

KIMBERLEY LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS PRECINCT

Motion

Resumed from 15 October on the following motion moved by Hon Jon Ford —

- (1) That this house expresses its concern at the comments made by the Premier to the Committee for Economic Development Australia conference on Tuesday, 3 March 2009 in which he referred to a proposed LNG precinct to the north of Broome and stated —

... we are proceeding in developing an LNG precinct to the north of Broome. That's not the spectacular part of the Kimberley coast, it's flat tableland, no people living within probably 30 or 40 kilometres of the area ... That's important, we're trying to do that by negotiation, the timetable is the end of this month. If we can't do it by negotiation, the State will resume the land. I'll do that reluctantly, but we will do it. We will not hold up economic development and we will not deny the people of the Kimberley—and particularly the Aboriginal people—the opportunity from some economic independence and some economic security.
- (2) That this house calls on the Premier to —
 - (a) explain how he can claim to be negotiating in good faith when he put on public record that if he does not get a negotiated outcome, he will resume the land to develop an LNG precinct to the north of Broome; and
 - (b) explain why he is presenting a veiled threat to Indigenous people in respect of this matter and whether this is a sign of things to come.

HON JON FORD (Mining and Pastoral) [4.07 pm]: Members may recall that when debate was adjourned on this motion, I was talking about some of the backflipping that the Premier has engaged in with this project, and also about the bullying by the Premier, with the Premier saying, on the one hand, that he is an advocate for the best interests of Indigenous people and he wants to see them benefit from any future development that may or may not happen in the Kimberley, but, on the other hand, talking about how he will compulsorily acquire the land at James Price Point because it is “the place”. History shows that initially the site was to be North Point, and that was “the place.” Then that became “not the place,” and now James Price Point has become the place.

Last week I was going through the chronology of the project and quoting some of the media coverage, and I will continue along that vein. At the time the debate was adjourned, I was just starting to read from an article in *The West Australian* dated 28 April 2009 by Robert Taylor titled, “Gas hub deal signed, the rest comes down to trust”. Members may recall that in one of the Premier’s earlier statements he described the James Price Point area as not being typical of the Kimberley, because it is not that attractive and it is flat ground. I argue that the trouble about those comments is that the Premier has put offside people whom he did not necessarily need to, particularly the locals. The local people who live in the Broome district who recreate in that area and also visitors who regularly recreate in that area know that it gives good unfettered access to the coast.

Robert Taylor had been to the Kimberley for the signing of the gas hub deal and he noticed that too. In his article, he writes —

James Price Point is not the kind of place you’d get to and immediately think, what a great spot for a gas processing plant.

It’s not the nondescript piece of scrubby Kimberley coastline we’ve been led to believe but a magnificent pristine curved beach set against a dramatic backdrop of red rock cliff 60km north of Broome.

Robert Taylor is not a typical visitor to the Kimberley, either. I do not really know, but it is likely that this was his first visit to the area. However, it appears that he saw what I saw when I visited that area. Having said that, I am supportive of the gas hub being located there, because it will provide a lot of benefit to local people if it goes ahead, particularly Indigenous people and a broader range of people who traditionally have been supported by such projects. A coalition of traditional owners have an agreement among themselves that irrespective of which of these preferred sites is chosen for the gas hub, everybody who is a signatory to the negotiation agreement will receive a benefit. It is groundbreaking in that regard.

The article goes on to talk about the speeches and points that were raised. It states —

Yesterday, everyone participating in the ceremonial signing of an agreement between the site’s traditional owners, the Jabirr Jabirr people, gas giant Woodside and the State and Federal governments

for use of the land made a point of saying they would do everything possible to preserve the area's environment, natural and cultural heritage.

Robert Taylor commented in his article as follows —

Easier said than done. The other word bandied about a lot was “trust”, ...

Trust is essential in these sorts of dealings. People must be consistent in what they say and the people involved in the negotiations must be made to feel that they are involved. If people use threats when they do not need to do that, they break down that trust and the stakeholder ownership. The result is that they create suspicion.

