

Rock art decision looms

By Ben Cranston

SECRETLY taken pictures of Woodside cranes and bulldozers slinging ancient rock art onto trucks have come to light as the mining giant pushes ahead with site works for its Pluto project.

The pictures emerge with Federal Heritage Minister Malcolm Turnbull set to decide the fate of the entire Burrup Peninsula in just a few days.

The pictures show examples of petroglyphs being picked up for removal to nearby stockpiles beside the east-west service corridor, according to International Federation of Rock Art Organisations spokesman Robert Bednarik.

"They (Woodside) want to do it as quick as possible because what they're doing is wrong," Mr Bednarik said.

Mr Bednarik said after three years of procrastination the Federal Government would finally make its decision but he believed Mr Turnbull would shy away from locking up the Burrup allowing Woodside to

continue bulldozing Aboriginal culture.

Mineral Policy Institute director Robin Chapple said the Federal Government considered the Burrup rock art from a heritage standpoint but failed to recognise its indigenous significance.

"The indigenous groups have told the Minister for Indigenous Affairs to take all the industry off the Burrup," Mr Chapple said.

"Now we're having all these Stand Up For The Burrup actions around the world.

"This was always a fundamental mistake because if they (Federal and State Governments) had recognised that indigenous people have rights too then it would never have got to this."

In a recent Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation statement chairwoman Jill Churnside said, as traditional owners of the Burrup, her people had not been consulted by Woodside bosses about their heritage and environmental concerns relating to

Pluto.

"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," Mrs Churnside said.

"Desecration is the only word for this step as 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."

A Woodside spokesperson said the company had all the necessary approvals in place to carry out the works and it would only move 150 pieces of rock art - a fraction of the petroglyphs at Pluto Site A.

The rock art had been moved with extreme care to another location on the Burrup and a diamond saw had not been used.



Above, these secretly taken pictures show Wooside clearing land for its Pluto Development on the Burrup Peninsula. Left, one of the pieces of rock art.

