

Residents urged to speak up on future

By FLIP PRIOR

BROOME residents will have the chance to be heard on the economic future and marine, coastal and terrestrial conservation of the Kimberley in a public forum to be held in the town on July 20.

Conservation groups have called on the community to play an active role in the State Government-led push to establish a science and conservation strategy for the region.

Last month, a group including the WA Conservation Council, Environs Kimberley, Wilderness Society, Australian Conservation Foundation, World Wildlife Fund and Pew Environment Group made 29 recommendations in a group submission to the forums, also held in the East Kimberley last month.

The group called on the State Government to declare a moratorium on major new developments in the Kimberley until it had implemented the strategy, backed by funding and with statutory authority.

Criticising the current "ad hoc" approach to the region, they said urgent action was needed to prevent further damage to the region, which was comparable to globally-significant sites including the Great Barrier Reef or the Amazon.

Last week Environs Kimberley

director Martin Pritchard said less than 7 per cent of the Kimberley was protected, which was "woefully inadequate".

"The WA Government needs to commit to at least 50 per cent in protected areas if it's serious about protecting one of the world's last remaining natural areas," he said.

"We are really concerned that the Premier Colin Barnett wants to turn the Kimberley into a huge quarry like the Pilbara – we would like assurances that this is not the case."

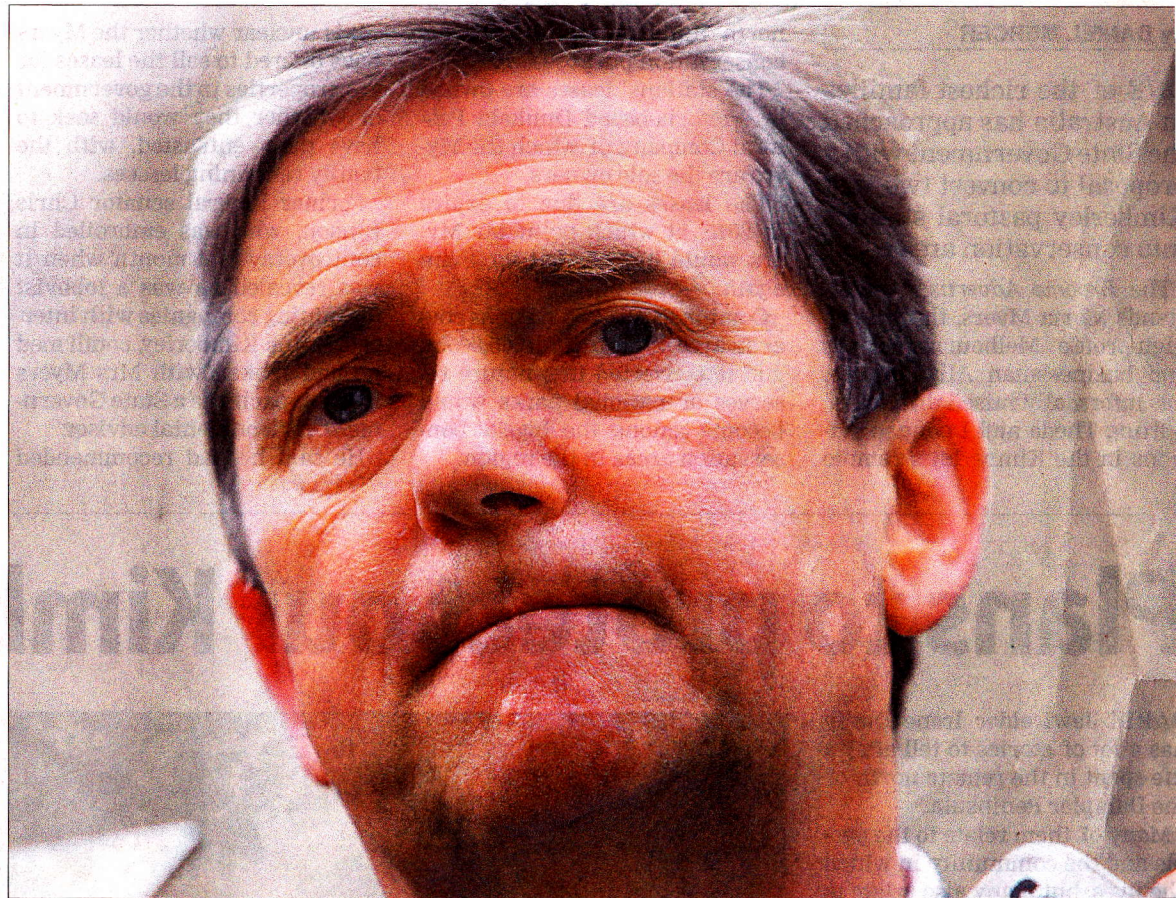
Conservation Council WA spokesman Piers Verstegen said it was critical that in consultation with traditional owners, the process set international conservation benchmarks.

"An effective conservation plan for the Kimberley must avoid the simplistic tendency to 'balance' the impacts of inappropriate industrial development with the creation of relatively small conservation parks," he said.

"This is not a strategic or sustainable approach – as it has in other places, [it] will inevitably fail."

The forum will be hosted by Chris Ellison, controversially appointed to the position of "independent facilitator" and reviewer of submissions despite his links to mining interests in the region as a registered lobbyist being revealed last month.

Mr Ellison was later forced to



Chris Ellison will be in Broome on July 20 to host a public forum on the future conservation and economic strategy for the Kimberley.

resign his position as associate director with the Enhance Group for the duration of the appointment when he was accused by the State Opposition of having a "massive conflict of interests".

The forums will be held in

Broome at the Mangrove Resort Hotel on July 20 and at the Derby Recreation Centre on July 22.

At each venue, an open session will be held from 1pm to 5pm for individuals and organisations to make statements or talk on sub-

missions and from 5pm to 7pm a workshop on the development strategy will be held. Registrations are required by noon on July 17. Phone Jacinta Overman on 9442 0300 or email kimberley.strategy@dec.wa.gov.au