

POLICY

Legal showdown intensifies in INPEX's \$4.5 billion claim over Ichthys Project

Judge disqualifies expert's evidence

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As the complex legal battle over the Ichthys LNG Project enters its sixth week, the WA Federal Court heard pivotal expert testimony from INPEX, its partner JKC, and AkzoNobel.

The case - centred around a \$4.5 billion claim - has captured industry attention with allegations of deception concerning the suitability of Dutch paint company AkzoNobel's I228 product.

The lawsuit, now in its 34th day of an expected 11-week trial, has reached a crucial juncture. Both sides have agreed on technical evidence, setting the stage for intense cross-examinations.

However, the proceedings took a dramatic turn as INPEX and JKC's legal teams successfully argued against the inclusion of crucial parts of a technical report by AkzoNobel's leading expert, Prof. Robert George.

INPEX barrister Richard Payne told the court the disputed report includes discussion regarding Professor George's acknowledgment of his own limitations in expertise and argued that this would undermine his credibility concerning the product's performance.

"The forum discussion compares salt spray testing and provision testing and their relevance in certain circumstances," he said.

"Now, I quite like cars. So, when I go to buy a car, and I'm choosing between two options, I often visit a forum. In the forum, people suggest why one option is better than the other," he added.

And the judge agreed

"I'm going to allow the for the reason given by Mr Payne," Justice Banks-Smith told the court.

The judge's decision has weakened Akzo Nobel's argument and cast doubt on the adequacy of I228 for the high-stakes LNG project.

The court's ruling on evidence admissibility marks a significant point in this protracted trial. It tested the allegedly unsuitable protective coating used on pipework on the \$45 billion Ichthys natural gas project.

The case continues.