

# Work starts on NW rock art site

## AMANDA BANKS

Work on Woodside's \$10 billion Pluto gas project began on the Burrup Peninsula yesterday, ending a fight by heritage groups and politicians to shift the facility to an alternative site to save 150 pieces of ancient Aboriginal rock art from being relocated.

Liberal MP, former State Opposition leader Colin Barnett — who has been campaigning to relocate the project to a cleared, adjacent site leased by the North-West Shelf Venture Partners — said work on plant's first phase made a mockery of the Federal Government's ongoing consideration of heritage listing for the area.

"If Woodside are proceeding on that site then any national heritage listing is either irrelevant or too late," Mr Barnett said.

"It does not matter what the Government comes out with — the decisions would have been made and the rock art moved or

destroyed." Mr Barnett also criticised the State Government, saying it was staggering that Labor MPs had been silent on the most significant heritage issue WA has ever faced.

National Trust chief executive Tom Perrigo yesterday refused to concede the fight was over, saying Woodside was yet to be granted final environmental approval for the second part of the project.

Mr Perrigo said the case had highlighted fundamental flaws in Federal Government processes.

"How they can give approval for the destruction of one of the world's greatest scientific treasures is beyond me," he said.

Greens Senator Rachel Siewert, one of several Federal MPs behind a failed application for the area to be given emergency heritage listing, said it was still not too late to relocate the Pluto project.

"I cannot believe that in this day and age our governments think it is acceptable to destroy ancient rock

art to allow development," Senator Siewert said. "Our failure to protect our unique indigenous heritage is an international shame."

Woodside recently committed \$1.4 billion to preliminary work on the Burrup industrial estate's Site A, which is the location for Pluto's LNG storage tanks.

The work — which will employ up to 80 people over five months — will include building access roads, fencing and bulk earthworks, as well as the relocation of about 150 pieces of rock art that are expected to be moved to other areas of the lease in consultation with Aboriginal custodians.

Woodside has promised that its plans will not disturb 95 per cent of the area's rock art — close to 3000 pieces.

The project is still awaiting further environmental approvals and a final investment decision by Woodside is not expected until the middle of the year, but its LNG exports are set to start in 2010.