

Inpex plans work camp

NIGEL ADLAM

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MOST of the army of gas plant workers heading for the Top End are likely to be housed in a temporary but upmarket camp, Inpex said yesterday.

"The days of the construction worker's donga are long over," said the resources company's external communication manager Sean Kildare.

Up to 3000 workers will be building the plant at Blaydin Point at any one time.

Mr Kildare said their impact on the local housing market would not be dramatic if most of them lived in the temporary camp.

He said Inpex was not responsible for a jump in property prices since the company announced it would build the \$12 billion LNG plant alongside Darwin Harbour.

"It's unfair of the real estate agents to suggest we're driving up rents and house prices - we don't own houses, we're not buying any houses.

"Darwin is experiencing the pure profit-making instinct of the real estate industry."

He said Darwin had a housing shortage long before the Inpex project came along.

Mr Kildare said most of the construction workers would have to be recruited from interstate on short-term contracts.

"If there aren't, say, 1400 tradesmen sitting on a park bench in Darwin waiting for our phone call, we'll have to go and find them."

But there would be big opportunities for Territory workers and business, and Inpex is talking to the Larrakia Development Corporation about training Aboriginal workers.

The size of the plant has not yet been determined by engineers, he said, but it will be three times more productive than the ConocoPhillips complex at Wickham Point.

"That doesn't mean it will be three times as big," Mr Kildare said.

"We won't build anything bigger than it has to be."

The plant will sit on 340ha of land.

Construction is expected to begin in 2010, and first exports in 2014.



HOME BASE: Inpex external communication manager Sean Kildare in Darwin yesterday.
Picture: Brad Fleet