

Media Release

Friday, 1 October, 2010

Standing room only as Broome Council jumps the gun to give go-ahead on industrialisation & James Price Point.

In a massive show of community concern, more than 200 people attended the Shire of Broome meeting last night, with people spilling onto the verandahs and hallways outside the packed Chamber.

Feelings are running high in the small town where a massive gas refinery and industrial port are planned by the State Government and a consortium of oil and gas companies headed by Woodside Petroleum.

Residents fear that the oil and gas industry will change the tourism mecca and gateway to the Kimberley into another WA industrial town.

“This draft strategy takes Broome down the road of industrialisation and will act as a stepping stone for the industrialisation of the rest of the Kimberley.” Martin Pritchard, Director of regional environment group Environs Kimberley said.

Council also considered a planning application by Woodside Petroleum to undertake investigations into the availability of groundwater for its proposed refinery. The proposal would require the clearing of 25 hectares of bush for drill pad sites and dams as well as the pumping of 5.2 million litres of water per day from 6 bores.

The controversial proposal 40km north of Broome would require a new industrial port in the middle of a whale calving and popular recreational fishing area as well as the clearing of several thousand hectares of land including rare rainforest vegetation.

In December 2008 the Shire voted¹ to not support the gas refinery in the Shire of Broome because of the environmental damage that would be caused and the potentially negative impacts on pearling, fishing and tourism.

Last night, the Shire passed a resolution to adopt a draft Local Planning Strategy which had been developed without community consultation, and neglecting the guidelines set down by the State planning watchdog the West Australian Planning Commission.

“The community has had virtually zero input into this document. This is contrary to the very clear guidelines set out by the WA Planning Commission. We’re concerned the Shire is being coerced by the State Government to ram through plans that will clear the way for massive industrialisation of the Shire, with virtually no public scrutiny or input.”

“This community is passionate about the Kimberley and our unique culture and environment. The huge crowd last night sends a message loud and clear to the Shire and the State government: we don’t want the town and region turned into an oil and gas and mining province like the Pilbara,” Mr Pritchard said.

The Shire approved the planning application but not before the suspension of the meeting due to the protestations of the packed gallery.

Media Contact: Martin Pritchard 08 9192 1922 or 0427 548 075. Photos available on request.

¹ <http://www.broome.wa.gov.au/council/pdf/minutes/2008/20081217om.pdf>