

Rock art report wrong

By Ben Cranston

Conservationists accuse Government of using inaccurate figures

CRACKS are appearing in State Government reports used to plan the conservation of rock art on the Burrup Peninsula.

National Trust spokesman Robin Chapple said the Department of Environment and Conservation plan, which set aside 60 per cent of the Burrup Peninsula land area for conservation, was wrong.

Mr Chapple believed Parliament question time had uncovered the truth that just 41.5 per cent of the Burrup would be protected.

He said the Burrup Peninsula Land Use Plan and Management Strategy only accounted for the northern end of the Burrup, defining its study area as 88sqm, when the whole of the Burrup was in fact 109sqm.

He went on to say the 88sqm figure was even wrong and put it at closer to 93sqm.

Just 49sqm of freehold title land had been transferred to the Aboriginal Approved Body

Corporate for conservation - equalling just 53 per cent of the 88sqm study area - not 60 per cent.

More alarm bells were raised when comparing that 49sqm to claims 60 per cent of the entire peninsula would be conserved.

In fact, just 41.5 per cent of the entire 109sqm would be protected from destruction; mean-

ing 60 per cent of the Burrup would in fact be lost to industry.

The information came to light following a series of questions from Greens MLC Giz Watson who grilled Kim Chance, representing the Minister for State Development, trying to determine what percentage of the Burrup Peninsula was safe.

National Trust spokesman Mr Chapple said by 'pulling at the thread the whole sweater would eventually come undone'.

"I actually think they made a genuine mistake," Mr Chapple said.

"The area isn't 60 per cent it actually 41.5 per cent."

He felt the original Burrup Peninsula Land Use Plan and Management Strategy was trotted out in a hurry.

"They (State Government) have literally captured that 60 per cent and transferred it to the Department of Environment and Conservation plan," Mr Chapple said.

"They've made a mistake but they don't want to admit it."

An Australian Rock Art Research Association spokesman confirmed he had written to the Department of Conservation highlighting the mistake.

"Their figures are erroneous and were calculated using spurious data," he said.

He said the error was obvious

and the southern end of the Burrup had not been included in the latest plan and the 60 per cent figure was wrong.

At a time when the spotlight was squarely on the State Government to explain the discrepancies the Karratha and Districts Chamber of Commerce and Industry has released its own position paper on the National Heritage listing of the Burrup Peninsula - advocating both economic development and heritage conservation.

The chamber wanted a management plan to replace the need for a national listing and further survey works and impact statements to be carried out.

Former Federal Minister Carmen Lawrence has now joined the chorus of politicians in favour of protecting the rock art.

She spoke last week at an International Council on Monuments and Sites conference in Fremantle.

"Successive governments - my own included - have failed to appreciate the global significance of the site," Ms Lawrence said.

"Indeed the current government opposes heritage listing of "all or any part" of the Burrup because of "potentially grave consequences" for the resources sector.