

# gasbag

lifting the lid on Browse

## GAS HUB IS NOT A DONE DEAL

Be assured, the fight for James Price Point is a long way from over. The final decision on the gas hub will not be made until at least mid-2012.

Readers may feel confused by conflicting news stories, so Gasbag will try to put you straight.

In May, 60% of the traditional owners of the gas hub site voted in favour of the construction of an LNG refinery at James Price Point. On their own admission, they voted Yes under the threat of compulsory acquisition, believing they had no choice. They did not give 'free, prior, informed consent' as required under Article 32 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, of which Australia is a signatory. (*'We don't want it.'* Wayne Barker, *Jabirr Jabirr negotiator for KLC*).

Aboriginal people from Broome and nearby communities who will be affected by the hub, without receiving any benefits, have not been consulted. Neither has the rest of the community, including small businesses. All have been mobilising.

A blockade at Manari Road was kept running for a month by stalwart souls, black and white, old and young, who braved the cold to camp out and be awakened before dawn by Woodside trucks trying to pass. Supporters joined them around the clock, bringing food, water, ice.

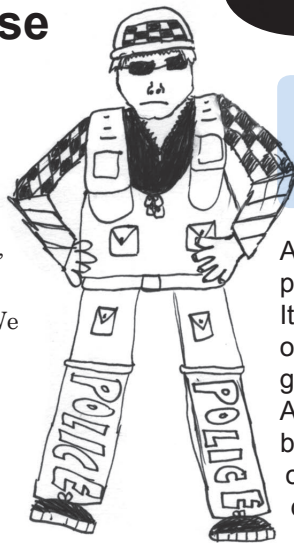
In May, prominent businessman Geoff Cousins addressed Broome business people about the proposed gas hub. He didn't pull his punches.

'It's about money,' he said, and 'Companies lie.' We can't argue with that.

On 3 June, Gary Slee from Karratha came to talk about the disastrous effects of a gas plant on his town: rents up to \$2,500 a week and small businesses unable to find or accommodate workers. We hear that Dampier gets so polluted you can't see the town from the air. Lovely.

On 8 June, hundreds of Broome families, old and new, met at St Mary's College to express their objection to the proposed gas hub and sign a letter and petition. They were asserting their rights, not to James Price Point, but to their home town. They want Broome to keep its character; they don't want it turned into a mining town; they don't want to be inhaling toxic gases from up the track; they don't want inflated rents and house prices; they know what is most valuable about this part of the world, and it isn't gas or oil or heavy industry; it's the land, the sea, the people who live there and the unsurpassed nature.

On 1 July, the intrepid Anne Poelina gave a powerful speech at the NAIDOC week opening ceremony, presenting her vision of a sustainable Kimberley. She then led a small contingent to Canberra to present her case. A woman to watch.



## Woodside in trouble?

Analysts are talking down Woodside's prospects of developing the gas hub at JPP. Its Pluto project costs have blown out and other companies processing LNG have got off to a quicker start. Energy analyst Adrian Wood is betting that 'Woodside's \$30 billion-plus Browse LNG is likely to be one of the casualties.' Standard and Poor's has downgraded Woodside's credit rating and its share price took a tumble recently.

## vale Mr Voelte

We have mixed feelings about the departure of CEO Don Voelte from Woodside. Much as we failed to appreciate his braggadocio, he made a lovely target. Rumours to the effect that Don's departure has anything to do with Gasbag's rapier wit are, unfortunately, likely to be ill-founded.

## Don's bons mots

'We love Browse. We love the way that it is going and we hear things that are said about it which are basically not true'... 'We know exactly where we stand and we see no roadblocks.' (Nov 30, 2010)

*Where were you looking, Don?*

'I think one of the greatest things I will have achieved is not taking my company into coalbed methane (aka coalseam gas or fracking).'

*Think how much more Don would have achieved by not taking Woodside into Browse!*

## A Sad Day – but we fight on!

Few readers can have missed the news of 5 July: the brave community blockade was finally broken by police. Mind you, they had to fly up a large contingent of the black-clad Regional Operations Group (ROG) to do it. These lads and lasses spent a lot of time standing in lines in the sun, looking fierce and getting their ears burnt. Then they went off for lunch. They came back in a nasty mood, formed a V and advanced on the singing blockaders, pushing and shoving people out of the way. Scuffles ensued, and there were arrests. A man achieved a lock-on under one of the three bulldozers, causing a delay, but eventually the police and convoy moved on, accompanied by shouting protesters, who were eventually shaken off. On 6 July, the bulldozers started clearing 25 hectares of virgin bush for drilling studies — without a clearance under Section 18 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Even before the bulldozers went in there had been reports of trampled sites, missing artefacts and more. Dept of Indigenous Affairs is investigating.



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