

Media Release

August 3, 2009

WA Premier proposal to dam Fitzroy to send water to mines in Pilbara unsustainable

WA Premier Colin Barnett's vision of piping Kimberley water to mines in the Pilbara is 'fatally flawed', said Environs Kimberley Director Martin Pritchard.

'The Premier's plan to dam the Fitzroy River in the Kimberley to send water south cost him the election in 2005. An independent assessment panel found that it was too expensive, and environmentally and culturally unacceptable,' said Mr Pritchard.

'We don't believe that the people of Western Australia have changed their mind on this; we think they would vote against any similar proposal.

'The Kimberley and the Fitzroy River are internationally significant because of their environmental and cultural values. The Federal government is in the process of National Heritage listing of the Kimberley, which would lead to World Heritage listing – why would you want to threaten somewhere that is of international significance to send water to mines?' said Mr Pritchard.

'Damming the Fitzroy River could cause irreversible damage to plants and animals, including internationally threatened species like the Freshwater Sawfish, which can grow to seven metres in length.
(<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/18174/0/full>).

'Thousands of people opposed the damming of the Fitzroy in the past and will do so in the future. The Premier is out of step with community values and needs.

'Mr Barnett should put in place a comprehensive water management plan for the Pilbara. Mining companies should use water responsibly; they need to maximise water use efficiency and they need to recycle. They owe it to the public to demonstrate that they are making the best possible use of water — particularly as they do not have to pay for it.

'To pipe water from the Kimberley to mines in the Pilbara would be environmentally irresponsible and unacceptable to the community,' Mr Pritchard said.

Media Contact:

Martin Pritchard

Mobile 0427 548 075