

Site for gas hub to be known before Christmas

19th December 2008, 8:30 WST

The site of a major gas hub to be built near Broome will be known before Christmas, Premier Colin Barnett confirmed today.

Despite an ongoing community backlash and concerns the project will destroy the environment and damage the area's pearling, fishing and tourism industries, the premier said he would not rule out compulsory acquisition of land for the project.

"I would always prefer a consent agreement that is in the interests of all parties to do that," he said.

"But you know, without being dramatic, if this land is not secured by the State and then available to be leased out to proponents of LNG, then there will be no LNG project in the Kimberley and there will be no benefits for the Aboriginal people of the Kimberley.

"There will be no benefits for the wider economy of the Kimberley and that's the bottom line."

The premier is expected to travel to Broome today, pending the cyclone threat, to talk to representatives of the Broome Shire Council and local environment groups about the proposed gas hub.

On Wednesday the shire called for more research and options before a decision was made on the site of the development.

Mr Barnett has come under fire from environment 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.

Kimberley Land Council chief executive Wayne Bergmann, who met Mr Barnett in Perth yesterday, said compulsory acquisition of the land was tantamount to stealing.

Mr Barnett said he didn't want to see another project lost to another State like the \$25 billion Inpex project, in which a Japanese gas company took their development to the Northern Territory due to disputes over environmental and native title regulations.

PERTH

ALEISHA PREEDY and AMANDA BANKS

