

Burrup claimants hit industry plans

By Yonnene Pearce

A PILBARA Aboriginal group has delivered what could be a fatal blow to a multi-million-dollar freehold title offer from the State Government to open the Burrup Peninsula to more industry.

One of three Burrup claimant groups, the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo, said yesterday they would not accept the offer of up to \$27 million, including title to most of the northern part of the peninsula.

Instead they joined the Liberals, One Nation, Greens (WA), pastoralists and graziers, conservationists, the local shire and community in proposing Burrup works be moved to the Maitland industrial area, south-west of Karratha. It has been zoned for heavy industry.

Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo spokesman Cane Hicks said his people wanted the Burrup's ancient rock art and beaches protected and open to all.

But in the wake of the group signing an access agreement recently with proponent Burrup Fertilisers, Deputy Premier Eric Ripper branded yesterday's rejection a negotiating tactic.

He said the Government was not considering shifting industry to Maitland. The \$6 billion worth of Burrup projects were critical to the State's economy.

This latest hurdle in negotiation did not stop Methanex Australia from doing feasibility ground work on the part of the King Bay Hearson Cove industrial area it plans to turn into the world's biggest methanol plant.

The Environmental Protection Authority's final report on the proposal is still months away. But according to Brian Wood, of the Office of Major Projects, authority for investigative groundwork was given by the Department of Land Administration and Woodside, which holds a lease over part of the proposed plant site.

Greens (WA) MLC Robin Chapple said giving Methanex access pre-empted decisions by working on the assumption the proposal would be approved.

He called on Premier Geoff Gallop to publicly address growing concerns about industries still at the proposal stage, and access, amenity and the protection of rock art carvings on the peninsula.

©2002 West Australian Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved.