leave to appeal to the High Court for another, similar claim. But he has a further seven native title cases alive for land around Darwin, including Bayview and Howard Springs.

The NT Government will be hoping if today's case is dismissed the other eight will fall with it.

When trying to lure Inpex from Western Australia, former Chief Minister Clare Martin said Middle Arm would not have the unresolved native title concerns present in WA.

If Mr Quall is successful the Government would need to compensate him for the land to be developed.

The case continues as it was revealed the National Native Title Tribunal has more work than it can do in 30 years _ and a third of it is in the Northern Territory.

A Senate Committee was told the tribunal has 513 applications on its books and is working on speeding up the determination process to clear the backlog. Acting tribunal registrar Franklin Gaffney said 135 applications had been determined in 15 years.