People have good hypocrisy radars. As members of Parliament, we are exposed to a healthy level of cynicism in the community, which is fed by all sorts of things, including us. However, the Premier needs to avoid situations in which he adds to the perception that people cannot be trusted or are acting in self-interest. In this case, on the one hand he is saying that he will look after these people, but on the other hand he is saying that he will take their land from them. According to this article, the people there responded cautiously. I was not there, but I have spoken to the local member, Carol Martin, who was there.

Hon Ken Baston: I was there.

Hon JON FORD: Hon Ken Baston might be able to comment on this. The article states —

Asked to perform the traditional welcome to country, Jabirr Jabirr elders produced a very different version from that usually trotted out in Perth.

There was no singing or dancing, just the naming of places and a steady insistence that they had the right to decide the area's future.

If that is accurate, that is as strong as a direct comeback to a threat one would get from an Aboriginal person other than a spear, in a traditional sense. As a general rule Aboriginal people will not directly criticise somebody without paying due respect to that person's name. A typical first comment from somebody would be, “Joe Blow's father was a good man.” We would know from that signal that that person was about to say something that was not complimentary about the next person that he or she was about to name—usually the son. An Aboriginal person will pay a compliment by naming a person and will then describe the problem. When somebody says that they did not perform their normal welcome to country, what the Aboriginal people are saying is, according to this article —

“You people don't know what we've been through. Our Mum and Dad used to work for us but not get us fed properly. Work on the station just for tea and bread and shoes and shirts,” ...

There is a clear message in that that this is their land and it does not matter what anybody says. Even if the land is compulsorily acquired from them, it will still be regarded as their land and nobody knows what they have been through to get where they are at. They are indicating that they do not want a lecture.

There is an assumption that somehow Aboriginal people, particularly in the Kimberley, are antidevelopment, or that they are filibustering the process, which is what occurs in this place at times. These people are very keen to get away from the welfare dependency that has been imposed upon them over generations; that is, since white fellow arrived in this country. The process might take longer on this occasion, but they need to be sure that they are not done over. There is a long history of Aboriginal people in this country being done over. They have been given lots of promises about outcomes from which they will benefit, but that has not happened. They are trying to prevent those things from continuing to happen.

The deal proposed by the Kimberley Land Council is breaking new ground. The government does not assist those processes by making veiled threats. The good cop-bad cop cannot be the same person. However, our Premier has a history of that. I will not keep repeating the comments I have already made about that. I have made my point.

The article continues —

For Ms Donaghey, an engineer who spends her time in management and gas marketing, the negotiations with the KLC were a completely new ball game.

“Usually it's all about money and it ends up all being win-lose. Here it was heritage and culture and they weren't negotiating for themselves, they were negotiating for their children,” she said.

“The other thing that was new to me was their connection to the land. What they were giving up meant something to them in a way I couldn't really understand.”

Robert Taylor asked her —

Do you understand it now?

Her response was —

No, but I respect it.

While the general area has been selected for the processing plant, the actual location of the LNG precinct within an area of about 3500ha has still to be decided.

This came from a complete outsider who is right up to her ears in industrial development. She actually appreciates the process that she has witnessed, although she admitted that she does not understand it. These are the project proponents who want to get the project up and going. Yes, they have an imperative to try to keep their costs down, but they are talking about the importance of the way in which the negotiations have been conducted. It is a lesson that the Premier needs to learn, because he will put these projects at risk if he continues his approach.

The Premier does not limit his attacks on the traditional owners or other groups who are not supportive of the process. He likes to have a go at the project proponents as well. Members would remember that I quoted from an article that referred to the Premier saying that the gas hub will be at James Price Point. The same article quoted one of the project proponents, Woodside, as saying that it was still looking at the Burrup Peninsula. That is the case; I know it is. The Premier probably knows as well that it is; however, he wants to take it on. There was an article that reported on this in *The West Australian* on Thursday, 30 July 2009. It is titled “Barnett warns gas project partners to back Kimberley plant” and it states —

Premier Colin Barnett has threatened to force Woodside Petroleum’s warring Browse LNG project partners to build a gas plant at James Price Point, as part of his desperate attempt to ensure development of the \$30 billion jobs-and-wealth creating development in the Kimberley.

Mr Barnett last night hinted that, irrespective of the Woodside Browse partners’ decision on where to locate the LNG plant, he would force them to build a plant at James Price Point, north of Broome, ...

