

MEDIA RELEASE

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Premier's hollow promise to protect dinosaur footprints exposed by Government report

Internationally renowned fossilised dinosaur footprints on the Kimberley coast would be destroyed for a gas refinery and port, according to a Government commissioned report. WA Premier Colin Barnett has previously given a commitment to protect the footprints.

The Report¹ is part of the Strategic Assessment for the location of LNG refineries to process Browse Basin gas on the Kimberley coast, released earlier this week. It states:

"The exact location for the proposed Browse LNG precinct indicates a direct impact on the sauropod underprints. Their removal or destruction is regrettable..."

"The proposed development of a LNG plant at James Price Point would require significant and possibly ongoing dredging of one or more channels and the construction of groynes and bulkheads. Both groynes and breakwater structures cause a re-distribution of sand transported by longshore currents. The net impact on dinosaur footprints in the area is unpredictable, but currently exposed sauropod footprints may well become buried under sand..."

In September 2010² WA Premier Colin Barnett stated:

"The dinosaur prints which are in that area will be protected... [and there would be]...no impact on any heritage site of importance."

"Now the dinosaur prints, I haven't seen the dinosaur footprints, but they are there, but the plant won't be on top of the dinosaur prints."

EnviroNS Kimberley Director Martin Pritchard said, "The Government's own report clearly says these dinosaur footprints at James Price Point will be removed or destroyed, while the Premier says they will be protected. These fossilised prints are of enormous cultural significance to Traditional Owners, and make up practically the entire fossil record for dinosaurs in the western half of the Australian continent.

"It's hard to imagine how building a 25km² industrial site and port will do anything but destroy this internationally significant dinosaur fossil record" Mr Pritchard said.

A letter signed by 86 scientists from 16 countries has been sent to the WA and Australian Governments this year, asking for protection of the footprints. The letter stated that some of the most important sets of footprints are situated where they face the greatest risk of damage or degradation if industrial development is allowed to proceed near James Price Point."³

"The WA Premier has recognised that dinosaur footprints exist at the proposed location for a gas refinery, and he has made a public commitment to protect the tracks. It's time for the Premier to back up his promise to protect these irreplaceable footprints," Mr Pritchard said.

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¹ Preliminary Report upon the Palaeontology (incl. Dinosaur Footprints) of the Broome Sandstone in the James Price Point Area, WA. Prepared for Department of State Development

² ABC 720, 14 Sept 2010 http://www.premier.wa.gov.au/Ministers/Colin-Barnett/documents/transcripts/transcriptCBarnett_20100914.pdf

³ ABC Kimberley April 20, 2010 <http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2010/04/19/2876835.htm>