

Letters

Save artefacts

Thanks to *The West Australian* for acknowledging the significance of the historic Hope Downs discovery (report, 7/4) and again when Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting and Rio Tinto refused to guarantee that they would quarantine the area from mining activity (Rinehart refuses to guarantee protection of prehistoric site, 10/4).

As we have seen on the nearby Burrup Peninsular, with its ancient Aboriginal rock carvings, mining and construction activity interferes with their archaeological and aesthetic integrity.

The Hope Downs site is of similar or greater anthropological and archaeological significance than the Burrup site because it is older and there appear to be more artefacts of daily life of the Banyjima people at Hope Downs than on the

Burrup Peninsular.

White man's pastoral and mining activities have been in the Pilbara for only the last 140 years and left quite significant effects on the land, people, flora and fauna, while Aboriginal use of the land, which dates back 35,000 years, has demonstrated a more sustainable use of the land through a more harmonious existence with it and all its plants and animals.

It would be a great loss to humankind if the evidence of Aboriginal activity spanning thousands of years in the Pilbara would have its integrity compromised by disturbing and also moving many of these artefacts from their original sites to where they have little relevance. And they could also be moved to the land of other Aboriginal peoples in the Pilbara.

West Australians should call on the State Government to act to preserve the caves and rock overhang where evidence of ancient Aboriginal habitation took place and that mining not be allowed within a certain perimeter of the sites rather than move the prehistorical artefacts.

Maintaining the sites in their current location would assure Aboriginal groups seeking to protect their history and culture that the Government is choosing to recognise them, rather than acceding only to the wishes of resource companies; managers and owners seeking to make a killing from the ripping up and extraction of the fleeting mineral wealth of the area to line the pockets of a few rich shareholders.

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