If that accurately reports his comments, I would like to know how the Premier thinks he will force the project proponents to build it where he wants it to be built. Sure he can influence the decision but, after all, he is not supplying the money. These plants cost billions of dollars to build—billions of dollars for the construction and millions and millions of dollars for support contracts and setting up an industry base. These are big commercial decisions.

I suggest to the house that it does not really matter what the Premier has said about what he wants to force these project proponents to do; if the sums do not add up and if the political environment is not right, they will not build the plant at James Price Point. The Premier is not sitting in the boardrooms of the proponents. He might be able to induce them there with the help of the commonwealth and some sort of royalty relief. He might be able to gift them land. He might be able to give them payroll tax deductions—I do not know. He might be able to give them a whole range of inducements. However, that is a whole different language from saying, “I don’t care where you want to put it; you’re going to put it here.” Why would the project proponents ever pay any attention to the Premier? In less than a year prior to that he had said that they would put it at North Head and he would compulsorily resume the traditional owners’ land, only to be told by one of his own agencies—the Environmental Protection Authority—that it could not be built there. Still he argued the toss but ultimately he had to argue that it be put somewhere else.

The Premier was then going to get rid of the Kimberley Land Council out of the negotiations and he put unrealistic time lines on that, which caused the commonwealth government to put a mediator in place to mediate between the commonwealth and the traditional owners and other stakeholders. What we are looking at now is a threat to the project proponents and we are asking the commonwealth to appoint a mediator to negotiate between the state and the project proponents. We know that one of the project proponents, Woodside, is dead keen on putting it at James Price Point. It has publicly said it and it keeps on saying it. However, it is just one of the joint venturers. It does not have the capital to develop the field on its own because a huge amount of capital funds need to be raised. Woodside, therefore, has to negotiate with its project partners, and here we have the Premier saying, “I don’t care. If you decide to put it somewhere else, you won’t be building it there. I’m going to force you to build it here.” What if Woodside says no? Where is the escape clause? The article goes on —

Mr Barnett last night hinted that, irrespective of the Woodside Browse partners’ decision on where to locate the LNG plant, he would force them to build a plant at James Price Point, north of Broome, because the State had control over pipeline easements and could therefore dictate whereabouts in WA the gas came onshore.

Is that right? We can start talking about sovereign risk. There are two parts to sovereign risk. There is the sovereign risk that is the associated risk that companies take into account when they are dealing with a sovereign state—in this case Western Australia and the commonwealth. There is also the risk that businesspeople foresee

in investing, such as how much their liability is, and how much they can afford to lose in dealing with a company. While everybody is talking about the different aspects of the gas hub, debating where it should go, what should be brought ashore, who should be the customer and who should be dealt in and who should be dealt out, companies like Woodside—the big resource companies—are actually spending millions and millions of dollars doing feasibility studies and conceptual pre-design studies, sending people all over the country looking for hiccups within the project structure that could increase or decrease their costs, negotiating with government agencies, and looking for markets and negotiating with markets. They are therefore spending a heck of a lot of money before they are even given approval. A sovereign risk assessment therefore is a consideration for proponents before there is an agreement between the state or the commonwealth to give them a production licence. Of course, in this case they will look at the behaviour of the state over a period of time—how it has assisted or stood in the way of the process and how long the processes take, such as environmental impact statements and negotiations with traditional owners. They will look at how much money they are prepared to lose and how much risk they will expose their contractors to, because a bigger company can bear a lot more risk than a smaller company before they actually allocate the money. They will then reassess that as time goes by.

To think that the Premier's comments will not be taken into account and are just part of the ongoing political debate is wrong. When people are ministers in government—I have said this to ministers in this house before—they must watch everything they say. They have to be absolutely careful about everything they say because people make commercial decisions based on ministers' utterings and comments, whether they be made over a drink at the pub, over dinner at home or in the media.

