

Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation Statement: Ngarluma, Woodside and the Burrup

2 February 2007

We are the Traditional Owners of the Burrup.

Despite our requests, we have not been consulted by Woodside's bosses about our heritage and environmental concerns on the new Woodside LNG project on the Burrup.

Alan Carpenter said recently that if Aboriginal people "do not want to host an onshore processing facility, none will occur."

Ok Mr Carpenter, do it. Tell Woodside that we support their project but not having it being located on the Burrup, requiring destruction of our Dreaming Ancestors rock art and statues.

Stonehenge in England is thousands of years younger than this art. Do we see Stonehenge being dismantled and destroyed?

Why can't the project be at Onslow?

Now we hear that a gleaming Woodside diamond saw has come onto our Country to slice up our Ancestors sites and pop them on another bit of land nearby. "Desecration" is the only word for this step. The whole of the Burrup rock art will lose its spirituality, the links to and between each and every rock. Our Ancestors produced each and every one of these engravings for a reason, a spiritual reason that it is not our right- nor that of any other person- to destroy. Our unending obligation to them, and to our current and future generations, is to do everything we can to stop this desecration. To cut off the face of a rock to shift the Ancestors' engraving on its front and dump it in some other place is taboo under our Law. The engraving was put on that rock, in that place, for a sacred reason and it is not our right nor that of any other person to destroy it in this way.

But how can we stop this desecration? We wrote to the Government's Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee, the supposed guardian of Aboriginal sites, to try to stop the desecration of the Aboriginal sites complex on the Burrup. Our letters were marked "Private and Confidential" but the Government of course just gave them to

Woodside to attack. In return, we asked to see Woodside's letters and arguments being sent to the ACMC but we got a stony wall of silence. We did not get to know what the ACMC recommended to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs about whether or not the sites should be destroyed or not. We wrote of these issues to the Minister but are yet to get her reply, her decision as a *white* person about destruction of *black* culture. How *unusual* that the procedural rules are bent to suit the Government and Woodside but us blackfellas are given none of the same procedural rights!

We have to laugh at Woodside's public statements on their website that talks of broad consultation with our People about our Cultural Heritage. It just has not, and is not, happening on the Burrup. Maybe this wonderful Woodside Indigenous policy is meant for blackfellas in distant lands and not here in our Backyard? Sure looks that way.

The "no objection" part of the agreement that we made in 2003 with the State about the development on the Burrup is apparently being used to try to stop us speaking out about these matters. Well the fact is that the Aboriginal Heritage Act overrules that agreement and we have rights under section 7 of that Act as Traditional Owners to veto destruction of sites but the Government refuses to acknowledge this. The State's Gatekeeper, the Office of Native Title, refuses to tell us how that agreement is progressing or if it is being honoured by the State. The fact that there is so much secrecy about this makes us believe that the State is not honouring that agreement, as it should be honoured, and as we assumed it would be honoured."

**Jill Churnside
Chairperson,
Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation (Prescribed Body Corporate for
the Ngarluma People)**