

KIMBERLEY LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS PROJECT

Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral) [5.42 pm]: Before the very important question time, I was talking about the establishment of a natural gas precinct in the Kimberley, and about the value of such a precinct to the development of a sustainable international tourism industry in the Kimberley, along with the proposed new airport development. This motion is about whether any land will be resumed for that precinct. The answer is, of course, that no land will be resumed for that precinct. An Indigenous land use agreement is in progress for that precinct. Under that agreement, the government will lease the land from the native title holders for 99 years. Therefore, native title will not be wiped out. That is very similar to the proposition that was put up by the now opposition when in government when it brought in the Indigenous Conservation Title Bill 2007 for the establishment of Rudall River National Park. The proposition in that bill was that the land would be leased from the Indigenous owners for 99 years, and the traditional owners would be given \$15 million a year to manage that park. This is similar to that. No land will be resumed for this precinct. As has been pointed out by Hon Jon Ford, this is very much an amicable agreement.

I want to quote an article on the ABC Online *Kimberley News* of 10 April. The article is headed “Native title groups eye gas future”, and it states—

The Kimberley Land Council in northern Western Australia says native title groups in the region would be supportive of liquefied natural gas facilities as a way of securing their economic future.

The council’s Wayne Bergmann says traditional owners are prepared to negotiate on one industrial hub rather than fragmented development up and down the coast to service the Browse Basin gas fields.

The comments follow a national media campaign by Broome-based lobby group Cultural Heritage Environmental Advocacy for the Kimberley (CHEAK), urging caution over gas development on the wilderness coastline.

Mr Bergmann says three native title groups have said they will work together to identify a suitable site.

“We’re in challenging times now and we’re required to look at economic opportunities, where we are building our own economic independence,” Mr Bergmann said.

“There is so much oil and gas out there, or condensate, it’s important for us to be part of that economy.”

That is very relevant to this debate.

I also want to quote an article in *The Australian* of 29 April this year. The article is titled “Stepping on the Gas”, and it has the subtitle “Opponents of developing the Kimberley should get a grip”. There is a valuable comment in that article that is worth noting —

The go-head for the Browse Basin gas project and processing plant on Western Australia’s Kimberley coast is a win for the country in general and specifically the region’s indigenous community. Browse holds one-third of Australia’s offshore gas reserves and over its 30-year life the \$185 billion project will generate jobs, enormous export income and provide \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion to local Aborigines. In a period when major investment projects are few and far between it is hard to imagine a better outcome for all concerned. The project will pump money into a remote region, it has the potential to provide Aboriginal communities with facilities to improve sub-standard health and education levels and during the construction phase the Browse project will require 6000 fly-in fly-out jobs, plus hundreds of jobs for locals.

I am not sure whether the fly in, fly out figure will be that high; the figure I have heard is 4 000 jobs. The article continues —

Nor does it ignore the interests of the environment, with the state Environmental Protection Authority approving the James Point site for the processing plant.

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But because there are always individuals who hate change on principle, people are bothered by Browse. Environmentalists worry what will happen to whales and say the pristine Kimberley should stay unsullied.

We heard a ministerial statement on 3 October to the effect that a marine park will be established at Camden Sound in the Kimberley. The government has also released a report entitled “Foundations for a Kimberley

strategy". I must admit that I have not read it, but it is on the website of the Department of Environment and Conservation. That has been taken care of as well. We will be looking after the environment as we go. Hon Jon Ford quoted an article from *The West Australian* of 28 April 2009, headed "Gas hub deal signed, the rest comes down to trust". He referred to a few parts of that article, but I would like to add a bit more that he did not read out.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.