

GOVERNMENT MEDIA MONITORING UNIT

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SIAN GARD

Now earlier in the week, we spoke about a TV report on the destruction of ancient rock art on the Burrup Peninsular, near Karratha. Big industry and the WA Government have been accused of destroying the art in the interest of wealth creation for the state. The issue has made its way to Parliament House in Canberra and now a bunch of senators are on their way to Karratha to investigate.

Senator Rachel Siewert from the Australian Greens, is one WA senator on that parliamentary party. Now what have senators in Canberra been told about the Burrup rock art?

RACHEL SIEWERT

Well what.. Senator Eggleston and myself co-hosted a forum last week in Parliament, just so that we could let people know – senators and their staff and other interested people in Parliament House – we wanted to let people know about the rock art on the Burrup and its extreme value and world importance and also to let people know what threats it was facing and, in fact, unfortunately, that some of the art had already been destroyed by industrial development in the area over the last 20 or 30 years.

SIAN GARD

So why are you coming to Karratha?

RACHEL SIEWERT

Well, what we're trying.. we're.. certainly Senator Brown and myself are coming up later..

well, early next month or next month, to look at the area. There's going to be.. the National Trust have a forum on July the 13th, so we're coming up to attend that, but also to have a look at some of the art and look at some of the potential threats, so that we can get an understanding for ourselves. I know that people have already been up and I understand there's others that are interested in going. This is a world class site and it's an area of absolute national significance and people, I think, are trying to find out for themselves and have a look for themselves just what these issues are.

SIAN GARD

Senator, I just like to clarify.. that's the Greens' leader, Bob Brown, that will be attending to Karratha as well, is that correct?

RACHEL SIEWERT

That's right, yes, that's right.

SIAN GARD

Now what do you hope to achieve while you're here?

RACHEL SIEWERT

What we're hoping to do is have a look on site; give.. certainly Senator Brown who already, I must say, has an understanding or has a deep interest and understanding of these issues, but he hasn't been on site, so he'd like to see for himself these issues, get a better understanding of the issues and of the potential for different industries to impact on the area and also the scale. So he's trying to get a deeper understanding of the issues and also, I don't think that this particular site.. people probably don't have a really good understanding, or just a feeling for it until they've actually seen it for themselves. But Senator Brown in particular and myself have a very deep interest in this area and are deeply concerned about the potential threat to the petroglyphs in the area.

SIAN GARD

Will you be talking to big industry like Woodside, which has impacted on rock art sites?

RACHEL SIEWERT

We're hoping to yes and, in fact, we have already spoken to them and representatives of Woodside were, in fact, at the forum in Canberra last week. So it's not as if we don't want to talk to them as well. I've, in fact, met with representatives of Woodside on a number of occasions myself and have an understanding of existing infrastructure on the Burrup and also the proposals for extension of the infrastructure already. So yes, we certainly want to be talking to industry and to hear all sides of this discussion.

SIAN GARD

Senator, we have less than two minutes to go before we hit news, so very quickly – what about the roll of the WA State Government? They're accused of mainly being interested in generating wealth for the state, will you be tackling them?

RACHEL SIEWERT

Certainly. We have very strong concerns about their desire to push expansion of the industry on the Burrup, when we believe it would be better located in other places. We don't want to stop development in this state, but we don't believe it can come at the cost of this extremely important, world significant site. There's estimates that there's a million petroglyphs up there and that it is one of the most important sites. It's at least five times older than the pyramids and I don't think anybody would want to see the destruction of the pyramids, so I don't believe that in this state we should be facilitating the destruction of this hugely important site.

SIAN GARD

Senator Rachel Siewert, thank you for dropping in to the North-West this morning. That's Senator Rachel Siewert from the Australian Greens, who is one of the senators that will be visiting from Canberra to look at the Burrup rock art.

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