Another aspect of sovereign risk comes into play once the production licence is issued. That is a whole different ball game. Once a licence has been issued, we start talking about compensation being payable. How the relationship between the state and the commonwealth and those investors goes on after the production licence is issued is also taken into account in assessing the risk to which companies feel that they are exposing themselves or in assessing the funds they are prepared to lose in doing business. Western Australia has a very low sovereign risk. Although people might not be happy about the length of the approvals process, about native title and about the environmental processes, the fact of the matter is that they are quite prepared to invest in this state on an ongoing basis; we have seen that even in the worst financial downturn we have had since the Great Depression. Investment has been flying into Western Australia and indeed this state has been carrying the rest of the nation. The Premier therefore needs to be very careful about the language he uses and he must have a mind to consider company policies and investment trends.

About 10 years ago, the board of Rio Tinto took the view that, internationally, the company needed to take into account what the traditional owners want—that is, not just the Aboriginal traditional owners in Australia, but the traditional owners around the world. Rio Tinto demonstrated that when it bought the Jabiluka uranium mine in the Northern Territory. It asked the traditional owners what they wanted it to do with that mine, and they said they wanted Rio Tinto to close it, and it did. Rio did not just close down that mine. It re-employed the same contractors that it had used to get the uranium out of the ground, and they put it all back into the ground. That gives us some indication of the extent to which Rio is prepared to go to please traditional owners. Why does it want to do that? It wants to do that because it wants to attract money from very cynical and sceptical people in the investment world who do not want to tie up money in projects that are seen to be doing over the traditional owners. That is a part of corporate risk. That is why companies such as Rio want to do that.

Rio Tinto, which is one of the largest mining companies in the world, wants to not only protect the interests of traditional owners but also utilise local people in its projects. Rio Tinto has demonstrated that by leading the way in the employment of Indigenous people in its Argyle diamond mine. Yes, it is about self-interest. Yes, it is about attracting investment. Yes, it is about good business sense. It is very important that people who are involved in high-profile jobs in government—ministers of the Crown, and particularly the Premier—use the same sort of language. We are living in a world in which the general trend in the resource sector is to want to present a healthy image to investors around the world.

One of the impacts of the information superhighway and the change in the way we are now able to communicate around the world is of protagonists being able—with very few resources compared with what they might have needed in the past—to launch massive attacks against companies if they are not seen to be good moral corporate citizens. Therefore, these companies hedge themselves against that. However, the Premier does not seem to have cottoned on to that, because, if he had, he would not be using the sort of language that he has been using in the past 12 months. He would not be threatening the traditional owners. He certainly would not be threatening—this is a different issue again—the project proponents. The Premier needs to realise that no matter what powers he may think he has, he does not sit at the board table, and he does not make the decisions. If Woodside comes back to the state and says that it wants to put this gas plant on the Burrup, I bet that is where it will go, but we will wait and see what happens.

The article to which I have referred goes on to quote the Premier as follows —

He told the dissenting partners to “take a reality check, recognise the policy position and deal with it”.

It is not a good look for the Premier of this state to say that; and, if the Premier does want to say that, he should be saying it behind closed doors, not publicly in the paper.

A similar article appeared in *The Australian* of 31 July 2009 written by Amanda O’Brien, titled “Gas plant to be near Broome: Barnett”. The Premier is now making the same comments on the national stage. The article states —

Premier Colin Barnett will force companies developing the massive Browse Basin gas resources off the Western Australian coast to process the gas at a nearby plant he wants built in the Kimberley.

In a blunt attack on several petroleum giants who reportedly want to pipe the gas to the Pilbara for processing using existing plant facilities, Mr Barnett said he would not allow it and they should “take a reality check.”

In the same article, the Premier talks about Pluto and how that will be a great project for the state. Of course, the gas from the Pluto project will be brought onto the beach at the Burrup. So, on the one hand, the Premier is saying to a company that it cannot take the gas to the Pilbara but must take it to a beach in the Kimberley, and, on the other hand, he is saying what a boost the Pluto project will be to the Pilbara and to the state. The contradiction in that is obvious. That is revealed in an article in the *Broome Advertiser* of 20 November headed “Gas backflip from Barnett”. The article states —

Anti-LNG campaigners in the Kimberley have accused Premier Colin Barnett of hypocrisy over a speech he made to State Parliament in 2006 in which claimed there had been insufficient consideration of the environment and heritage of the Burrup Peninsula ahead of industrial development.

