

Media Release

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WA Premier undermining strategic environmental assessment for proposed Kimberley gas project

'The WA Premier Colin Barnett is looking increasingly desperate in his bid to build a gas industrial precinct in the Kimberley. To get his way he is undermining the environmental assessment for the project,' said Environs Kimberley (EK) Director Martin Pritchard.

'The Premier is trying to force Woodside's joint venture partners to build a 3,500 hectare gas processing plant at James Price Point near Broome.

'The project would need two 125 megawatt power stations, a desalination plant, an airport and a town for 3,500 construction workers, as well as a new port capable of accommodating gas super-tankers at an environmentally sensitive site in the Kimberley.

'The joint venture partners, Chevron, Shell, BP and BHP Billiton, must be thinking about the damage to their international reputation if they go ahead with a development that would make a heavy environmental impact on a sensitive site in the Kimberley,' said Mr Pritchard.

'The industrial site has been proposed for an area previously earmarked by government for a national park. A number of internationally threatened species, including Humpback Whales, endangered Turtles, Dugong, Snub-fin Dolphin and Sawfish would be at risk from the dredging and blasting of reefs and seagrass beds for a new port, as well as from the huge increase in shipping.

According to analysts, piping gas to the Pilbara to be processed is a much cheaper option than building a new industrial area and port in the Kimberley.

'The Premier's dictatorial stance is undermining and pre-empting the strategic assessment being undertaken for the proposal by the State and Federal Governments. Under the strategic assessment, sites outside the Kimberley are being considered and the Federal Minister for the Environment will make a decision in mid-2010 about whether or not the gas proposal can go ahead in the Kimberley,' said Mr Pritchard.

'The proposal for an industrial gas processing plant and downstream industries is of international significance because of the environmental values of the Kimberley. We are calling on the Prime Minister to stop the WA Premier from undermining the strategic environmental assessment process. We question whether the Premier has the legal right to force companies to use the Kimberley site. We believe that to do so would contravene the strategic assessment agreement between the State and Federal governments.' Mr Pritchard said.

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