



Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia



Church Groups call for Government to support World Heritage Listing of the Burrup Peninsula

MEDIA RELEASE (20 December 2008): Today marks the second anniversary of the campaign to save the rock art of the Burrup Peninsula. While Western Australian Premier Colin Barnett gave a commitment to protect the Burrup during the State election campaign, this site of cultural and spiritual significance remains under threat from industrial expansion.

The Social Justice Board of the Uniting Church in Western Australia, the Anglican Social Responsibilities Commission, the Catholic Social Justice Council, the WA Regional Meeting of Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and the Council of Churches in Western Australia support the campaign to have the Burrup Peninsula World Heritage Listed.

Today, we call on the state and federal Governments to demonstrate, once and for all, their commitment to the protection of the Burrup Peninsula by actively and openly supporting work by Friends of Australian Rock Art, the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations, the Australian Rock Art Research Association, the World Monuments Fund and the National Trust of Australia to have the Burrup included in the World Heritage List.

The Burrup Peninsula is a wonderful repository of tens of thousands of examples of ancient rock art.

The rock art is believed to be some of the oldest artwork in the world - some of it between ten thousand and thirty thousand years old. It has also been argued that the Burrup may contain the earliest known representations of the human face, as well as several animal species which have been extinct for several thousand years.

However, the Burrup Peninsula is also the only Australian site ever to have been listed on the World Monument Fund's list of the world's 100 most endangered cultural monuments, which includes Machu Picchu and Angkor Wat.

While the rock art was included in the National Heritage List on 3 July 2007, the Burrup Peninsula is still under threat of damage or destruction as a result of industrial expansion.

The Burrup Peninsula needs and deserves to be included on the World Heritage List.

The protection of the ancient rock art also offers an opportunity for the government to further its efforts towards reconciliation and to demonstrate a commitment to acknowledging the spiritual heritage of this land. Furthermore, the government should ensure the active participation of Indigenous people in the management of the rock art - this is integral to the protection of Indigenous heritage values.

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