

Rock carvings get protection

By Ben Cranston

GREEN groups and the WA Government are in disagreement over whether Commonwealth heritage listing of 99 per cent of the Burrup Peninsula will stifle industry.

State Development Minister Eric Ripper says the decision will allow industry to continue uninhibited and help protect thousands of rare Aboriginal rock carvings.

"The Burrup is an important industrial hub as well as being an important heritage site," Mr Ripper said.

"It currently produces about \$15b in production which is exported, so that's something to take into account.

"Further development is possible because there are industrial sites that are not in the heritage listed area and even in the heritage listed area, properly planned and sensibly controlled development is possible."

But Friends of Australian Rock Art spokesman Robin Chapple hit back saying the move would like-

ly raise questions as to the future of the LNG industry on the Burrup.

He told ABC News: "Industry should now really reconsider its position, and not be seen as international pariahs in going to this site for industrial development and relocate to the mainland, which doesn't have any of the problems associated with Burrup".

Greens leader Bob Brown attacked the decision to only protect 99 per cent of the Burrup, saying it was akin to selling off a section of the Sydney Opera House.

"This is probably the world's greatest rock art site," he told reporters in Sydney.

"It predates the primitive area sites in France, it's much older than Stonehenge or the pyramids of Egypt, and here's the minister saying 'I'll keep one per cent of it aside for the gas developers'."

Malcolm Turnbull last week announced the 241sqkm listed area was 99 per cent of the land area where national heritage values occurred.

"The Dampier Archipelago is home to Australia's second largest tonnage port (Dampier Port), supports thousands of jobs and contains in excess of \$35b in industrial developments," Mr Turnbull said.

"Today's decision shows that the Archipelago's significant heritage can co-exist alongside one of our most resource-rich industrial areas."

Greens Senator Rachel Siewert said: "At this point we call on Woodside Energy and the Western Australian Government to go one better than the Federal Minister, and to protect Australia's heritage by relocating the proposed Pluto gas plant to one of the perfectly adequate alternative sites that have been identified."

Rock engravings are thought to number in the hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, with individual sites including Slew Valley in the Southern Burrup containing more than 20,000 engravings in extremely hard granite.