

WA to fight heritage bid for Burrup

GRAHAM MASON

Alan Carpenter has warned of economic catastrophe for WA if Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell grants national heritage listing on the Burrup Peninsula in the State's North-West.

The National Heritage Council is assessing a heritage listing application for the region and will make a recommendation to Mr Campbell as early as next month, which the Minister can accept or reject.

To complicate matters, the WA Heritage Council is also investigating whether the peninsula, or parts of it, should be heritage listed.

The council's committee toured the region last month. At a meeting in Karratha, it unanimously resolved that the 20,000-year-old Aboriginal rock art in the region had the "highest cultural significance".

The Premier told Parliament yesterday that the State Government could manage the peninsula successfully and sensibly.

"It does not need to be listed on the national heritage listing," he said.

"If it does . . . it could have an absolutely devastating impact on industry in that area and obviously therefore in the flow-on strength of the Australian economy.

"The Burrup and Dampier Archi-

pelago are vital in the continuing economic development of WA and the proper and careful management of heritage, environmental, economic, social and cultural issues can be performed by the State."

A spokeswoman for Mr Campbell said the Minister would balance the need to protect the heritage values of the area with the economic development of the State and the nation.

Mr Carpenter has appointed native title solicitor Bardy McFarlane to chair the Dampier Archipelago Co-ordination Body, which includes representatives from government, industry, community, indigenous and non-government organisations.

Mr Carpenter said the absurdity of the Burrup being listed on a national heritage register could mean that applications for an injunction to stop work in the region could be lodged by parties outside Australia.

"This is the very core of the Australian economy which is being put in jeopardy here," he said.

"What we have to have from the Federal Minister is an absolutely unequivocal statement that under no circumstances will he allow any disruption, any listing, or any continuance of legislation that is going to potentially devastatingly interrupt the economy of WA at the Burrup Peninsula."