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Archaeologists' group backs push to protect rock art. 06/12/2006. ABC News Online

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Archaeologists' group backs push to protect rock art

A group representing Australian archaeologists has backed a call for emergency heritage listing of the Burrup Peninsula, in north-west Western Australia, to protect ancient Aboriginal rock art.

The Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists was commenting on an application by a coalition of federal politicians for urgent action.

Woodside is planning to relocate some of the rock art for its Pluto project, but the MPs claim the process is highly risky and will also destroy its heritage value.

Association president Sue McIntyre-Tamwoy says industrial development on the Burrup is an embarrassment to Australia.

"It's a ridiculous situation to exist in Australia where you have something that is known to be of such significance that is constantly being attacked through attrition through individual development projects," she said.

Woodside says that with the assistance of Aboriginal custodians, the Pluto gas plant has been redesigned to leave 95 per cent of engravings on the Pluto site untouched.

The remaining 150 engravings will be relocated in consultation with traditional custodians and heritage experts.

Site preparation is due to start by the end of the year.

The federal Member for Kalgoorlie, Barry Haase, says Woodside has done the right thing and should be commended.

"They have realigned the footprint of the site, they have realigned things like pipe racks and roads to avoid the greatest majority of petroglyphs [rock art]," he said.