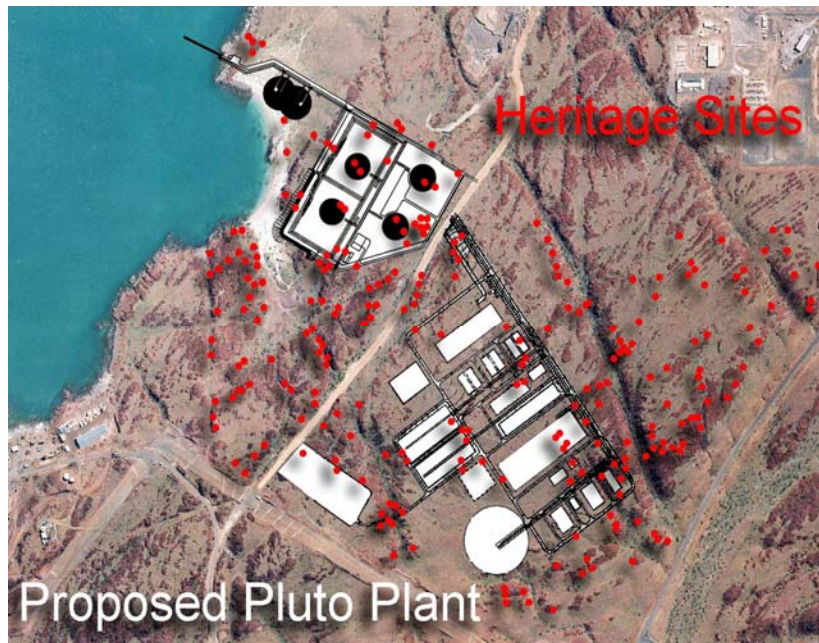




preserving profits, destroying the past

will anderson at 4:34 pm on thursday, january 18, 2007



Woodside Petroleum, the mining company whose expanding gas plant on the Burrup peninsula in Western Australia will destroy hundreds of ancient rock carvings, has just announced a record annual revenue of [\\$3.81 billion](#).

I've written [before](#) about ideological aspects of the government's hypocritical heritage policy, but news of Woodside's massive profits strengthens the practical argument that the company is perfectly capable of finding an alternative location for its operations.

Last year, Australia's Minister for Heritage and Environment, Senator Ian Campbell, called for submissions on the company's proposed Pluto project. No doubt he received dozens of desperate pleas to save this globally significant site, which the Australian Heritage Council has deemed eligible for national and world heritage listing. But despite this democratic posturing, and a long campaign to save the Burrup peninsula from the ravages of heavy industry, there is little doubt where the government's priorities lie:

'No one in their right mind would propose saving every single last bit of heritage on the Peninsula, unless they wanted to close down the economic development of Australia', Campbell [said](#) last year.

Is it really 'Australians' that benefit? The gas plant may create some extra jobs, but so would an offshore facility; or does Woodside not have enough money? Aboriginal communities in this remote part of Australia are certainly not seeing cash comin from the ugly behemoth on their doorsteps; places like [Kalumburu](#), where 'there is not adequate housing or infrastructure, the houses are overcrowded, [and] many of them are in an incredibly rundown state'.

Something tells me that the expected go-ahead for the Pluto plant is more about lining the pockets of fat cats, and filling the government's war coffers, than a pious desire for 'progress' and 'development'. Woodside's CEO collects a salary of almost [\\$7 million](#); in 2000, the company paid taxes of \$440 million. As Jeff has said, global wars on terror do not come cheap, so little wonder that the government is again kowtowing to the desires of Big Oil.

For short-term corporate gain, concentrated in the hands of city executives, the Australian government is wiping out our natural and cultural heritage.

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