In his 2006 speech about Burrup Peninsula rock art Mr Barnett said that “most government and all the industry studies were driven by industrial development imperatives rather than environmental or heritage considerations”.

The article goes on to refer to a comment from lobby group The Hub Caps about how Mr Barnett was now doing the same thing in the Kimberley —

“We are surprised Mr Barnett recognised this . . . (but) it’s crazy that he has forgotten about what he said about the Burrup Peninsula in his rock art speech,” . . .

A problem has been revealed. We have an issue of credibility: the gas hub was going to go to North Head, but now it is definitely going to go to James Price Point, although it might end up going to the Burrup, but the Premier does not want it to go there, so we are going to have it come back here. Of course, now the Premier has got the antidevelopment people in the Kimberly pointing to speeches and comments that he made in 2006. I remember very well the Premier making some reflections on “Stateline” about how in hindsight we should not have allowed these developments on the Burrup to go ahead and we should have put more protections in place. At the time, the Premier was supporting an argument that the Burrup was full and we should not be putting any more infrastructure on the Burrup. That seems to be supporting the Premier’s argument about why the gas hub should be located in Broome. However, the Premier does not actually say that it should be located in the Kimberley. The Premier cannot now argue that he is trying to protect the Burrup for environmental reasons when, on the other hand, he is patting the Pluto proponents on the back and saying, “Well done; that is fantastic.” A whole lot of contradictory remarks are coming from the Premier of this state. That is why we hear these comments about “just another Barnett thought bubble”. These types of comments are popping up all over the place. The Premier cannot keep getting away with it. At the very least, the Premier needs to be consistent.

An article written by “The Prince” in *The Australian Financial Review*—another national newspaper—was entitled “Barnett’s pushing his own Barrow”, and it expands on that particular point. The article states —

It’s important for princes to move with the times. Back in 2003, when **Colin Barnett** was WA Liberal leader, he had plenty to say about plenty of subjects. **Richard Court**-led elements of the party despised him as a “wet” — a bloke who had a social conscience when it came to issues such as the environment, Aboriginal land rights and indigenous rock art.

Most notable he urged parliament in 2003 to block US energy giant Chevron’s plan to stick a “helluva large” liquefied natural gas plant in the middle of Barrow Island, an A-class nature reserve off the Pilbara coast.

“It [Barrow Island] has been described as an ark off the Australian continent. It has unique biodiversity; at least 24 species in that area are not found anywhere else in the world. They are rare and endangered.

It is a truly unique environment,” he said. “Government should not approve the location, construction and operation of any gas processing plant on Barrow Island nature reserve.”

The Labor government ultimately approved Chevron’s Gorgon LNG plant. Since Barnett’s stunning political resurrection last year his views have moved on a little. Nothing wrong with that! In fact he’s now leader of the Gorgon fan club. On Thursday, he headed out to Barrow Island to put his stamp of approval on the \$50 billion development, on which work could start within months.

And Barrow’s conservation values?

These days, not so much. Gorgon is probably the only hope he has of keeping the state out of recession and the budget in the black.

That is a fair enough comment on the end of that article, but it shows that everybody watches what a Premier says, which is a good lesson for every member of this house. Things that members argue about and say in public and in this house have a habit of coming back and biting them.

Hon Ed Dermer: We are speaking to the whole world, now that we are connected by the internet, aren’t we?

Hon JON FORD: We are.

Hon Ed Dermer: And it is there for all time as well, probably.

Hon JON FORD: Not only that, but, as I said earlier, it allows people who are opposed to development in this state ways to cause a whole heap of grief and expand the processes of objection, even when it could be argued, and most people agree, that a project should move on. These people are being given ammunition to try to defeat what most people believe are good developments for the state.

There has been argument about the pristine A-class reserve status of Barrow Island, and I table a map of the development of Barrow Island, including the sites of wellheads. That little bit over there is the site of the Gorgon project. For the interest of members, I seek leave to table that map.

Leave granted. [See paper 1445.]

