

## Inpex taskforce call a 'bit late' for planning

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**THE Territory is scrambling to prepare for the arrival of the \$12 billion Inpex gas plant.**

The decision of the Japanese resources giant to build in Darwin Harbour - the single largest private sector investment in Australia's history - has raised fears about its impact on housing and the economy.

Opposition Leader Terry Mills said a combined public and private sector taskforce was needed to "minimise risk and maximise opportunity".

But Business Minister Kon Vatskalis said the Government already had a taskforce dedicated to the Inpex project.

"That's an interesting proposal from the CLP but it's a bit late," he said.

"We've had this taskforce in place for a long time."

Mr Vatskalis said department chief executives often meet to anticipate the needs of new developments.

The Government has also created a planning unit in the Chief Minister's Department - made up of demographers and economists to prepare for the future needs of the Territory.

Mr Mills said the Government needed "something new" for a project of this size.

The Opposition's taskforce would include the Chief Minister and Opposition Leader, the mayors of Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield, the Police Commissioner, Chamber of Commerce and the chief executives of Treasury, Infrastructure, Health and Education.

The taskforce would also include representatives of Inpex and Total.

"We need something way beyond what we've had before," he said.

Mr Mills said there needed to be a bipartisan approach to planning - but it was necessary for politicians to be involved in the taskforce.

"Parliament is the peak decision-making body."

"It's only fitting politicians are involved in these things," Mr Mills said.

Mr Vatskalis yesterday announced a series of forums across the Territory - costing \$200,000 - to help local businesses reap the benefits of the Inpex project.

"There are big contracts, they're worth a lot of money and we want to make sure this money stays in the Territory," he said.

"I don't want Victorians or people from New South Wales coming here and getting the contracts."