

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

(Senate Question No. 395)

Senator Siewert asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 7 April 2008: With reference to: (a) the Minister's announcement on 5 February 2008, during his opening address to the workshop on Kimberley Coast Natural Values, that the Federal Government and Western Australian Government will carry out a strategic assessment to identify a site for a single common-user liquefied natural gas (LNG) hub for the Browse Basin; and (b) the completed cultural and environmental values contained within the national heritage listing of the Dampier Archipelago region:

- (1) Is the Minister or the department aware that, in 1994, the current chair of the Western Australian Government's Northern Development Task Force, Mr Limerick, committed to carry out an assessment of the region as a result of his department's legal intervention to stop the Dampier Archipelago being assessed by the Environmental Protection Authority (as evidenced by the media release dated 7 October 1994, 'Pilbara industrial development', available on the website www.dampierart.net/media).
- (2) Is the Minister or the department aware that no strategic or environmental assessment of industrial development on the Dampier Archipelago was ever carried out by the Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority.
- (3) Does the Minister therefore consider that it is time for a rational, considered and holistic approach to planning in the Pilbara region; if so, when will a strategic assessment be sought, in conjunction with the Western Australian Government; if not, why not.
- (4) Does the Minister believe that piecemeal development, with multiple ports and processing plants along the Pilbara coast, is in the national interest; if so, why; if not, will the Minister consider an assessment as referred to in paragraph (3).
- (5) In the search for a suitable single common-user LNG hub for the Browse Basin, will the Minister rule out the use of the Dampier Archipelago as a location for a development option outside of the Kimberley region.

Senator Wong – The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question:

- 1&2) Neither the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts nor the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts was aware of these propositions until they were put forward by the honourable senator.
- 3&4) The Pilbara region has not been identified, at this time, as a high priority area for immediate commencement of a strategic assessment under the EPBC Act.
- 5) The strategic assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* of a liquefied natural gas processing hub to service the Browse Basin will consider all feasible options.