Hon JON FORD: A member of the government, be it the Premier or a minister, has a much broader responsibility in the way that they contribute to debates, because it does not take much to add fuel to fires that will defeat good development in this state. I am not arguing against proper, managed debate and consultation, but members have to be consistent in their comments. They have to ensure that what they say over the long and short term adds value to the debate, and that what they say allows room for new and existing projects to expand in an orderly way with proper assessment, but without undue angst. An issue that has arisen with the Kimberley proposal is the lack of accurate information. People have claimed to me that there will be five trunk lines, and that the 10-kilometre area that has been talked about is a 10-kilometre exclusion zone around the site.

The problem for the project proponents is that they do not have a project at the moment, so they cannot actually talk about how the project will develop or about their proposals because they have a number of design concepts, but the government could be helping. It could be more constructive rather than threatening people with compulsory acquisition of their land and threatening companies that it will make them relocate their plant. It would be more constructive to be out there, trying to bring people together and giving them information that will at least knock off some of the more ridiculous ideas that have been floated about locally in this debate as being fact.

The government could also help to deal with some of the rifts in the traditional owners’ ranks over this development. The way that the debate about the Kimberley liquefied natural gas has developed in the past 12 months has enabled people to go in and fracture family relationships and fracture long-term traditional owner relationships for very short-term, self-serving reasons. The Premier would be playing a much more positive role if he was to actually talk and negotiate in real good faith and not be disingenuous in the way he develops and espouses his public comments.

I think I have said enough, but I look forward to other members’ contributions. It is a long-winded motion, but I hope I have been able to show members of this place the logic behind the motion. I will now draw my comments to a close. I commend the motion to the house.

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral) [4.48 pm]: The government will not be supporting this motion, but I find it very interesting. I know Hon Jon Ford said at the beginning of his remarks that a lot of water has gone under the bridge since this motion was put on the notice paper. I believe that we must put what is actually happening up there in the Kimberley in context, and clarify the area that the Kimberley represents in its sheer size. I will quote some statistics to the house and then I want to talk about the total Kimberley, and then I will narrow it down to the gas precinct site.

The Kimberley represents 424 517 square kilometres of landmass and has a coastline of approximately 2 000 kilometres; the Dampier peninsula, where James Price Point is located, covers some 13 000 square kilometres. How large will the proposed gas precinct be? It will be an area of 35 square kilometres, including buffer zones, and it will take up approximately five kilometres of the coastline, including those buffer zones. To get it in context, that represents 0.008 per cent of the whole region—eight thousandths of one per cent of the whole region. It will be the size of a pinhead in the context of the size of the region. I will make a few size comparisons: the Kimberley area is one-sixth of Western Australia and it is twice the size of Victoria, three times the size of England, larger than Germany, and 15 per cent larger than Japan. In the last census, the Kimberley population was approximately 30 000 people. I might add that 48 per cent of the Kimberley population is Indigenous and that is quite important in the context of the area.

As mentioned by Hon Jon Ford, the proposed site is some 60 kilometres north of Broome and is about 70 kilometres south of Beagle Bay. There are no residents within a 20-kilometre radius of the site. It was mentioned that the Premier's preferred site was North Head. I must admit that in making his first judgement, he had not been there.

As Hon Jon Ford will already know, a visit to James Price Point and North Head reveals that the area is highly populated. By highly populated I mean that there are lots of communities housed in the area. Although we would not say there was a large population, lots of people live in the area. North Head is quite a small site and I do not believe that it is suitable in that sense. The water is deeper, and yes, it probably would have been easier to put a port in at North Head, but I believe that James Price Point is a far better site in the sense that we are not encroaching on anyone.

A lot has been made about James Price Point being an unspoilt wilderness. I believe that Hon Jon Ford commented that he has been there on many occasions and that he was one of the reasons there are no oysters left in the area! Obviously, the area has been frequented by many people; it is not the pristine area that everyone talks about.

James Price Point was of course part of the old Waterbank Station. Both north and south of that area is used for camping and fishing and there is also extensive four-wheel-drive activity in the area of consequence that we are talking about. I might add for those not familiar with the present road system that if the area is to be the new gas precinct, obviously a new road will be built. That would stop camping and fishing along a five-kilometre stretch of coast probably—and probably less than that because people may be allowed access to the buffer zones; however, I am not familiar with that in any great detail.

