



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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SIGNIFICANT STEP IN KIMBERLEY HUB SITE SEARCH

Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett and WA Minister for State Development Eric Ripper said work to identify a hub site for liquefied natural gas (LNG) to service the Browse Basin gas reserves in the Kimberley had reached a significant milestone today, with the release of the Northern Development Taskforce's interim report and assessment terms of reference.

The Ministers said the joint assessment was the first such evaluation under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, and had been achieved through strong cooperation between the State and Federal Government, industry, traditional owners and other key stakeholders.

Mr Ripper, said the release of the Taskforce's report, including the identification of nine sites for further technical investigation and assessment of Aboriginal heritage, cultural values and environmental considerations, marked an important stage in the Taskforce's work in support of the Browse Basin gas development.

"The Taskforce is working closely with the Kimberley community, traditional owners and industry to ensure a timely resolution for the identification of potential processing options for Browse Basin gas," he said.

"The combination of the Strategic Assessment and the Taskforce's extensive consultation with the Indigenous community, environmental experts and the Kimberley community will ensure that any gas development will have minimal impacts on the environmental, heritage and community values of the region."

"Should industry choose to use the Kimberley on-shore option for LNG processing, the State Government is committed to ensuring the Kimberley community will benefit from the employment and business opportunities that such a project will offer the region.

"The Taskforce Interim Report sets out the State Government's commitment to ensuring benefits flow throughout the Indigenous and broader community, while lessening any impacts on existing industries."

Mr Garrett said valuable feedback had been received during the public comment period which had been incorporated into the terms of reference and site selection criteria.

"I'm confident this strategic assessment will provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential location of the LNG processing hub, providing certainty and efficiency for the energy industry and at the same time helping to secure the long-term protection of the unique heritage and environmental values of the West Kimberley region," Mr Garrett said.

"I also want to commend the positive engagement that has occurred to date with key stakeholders, including the traditional owners. This is an area rich in Indigenous cultural heritage and magnificent natural assets – we want to be sure these are carefully considered and protected throughout this process."

The Ministers said work would now commence to narrow down the list of potential sites with a decision on a short list expected early in August 2008.

The NDT Interim Report and Terms of Reference are available at www.doir.wa.gov.au/ndt and <http://www.environment.gov.au>