

Burrup to be listed, but...

By KEN BOASE



Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull says the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia's Pilbara

will be listed on the National Heritage Register by the middle of the year, but some industrial development will be allowed to proceed.

Mr Turnbull visited the Burrup on 17 April to inspect the impact that industrial development is having on ancient Aboriginal rock art and petroglyphs, some of them dated at 20,000 years old. He has held discussions with energy giant Woodside Petroleum which will be allowed to continue with the development of its onshore gas processing plant at Pluto Site A and Pluto Site B, which contain many hundreds of rock art paintings and petroglyphs.

Local Aboriginal and environment groups have cautiously welcomed the decision to list the site on the Heritage Register, but are frustrated at the reluctance to immediately move all industry to an alternative site to prevent any further destruction of rock art.

Ngaluma Elders spokesman Roger Barker said the listing would not prevent Woodside moving more rock art with the forced co-operation of local Indigenous groups as the company completed the development of its gas processing plant.

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"The rock art has just been moved into a section of the Pluto lease," Mr Barker said. "It's set down as a conservation area. We never wanted the projects to go ahead but we knew it was going to go ahead anyway so we work with them rather than have that stuff destroyed."

Community advocate Robin Chapple, who works with the

Minerals Policy Institute, said shareholders at Woodside's annual general meeting in Perth on 19 April had voiced concerns about the destruction of rock art.

Mr Chapple said Woodside directors told shareholders the company had no choice but to continue the development of its gas-processing plant on the current site, despite other cleared sites being available.

"When asked why they were not going to the already cleared land, they proffered very quickly the view that they would love to go there but the Government was not allowing them to, and was forcing them to go to areas that contained a large number of rock art," Mr Chapple said.

"The Government is paranoid of anybody doing something to protect rock art because it sets a precedent for any future developer that may go there."

WA Greens Senator Rachel Siewert said Mr Turnbull was not doing enough to protect the ancient rock art of the Burrup, and the National Heritage listing should go ahead immediately.

"What we're still concerned about is the delay and that it looks like the Pluto site won't go on the list. We're deeply concerned because of the art that will be lost," she said.