

# The Kimberley Echo

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# Taskforce listens to locals

East Kimberley organisations and community leaders lined up to tell the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce their views on developing Ord Stage II last week.

The taskforce has been touring the Kimberley listening to local opinion and examining options.

It was repeatedly told that the community strongly supported the expansion of irrigated agriculture as long as there was local consultation.

Farmers said there was a need for the expansion to embrace diversity in farmers, farm sizes and crops.

It was suggested a holistic approach to planning should be endorsed and that the development be staged to allow for adjustments according to demand and market needs.

The Kununurra Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Frank Rodriguez said that after 30 years of hard work it was time to 'kick-start' and already proven land and water development.

He backed the call from other bodies for a facilitator to be employed to report to the task force on the Stage II development.

Mr Rodriguez said the taskforce should give the Ord River Irrigation Scheme priority in its decision making process.

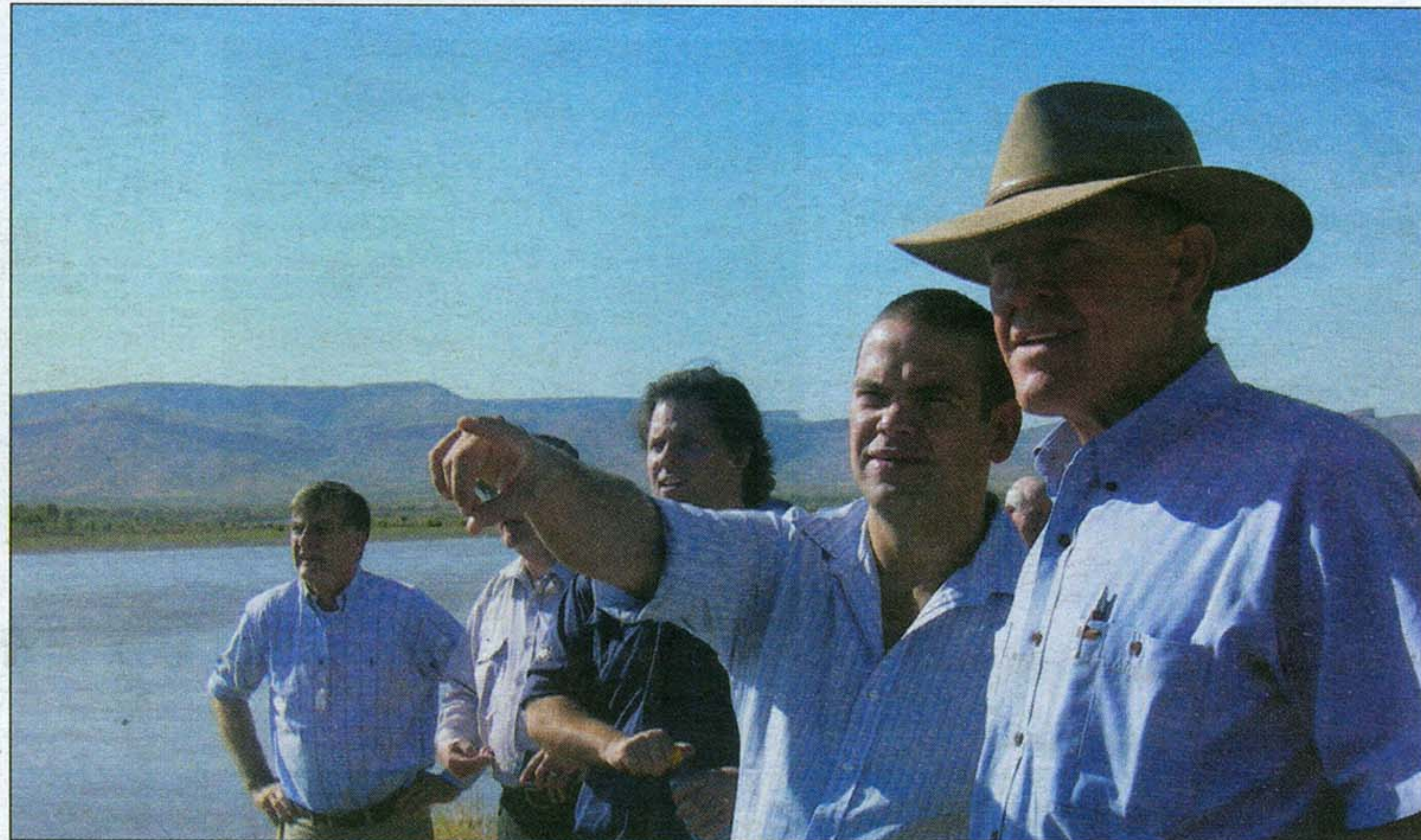
The State Government also made a three-page submission to the taskforce signed off by the principal policy officer in the Department of Premier and Cabinet Hazel Kural.

In it she praises the current irrigation area and points to its potential to grow a great diversity of crops.

Ms Kural also points to the ability to supply southern markets with crops grown during winter months.

She also listed the many other pluses for the development.

Taskforce member Lachlan Murdoch spoke of his experi-



Taskforce member Lachlan Murdoch points out a crocodile to Senator Heffernan (left), Nick Bradley and Barry Haase (right) at Home Valley Station. (Photograph by Nicolle Fenech.)

ences in the East Kimberley: "I think the taskforce is really here this week just to listen; we have heard a huge amount.

"We have also heard of some of the frustrations that the people have, both locally and in the indigenous community about kick starting Ord Stage II.

"I think we need to facilitate really how the WA Government and the NT Government move along with Stage II and get it done sooner rather than later.

"One of the most poignant things I have heard being up here is the frustration - it's quite natural in the community -

with the delays to Stage II.

"Hopefully people won't have to wait much longer.

"I have been up to the area before and obviously, in the wet season, it's incredible, incredible in all sorts of ways - the potential and also in the beauty and also in the environmental portion of it.

"So I think you have got to balance all of these issues but obviously Northern Australia is very rich in its water resource and we need to consider how we apply that resource over the next several decades," Mr Murdoch said.

EXCLUSIVE NEXT WEEK.....

INTERVIEW WITH  
NICOLE KIDMAN