The motion refers to negotiating in good faith—an issue Hon Jon Ford raised on numerous occasions. I guess we saw what happened to Inpex, which negotiated in good faith for some time only to eventually make a decision in 2008 to move to Darwin. I have to say that I had the privilege of going to Japan to meet with Inpex officials. The company had great plans to develop a liquefied natural gas hub and I believe Western Australia would have been a large beneficiary of such a development. However, that negotiation went on for a long time and in the end, in frustration, Inpex decided to move to a state that was obviously more receptive to a company that was going to invest its capital.

James Price Point was selected as the best option by Woodside, the Kimberley Land Council and the government after an exhaustive process, which obviously started with the previous government but which has, however, moved along since then. Woodside, like Inpex, needed some certainty about a site given its commercial commitments. Hon Jon Ford alluded to billions of dollars. These gas hubs or gas precincts are big projects. Gorgon is worth some \$43 billion. When I first came to Parliament, that project was worth about \$22 billion. Amazingly, that figure has already doubled. Who knows what it will be worth when it is finished; we probably will be talking about a \$50 billion project.

As a consequence of the broad agreement that was reached, an announcement was finally made on 15 April of this year. In December the Premier stated that his aim was always to obtain consent and agreement, and I notice that that has been quoted in the motion as follows —

If we can't do it by negotiation, the State will resume the land. I'll do that reluctantly, but we will do it.

I think the issue was resolved because the Premier brought some firmness to the whole equation, bearing in mind that negotiations had been going on for a long time. I believe the role of government is to lead and not to sit back and dillydally around. Government has to get involved and to lead and I believe that this government did so. I do not believe that setting a deadline and making explicit the powers of government takes away from the process of negotiating in good faith. It is difficult to understand why the result of this win-win outcome of the negotiation process is being cast in a negative manner by this motion.

We need to look at the positives that flow from this. These include both short and long-term job generation; employment opportunities and economic benefits to Indigenous communities and the Dampier Peninsula—I note

that Hon Jon Ford rightfully acknowledged their importance when I asked about the size of the Indigenous population base; development of road infrastructure; and increased opportunities for Indigenous tourism ventures. When I first came to this place, I remember talking about the road to Cygnet Bay. After asking various questions of, and sending letters to the then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Alannah MacTiernan, extra funding was obtained for that road. It was so bad that trucks could not deliver stores to the communities served by that road. It was a gutter to say the least. It had got to the stage such that everyone had to come into town from those communities—from Lombadina, Beagle Bay, Long Arm Point and all the other little communities along the road—to get their stores et cetera because deliveries could not be made along that road. Interestingly, 70 vehicles a day are required for a road to be sealed and, to my memory, at that time some 200 vehicles a day travelled that road. With this development project, I believe that the road would be further developed to the benefit of the communities it serves.

The other development spin-offs include the increased passenger traffic through Broome airport and the flow-on effect from discounted tourist travel. In other words, when the front of the plane is full, the tail, or the cheap end, will always be available for economy-class tourist travel.

Some people may have not realised that earlier this year the Premier was in Broome to open the helicopter terminal. That million-dollar facility supports the choppers that service the Browse Basin and the spin-off from that alone is the some 50 people employed to service those helicopters. One of those choppers is one of the biggest helicopters in Australia servicing oil and gas rigs. I think I have spoken about that chopper before in this house.

The flow-on effects of investment in the region include education, health, medical services, housing, infrastructure and general government services. We all talk about them in this place. We all jump up and down about the need for them; we all demand them, and this development can actually make them happen.

Did all the parties agree to the settlement? As I alluded, Hon Jon Ford, I was there when that historic signing took place at James Price Point. It was very plain to see the number of Indigenous people there who were very much forward and proud to sign-up to something that they saw could change their future and give their children jobs. Will the agreement be beneficial to all parties? Yes. Will it benefit Indigenous communities in the region, as I have alluded to? Yes. Will it bring some economic independence and security to Indigenous communities? Yes. Will it bring economic benefit to the state? Yes. Of course, the economic benefit of locating it onshore as opposed to on a floating platform is that with a floating platform the dollars and the people would go straight over the area, and the regional area of the west Kimberley would receive nothing from the project. It is important that we look at keeping those dollars here and extracting as many dollars as possible.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 8331.]