

Industry is a 'high risk' to Burrup rock art

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INDUSTRIAL development posed a "high risk" to ancient Aboriginal art on the Burrup Peninsula, some of which was rare enough to warrant national heritage listing, a new report commissioned by the Federal Government has warned.

The study done for the Federal Department of Environment and Heritage says there could be up to a million carvings in the area and on surrounding islands.

"The current footprint of industry on the Burrup Peninsula, and its anticipated spread, present both direct and indirect impacts which place cultural heritage and the art of the archipelago at high risk of being endangered," the report by Jo McDonald Cultural Heritage Management said.

"Sites ... contain motifs which are rare on the archipelago (and) could be argued as

meeting National Heritage list criterion."

Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull has pledged to place the area on a National Heritage list by the middle of this year, but the promise comes too late to prevent ancient Aboriginal rock art being moved to make way for Woodside Petroleum's new \$10 billion Pluto LNG project.

WA Liberal MP and former resources minister Colin Barnett has argued against building Pluto on the Burrup, saying it made a mockery of the Federal Government's ongoing consideration of heritage listing for the area. He believed the Burrup rock art was one of the most significant heritage issues WA had faced.

Woodside has already moved several artworks under the supervision of Aboriginal advisers. Ultimately, up to 200 rock carvings could be shifted to allow the development.

Pluto sits alongside Woodside's existing LNG project, which is Australia's biggest resource development, and the Burrup Fertiliser project. Several other industrial developments have been mooted for the area because it is close to vast gas supplies.

"The archaeology and rock art of the Dampier Archipelago provides an outstanding and arguably unique example of long-term Aboriginal occupation," the report said.

"The many thousands of sites and (likely) millions of engravings are spread almost continuously across the entire Burrup Peninsula.

"The cultural landscape of the Dampier archipelago is of outstanding scientific significance."

Woodside has said it would support heritage listing if it was recognised industry and heritage could coexist.