

Council worry at mining hub

By WA Correspondent KEN BOASE



ABORIGINAL groups have until 11 November to make submissions on the WA Government's preferred site for a mining hub in the State's north. Massive gas developments in the

resource-rich Kimberley region are being planned by major resource companies.

The Kimberley Land Council (KLC) has criticised the development decision-making process by the new Liberal National Party Government of Premier Colin Barnett, saying it looked like it was using 'old, paternalistic methods' to ensure certainty for business.

The WA Government recently released its report on the four sites identified by the previous Labor Government's Northern Development Taskforce, involving Traditional Owners, environmentalists, scientists and engineers.

The four sites identified were Gourdon Bay, south of Broome, James Price Point and North Head, both north of Broome, and the Anjo Peninsula, on the far North Kimberley coast. North Head was named the most preferred site.

Mr Barnett has been vocal in his support for developing liquid natural gas (LNG) in WA as a major energy source for



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Australia and overseas, reducing carbon emissions and ensuring that industry has a clean source of power. But while acknowledging the efforts of the Traditional Owners in helping to identify the four sites named in the report, Mr Barnett insisted that he did not need the permission of the Aboriginal community to develop the sites and would compulsorily acquire the land if necessary.

KLC Executive Officer Wayne Bergman

said the comments were unhelpful and signalled a return to paternalistic policies that disregarded the wishes and aspirations of local Indigenous communities.

"The approach of government or industry seeking compulsory acquisition notices to take away land is the old way of doing agreements with Indigenous people where you kick them off their land, chuck them in the back of vehicles and drive them to the nearest town," he said.

"We've got to this point of having four locations because of this process, so therefore the new Government needs to pick up on a number of those undertakings and move forward with us. We were moving forward on the basis of informed consent."

Mr Bergman also sounded a warning about the cultural and environmental impact of plans by Mr Barnett to build a pipeline from the North Kimberley to Darwin for the Japanese Impex gas industrial complex.

He said the Premier's announcement that the pipeline would be built by industry is misleading, and every effort should be made to attract Impex back to the North Kimberley coast.

People wanting to make public submissions on the Kimberley LNG precinct must do so before 11 November.