

Gas plant decision a step closer

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The Northern Territory Environment Centre says Inpex is a step closer to choosing Darwin for the site of a multi-billion dollar gas plant.

The Department of Natural Resources this week released draft guidelines for the preparation of an environmental impact assessment of the project.

The Environment Centre spokesman Charles Roche says he met with representatives from the gas company Inpex during the week to discuss the proposal.

He says the release of the guidelines will give the public the first formal opportunity to have their say about the project.

"It's not a surprise we have been meeting with Inpex fairly regularly and we met with them last week and they informed us that they were expecting the draft guidelines to come out soon but it is certainly a step closer to having a gas development in Darwin Harbour," he said.

Inpex is expected to choose the Darwin site or another option in Western Australia within the next two months.

A spokeswoman for Inpex says they welcome any public submissions on the draft environmental guidelines.

She says Inpex it is still choosing between Darwin and a site in Western Australia for the project and will not be making a decision until later this year.

She says making the draft guidelines public is a mandatory step in the environmental assessment process and does not signal Darwin is the preferred option for the plant.

People have until the September 1 to make submissions.

Mr Roche has called on the Government to make sure a senior, experienced politician is given the natural resources portfolio.

The Chief Minister Paul Henderson will announce the Government's new ministers tomorrow.

Mr Roche says he hopes the new resources minister is chosen carefully.

"Clearly we need a senior and a very independent mind to be the environment minister when they have such weighty and important decisions to be made in the first few months of their tenure," he said.