

\$25 billion gas hub now to be built in Darwin

By Nathan Dyer

WA has lost its bid to be the location of a \$25 billion LNG processing hub linked to the proposed development of the Browse Basin gas project.

Japanese gas giant Inpex, which is developing the gas hub, announced last week the project would be based in Darwin Harbour.

The announcement comes after months of speculation surrounding the potential location of the project, with the new WA Premier Colin Barnett accusing former Premier Alan Carpenter of losing the deal to the Northern Territory almost a month ago.

At the time, Member for Kimberley Carol Martin said Mr Barnett's claims were unfounded.

The announcement to build the project in Darwin, which is expected to generate up to 4000 jobs and \$50 billion in economic benefits over 20 years, has angered Federal Member for Kalgoorlie Barry Haase.

Mr Haase told *The Echo* he believed the previous Labor State Government, and in particular the previous Premier Alan Carpenter, was to blame for mishandling negotiations with Inpex.

"Inpex had a window of opportunity to develop the gas field and have a product for sale and they have now wasted four years.

"He missed the whole issue very badly," Mr

Haase said.

Mr Haase also had a swipe at the Kimberley Land Council, which had been heavily involved in negotiations on behalf of the traditional Aboriginal owners of WA's northern coastline.

"It seems to me the process adopted by the KLC was no good. Inpex have said they will not go to the negotiation table with the KLC again."

Mr Haase's comments in regards to the KLC reflect accusations made by Premier Colin Barnett who told ABC radio last week indigenous representatives who had made exorbitant claims about how much they might get out of the project 'may have killed the golden goose'.

In response to those comments, KLC executive director Wayne Bergman told the ABC Mr Barnett's claims were 'ludicrous' because KLC had never got to the negotiation table with Inpex, the deal being called off before negotiations had started.

Mr Haase, who was suspended from the Lower House in Parliament last week after accusing Acting Prime Minister Julia Gillard of being a fraud for purporting to support progress in the Kimberley but imposing impossible restraints, said he was hopeful the State could still attract some commercial activity from the Inpex project.