

gasbag

lifting the lid on Browse

Are you wondering what all this talk about gas in Broome is about? Do you want to be kept informed? If yes, this **gasbag** bulletin series from Environs Kimberley should help. **gasbag** will come straight to your inbox to:

- tell you in plain English what the Government and multi-national oil companies are planning for the beautiful Kimberley and Broome
- let you know the latest news on Gas.

This issue gives a brief overview:

- Where's the gas?
- What's the problem?
- Why the Kimberley?
- Why James Price Point?
- What are the alternatives?

The next bulletin will start drilling into the detail.

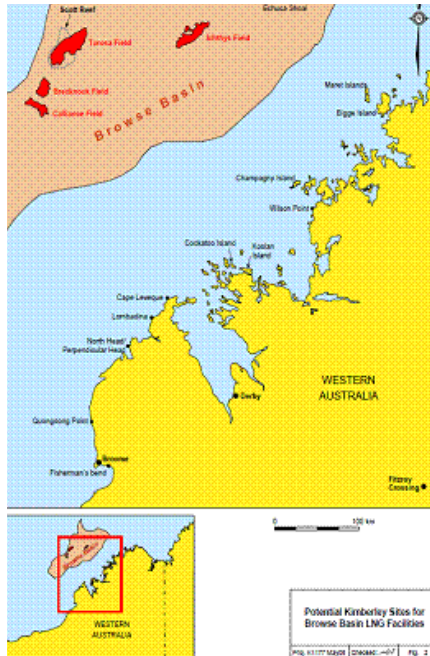
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gas? what gas?

400km northwest of Broome lies one of Australia's largest gas and oil deposits, under the ocean in the Browse Basin. Gas always comes with oil, known as 'condensate'.

There are seven different fields with enough natural gas in them to make serious profits. Multinational oil and gas companies with leases in the Browse Basin include: Woodside, Shell, Chevron, BP, BHP Billiton, Inpex, Nexus, Conoco Philips and Osaka Gas.

There's a lot of gas and a lot of companies. They all want to get the gas (and oil) from under the sea floor, process it and sell it overseas.



Map Source Browse Basin Gas Technical Report, Development Options Study, Report 1 Of 3, Lng Plant Site Selection Validation, Prepared For The Northern Development Taskforce May 2008 Gaffney, Cline & Associates

so what's the problem?

Greenhouse gas emissions

When the gas is brought to the surface, it is piped to a floating platform or a land-based processing plant. Here, it must be liquefied to reduce its volume so that it can be sent overseas in big tankers (cooling gas to -160 Celsius turns it into liquid, reducing it to 1/600 of its volume).

This processing and transport takes a huge amount of energy and releases millions of tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This is all *before* the gas is burnt as fuel, when another enormous volume of greenhouse gases will be released.

A number of processing plants exist already in WA, including one at the Burrup Peninsula in the Pilbara.

These industrial sites take up wide areas of land, require a port, and cause heavy pollution of the air and sea.

The environmental damage brought about by such developments can hardly be imagined. A future edition of **gasbag** will describe these in detail.

why the Kimberley Coast?

The Kimberley is the nearest landfall to the Browse Basin. There was concern that oil and gas companies would all apply for their own gas plants, building a whole string of them along the Kimberley coast. To avoid this, the government planned for a single hub or precinct, to be used by all the companies.

In 2007 the WA Labor Government set up the Northern Development Taskforce (NDT) to find a single site for an LNG processing plant. The options that were looked at included the Pilbara, Kimberley and Northern Territory. Options in the Pilbara and Northern Territory were not seriously considered – they were said to be too far away for gas to be piped to. This proved untrue. Inpex has now chosen to take its gas to Darwin, and industry experts admit that piping to an existing site in the Pilbara would be cheaper than building a new industrial site on the Kimberley coast.

why James Price Point?

After looking at 40-odd sites on the Kimberley coast, the government rejected all but four on environmental, cultural and technical grounds. In late 2008 the new WA Premier, Colin Barnett, dumped the NDT and made a unilateral decision that North Head on the Dampier Peninsula was the best site. The WA Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) published a report in December 2008 stating that North Head was too environmentally sensitive because Humpback whales have their calves and train them there. The report said that the least sensitive site was James Price Point.

Since then, James Price Point has been the Premier's preferred site.

the thin edge of the wedge?

In 2005 the Department of Industry and Resources published a report called *Developing the West Kimberley's Resources*. This report outlined a future for the Kimberley based on mining and the destruction of the environment. Such a future was dependent on a source of energy coming ashore – near Broome or Derby. The proposed gas plant at James Price Point is the main part of the jigsaw puzzle that would turn the Kimberley into a mining and industrial region.

MEDIUM DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO — BAUXITE
Alumina Refinery on Western Dampier Peninsula



Figure 42 Infrastructure requirement for bauxite mine at Mitchell Plateau, alumina refinery in vicinity of Broome
Source: Developing the West Kimberley's Resources 2005 Page 130

James Price Point as it is now.



Qatar LNG plant, or James Price Point as it soon could be.

Source: Browse Basin Gas Technical Report, Development Options Study, Report 1 Of 3, Lng Plant Site Selection Validation, Prepared For The Northern Development Taskforce May 2008 Gaffney, Cline & Associates

“...we sighted four humpback whales directly off the point in 30 minutes.”

Annabelle Sandes
Kimberley Whale Watching
— James Price Point
23 August 2009



photo: Annabelle Sandes

leave it in the ground

With dangerous climate change staring humanity in the face, the most common-sense approach would be to leave the gas in the ground and develop energy from renewable sources: solar, wind, wave and geothermal.

Future generations will need energy. There is no need to exploit all the gas now and leave the people who come after us with nothing. Arguments that gas will be a transition fuel from coal to renewables are false without a plan and an international agreement to make it so.

floating

If the government and multinationals insist on exploiting the gas and oil, there is the option of a floating platform at sea near the source to process the gas – this would not require land clearing nor an industrial port. The government doesn't like this scenario, which bypasses the mainland and reduces its revenues. Shell plans to do it.

Pilbara

Inpex is piping its gas to Darwin. Woodside and its joint venture partners could pipe to the Pilbara. Everyone admits this would be cheaper than building a new Kimberley site. Only Woodside and Government are pushing for James Price Point.

NEXT ISSUE

- Social Impact assessment – a flawed process
- James Price Point – too precious to destroy

“An unremarkable landscape...”

WA Premier Colin Barnett



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