

Govt will buy Kimberley LNG land if needed: Barnett

- **Chalpat Sonti**
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The Government will compulsorily buy the land at the proposed Kimberley LNG gas hub if indigenous owners do not reach agreement among themselves to sell, Premier Colin Barnett says.

Indigenous owners have already knocked back an offer of \$500 million from Woodside to build a processing plant for its Browse Basin projects in the Kimberley.

Agreement was also not reached with the Inpex-Total consortium, which is now all but certain to move the processing facilities for its \$25 billion Browse project to Darwin after the previous state government indicated it wanted one processing hub along the Kimberley coast rather than a proliferation of sites.

The consortium had wanted to build a processing plant on the environmentally-sensitive Maret Islands, but met with opposition from the government and environmentalists as well as being unable to negotiate a deal with indigenous owners.

Kimberley Land Council chief executive Wayne Bergmann said at the time: "Mining companies cannot expect to be able to do what they like with no regard to people or the environment by paying off Aboriginal people with unfair compensation deals".

Mr Barnett has been a fierce critic of the previous government over the Inpex decision, calling it the greatest embarrassment in WA's history. He said he wanted to ensure major private sector gas projects such as Woodside's and Gorgon, on Barrow Island, went ahead.

A quick decision on a hub site could also mean a slim chance of attracting Inpex back to WA, Mr Barnett said.

"The government will acquire that land, " he said.

While he would prefer indigenous owners to reach agreement among themselves to sell the land to the government, it would use the provisions under the Public Works Act to compulsorily acquire whichever site was chosen.

"The government will acquire that land, There will be a compensation package, " Mr Barnett said.

"If we don't do that there will be no LNG development in the Kimberley... and no benefits for the indigenous community or the wider community.

"I'm going to bring this process to a fair conclusion."

Indigenous owners would receive more benefits from the projects being developed rather than from the sale of the land itself.

Mr Bergmann has been contacted for comment.