

Protection for NW rock art

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MORE than 60 per cent of an area in the state's North West which is home to the world's biggest rock art collection will be protected from development.

Environment Minister Mark McGowan said a draft management plan released today focused on proposed freehold Aboriginal lands that would form the Burrup

Peninsula Conservation Reserve, that houses at least 300,000 pieces of art - some of it 20,000 years old.

He said under the plan for the internationally recognised area, the land would be jointly managed as a conservation reserve by the State Government and an Aboriginal body corporate.

"The plan aims to protect the rock art and provide local Indigenous people with ongoing, sustainable employment and business development opportunities," Mr McGowan said.

"This includes work in managing the land to protect its cultural and environmental values, and also in tourism development."

Proposals in the plan - now out for a two-month public comment period - included the development of a visitor centre, visitor accommodation and various recreation sites to cater for visitors."

Mr McGowan said the plan also proposed strategies to conserve native wildlife, provide public recreational facilities and improve access.

"The relatively undisturbed coastal and terrestrial habitats support a diversity of plant and animal life, including some vulnerable and endangered species," he said.

"The plan recommends a range of strategies to help conserve the area's natural values, including weed control, rehabilitation of disturbed areas and the continued implementation of the fox baiting program."



PROTECTED: The WA today announced moves to protect precious rock art sites in the Burrup Peninsula near Karratha, which have been under threat from industrial development. Picture: **Graham Crouch**

But WA National Trust chief executive Tom Perrigo said Mr McGowan should be protecting 100 per cent of the world's greatest collection of rock art.

He also said that the 40 percent that was not protected contained the biggest portion of the art.

"The Trust wants one wholistic management plan for the precinct, not five different plans which don't overlap, which is the situation with this and past governments," he said.

"The Trust also wants to see the business plan that goes with the conservation plan. We have also been contacted by a number of stakeholders, including some indigenous people who say they have not been properly consulted."

He said successive state governments, including this one, had allowed the destruction of more than 4000 pieces of rock art since 1972 and there were currently other destructive proposals before the current government.

Mr McGowan said the plan was prepared by the traditional owners, the Ngarda-ngarli, and the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Mr McGowan said an historic native title agreement in January 2003 saw the State Government return freehold title of 5,000 hectares of the Burrup Peninsula to Aboriginal ownership.

The plan is available at www.naturebase.net/haveyoursay and copies can be viewed at the Karratha, Dampier, Roebourne and Wickham public libraries. Copies of the plan also are available from the Karratha and Kensington offices of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Written submissions should be addressed to Management Planning Co-ordinator, Burrup Peninsula Conservation Reserve Planning Advisory Committee, Department of Environment and Conservation, Locked Bag 104, Bentley Delivery Centre, WA 6983. They also can be emailed to planning@dec.wa.gov.au. The closing date for submissions is 15 September 2006.