

Broome council votes no to gas hub, wants options explored

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Broome Shire Council is calling for more research and options to be considered in the push to develop a gas hub near Broome after concerns were expressed that the project will destroy the environment and damage the area's pearling, fishing and tourism industries.

The council narrowly passed a motion declaring the shire did not want the gas hub built on the coastline within its boundaries after extensive debate before a packed public gallery at a meeting on Wednesday night.

The council's opposition to the hub, which reflects division within the Broome community over the location for processing gas from the Browse Basin, comes on the eve of key advice being released by the Environmental Protection Authority today on the four short-listed sites for the precinct.

Colin Barnett, who is scheduled to visit Broome today but may have to cancel the trip because of a cyclone threat, has promised to nominate a site for the hub by next week.

The Premier has come under fire from environmental and Aboriginal groups for identifying two of the four short-listed sites as his preferred locations for the hub before the release of the environmental advice.

The two sites identified by Mr Barnett, who prefers the North Head site and has nominated James Price Point as his second choice, are north of Broome, within the shire boundaries.

Broome shire president Graeme Campbell, who voted against the motion at this week's meeting because of concerns the council would be excluded from decision-making on the location of the hub, said he wanted an urgent meeting with the Premier to discuss the concerns about the precinct being built on the coastline.

Mr Barnett said yesterday he wanted to meet representatives of the shire and local environmental groups during his visit to Broome, which would include a tour of the alternative sites.

He said he would prefer to reach an agreement with traditional owners over the location of the gas precinct, but would not rule out compulsory acquisition.

Kimberley Land Council chief executive Wayne Bergmann, who met Mr Barnett in Perth yesterday, said compulsory acquisition of the land was tantamount to stealing and the Premier had committed to working on an agreement over the site.

AMANDA BANKS