

# Barnett picks North Head as Kimberley LNG site

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Colin Barnett yesterday named North Head, 26km north of Beagle Bay, as his preferred site for the development of an LNG precinct in the Kimberley while also revealing that he would scrap the right of veto that had been promised to the traditional owners of the land by the former government.

Releasing the Northern Development Taskforce report which shortlisted four possible sites for the project, the Premier also said the role of the task force, set up by the former government to oversee the growth of the region, would be scaled back.

"I respect and welcome the full involvement of Aboriginal people but no group in our community will be given a legal right above the rest of the community and a right of veto created such ongoing uncertainty that it made it impossible for projects to proceed,"

Mr Barnett said.

Mr Barnett said delays caused by the right of veto had contributed to WA losing the \$25 billion Inpex plant to Darwin last month. But he said there was a "glimmer of hope" the project could be saved.

The State Government would attempt to acquire the land at North Head, part of an Aboriginal reserve, by negotiation but it could be determined in the courts.

Opposition Leader Eric Ripper warned Mr Barnett against the compulsory acquisition of traditional lands, saying negotiation and consultation would deliver a faster outcome. "Indigenous people in the Kimberley are supporters of development," he said. "If the minority Liberal Government goes down the path of compulsory acquisition, they open

themselves up to prolonged delays, division and tortuous legal action."

Kimberley Land Council chief executive Wayne Bergmann urged Mr Barnett to ensure Aboriginal people were not marginalised and said development must deliver lasting benefits.

Mr Ripper also said Mr Barnett's decision to name his preferred site was irresponsible and ran the risk of jeopardising the public consultation process, which would run for 28 days.

Woodside chief executive Don Voelte said he supported North Head as the preferred site.

A spokesman for Federal Environment Minister Peter Garret said the Rudd Government welcomed the opportunity to continue to work with the State Government through the joint strategic assessment framework.



Decision: Colin Barnett releases the task force report yesterday. Picture: Nic Ellis