

Ancient rock art vandalised

By Ben Cranston

SENSELESS vandals are desecrating rock art on the Burrup Peninsula leaving scars on the landscape for 500 years to come.

Industry has destroyed hundreds of artefacts on the Burrup, but this Pandora's Box of human history has a new foe looking to leave its own mark. Visitors are carving their own rock carvings and also defacing the artworks.

Australia's National Trust chairman Robin Chapple spent the weekend cataloguing damage already done in the hope of stopping any more tourists from leaving their mark.

Mr Chapple wants the area, where history and industry coexist side-by-side, defended from vandals with rocks and spray paint by Aboriginal people acting as rangers.

"The way it would work would be a lot like El Questro in the Kimberley," Mr Chapple said.

The pro-development conservationist said 20 to 30 rangers patrolling the area would secure thousands of artefacts from being defaced by scratch happy visitors, but also enhance the experience for those not

at the Burrup to carve their name over a picture drawn before the pyramids were built.

The plan would also create employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

"We can't allow this to happen," Mr Chapple said.

"People should see it and it should be available, but people need to be escorted through those areas."

Mr Chapple said at the weekend he gave directions to countless tourists driving in circles searching for the rock art.

The rock art was everywhere, but couldn't be seen from gravel roads that do not have signs.

When the *Pilbara News* visited the area with Mr Chapple one carload of tourists asked whether they could even use a public road to access the rock art.

The Environment and Conservation Department planned to open the Burrup's northern end later this year, adding accommodation and hiring two Aboriginal rangers.

"This place has huge potential for tourism," Mr Chapple said.

"It should be run like it would in the rest of the world."



ABOVE: Visitors to the Burrup have vandalised ancient artefacts with their own messages.

RIGHT: Other tourists have scrawled their own rock art.

