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Burrup study proves industry, rock art can co-exist: Bowler

Western Australia's Minister for Resources, John Bowler, believes a scientific study which found pollution levels on the Burrup Peninsula are lower than in Perth proves industry can coexist with the environment.

A CSIRO study has found rock art on the Burrup Peninsula, in north-west WA, is not being affected by industrial projects.

The Rock Art Monitoring Committee chairman Frank Murray says during the first year of the study, CSIRO scientists found the air quality to be better than suburban areas in Perth.

Professor Murray says the scientists also found the art had not been affected.

"We found no clear change in colour of the rock art over the period of the monitoring which is a 12 month period, but we're continuing to monitor for the four year period and we saw no changes to the mineralogy of the rock or in the microbial activity on the rock surface," he said.

The Minister for Resources, John Bowler, says the study demonstrates continued expansion can go ahead with little impact on rock art.

"What we're going to do as a Government, we're going to continue to do this monitoring, to make sure it wasn't a fluke, that the air quality up there will continue to be tested," he said.

"We want to achieve a win-win, we want to make sure the jobs are there for people in Karratha, but at the same time we want to look after the rock art."

The National Trust of WA says the report is outdated because the monitoring stations have not been working.

Trust spokesman Robin Chapple says the report was funded by the State Government and industry and does not provide a true indication of current pollution levels.

"The key issue I suppose for us is that the monitoring stations haven't been working now for quite some time and have obviously missed the recent emissions from Burrup Fertilisers," he said.

An archaeological group says it is not convinced by the results of the scientific study.

Robert Bednarik from the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations says he believes the art is at risk.

"They can certainly make conclusions about the quantity of emissions being detected, but they cannot in one year make any conclusions about the possible damage to the rock art, not even in four years," he said.