

# Gas backflip from Barnett

By **BIANCA THAIR**

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 he 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 or development imperatives rather than environmental or heritage considerations".

Rod Hartvigsen, from lobby group The Hub Caps, said 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," Mr Hartvigsen said.

Environs Kimberley co-ordinator Maria Mann said that in the 2006 speech Mr Barnett had seemed to realise the way development was handled on the Burrup had been wrong.

But Ms Mann said Mr Barnett's comments now appeared insincere and for political gain and she had seen no evidence of this "epiphany".

"Colin Barnett has stated he wants to fast track (the Kimberley hub) in order

to create certainty for industry – the way he is going it will create more uncertainty for the community and the last few days there has been a lot of evidence of angst, discomfort and concern amongst indigenous people," she said.

Wilderness Society WA co-ordinator Peter Robertson said with the global economic downturn and millions being spent on WA's new international tourism campaign featuring the Kimberley there was no need for government to act hastily.

"There is now no prospect of any Browse gas hub being needed for several years ... we can use this opportunity to look more carefully for sites outside the Kimberley where there is already industrial infrastructure in place," he said.

Mr Barnett told the *Broome Advertiser* this week that finding a site for an LNG precinct was critical for the development of WA and Australia and environmental standards and consultation with Aboriginal communities would not be compromised.

"The area (of the hub) we are talking about is well separated from Broome and well before you get to the pristine, spectacular coastline between Derby and Wyndham," he said.

Mr Barnett visited the region recently but did not visit North Head or meet with Aboriginal communities. His office said he was planning a more extensive visit next month.