

Council votes on LNG

By CHRIS HINGSTON

THE Broome Shire council has voted to conditionally support an LNG hub on Shire land on the proviso the State Government and the resource industry address a raft of concerns over the impact a processing hub will have on the district.

The Broome Shire council was split over what to include in a submission to the Northern Development Taskforce – with half the eight councillors calling for the Shire to oppose the hub, while other councillors believed a gas plant was inevitable and it was the council's role to broker the best outcome for the Shire.

Shire president Graeme Campbell used his president's casting vote to break the four-all deadlock, supporting a motion designed to ensure concerns over the introduction of oil and gas in the Shire were dealt with.

Sites identified for a possible hub include the Dampier Peninsula's James Price Point and North Head and Gourdon Bay.

Among the recommendations agreed to was the need to create a Kimberley regional development fund to deal with the long-term effects of a hub and a call for the

WA Government and resource industry to conduct a wide-ranging social impact study assessing the effect a gas plant would have on issues such as health, housing, education, indigenous employment and tourism.

The Broome Shire's inclusion as a key stakeholder in any planning and management discussions over the arrival of industry was another key request.

Cr Campbell said if the concerns were not addressed in the short to medium term then the Shire would not support a gas hub.

He said a gas hub was "almost inevitable" and the Shire needed to be involved in gas hub negotiations. "My support for this motion is support for being included ... we need strong representation from this community and this Shire," Cr Campbell said.

"It's far better for us to be inside the tent where negotiations are taking place, than outside in the desert not knowing what is going on." Councillor Nik Wevers gave an impassioned speech calling for council to oppose a gas hub in the Shire, saying this was the most important decision the current

council would make.

She said the hub jeopardised the region's pristine wilderness and indigenous traditions and heritage, as well as what the Shire had built over the past 125 years.

"What we have built in this time we are going to throw away by building a hub on any of the sites on the Dampier Peninsula and Gourdon Bay. We must not do it," Cr Wevers said.

Councillor Michael Albert said it was important council showed a strong voice and declared this was not what the community wanted.

"If we can have a strong enough voice I feel the State will listen," he said.

Councillor Robert Lander said he agreed with Cr Wevers but he was bothered by how remotely council had been treated in the hub selection process.

"Whether we have an opinion or not we are probably going to get steamrolled," he said. He said this motion gave the council an opportunity to influence the process.



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