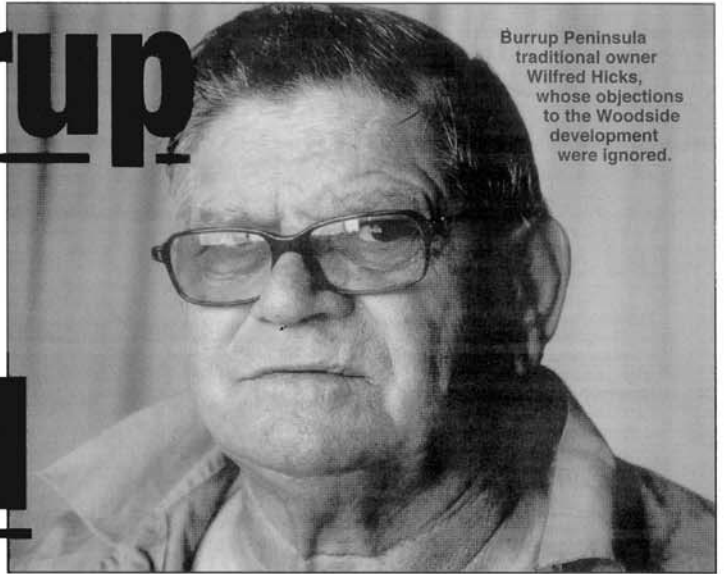


Woodside pushes ahead with site clearance works

More Burrup heritage destroyed

Burrup Peninsula traditional owner Wilfred Hicks, whose objections to the Woodside development were ignored.



By Perth Correspondent
KEN BOASE



The National Trust of Australia has warned that Australia will lose all credibility overseas if it does not list the Burrup Peninsula in

Western Australia's Pilbara region on the National Heritage Register.

The Trust has also pointed to an international campaign targeting the shareholders of Woodside, which has begun site clearance work for the Pluto A on-shore natural gas processing plant for the giant Pluto gas field north-west of Karratha.

The Trust, the National Heritage Council and other groups have recommended the listing but, in December, Federal Environment Minister and WA Liberal Senator Ian Campbell refused an application for an emergency heritage listing, allowing Woodside to carry out the site clearance work which the company admits will result in the destruction of some ancient Aboriginal rock art and engravings.

The company issued a short statement to the Koori Mail

confirming that site clearance work had begun on 8 January.

"Site preparation work has commenced on Burrup Industrial Estate 'Site A', the location for the Pluto LNG storage tanks, which take longer than the rest of the plant to construct. This work is consistent with our environmental and heritage approvals," the statement said.

"Site preparation work will include fencing, road access, relocating cultural heritage materia installation of temporary facilities, and bulk earthworks and will be ongoing over the first half of 2007.

"Relocation of rock art, in consultation with the traditional custodians, archaeologists and relevant government agencies, will be included in our site preparation activities over the coming months. Ninety-five per cent of the rock art on our leases will not be disturbed."

Traditional owner and Ngaluma Elder Wilfred Hicks said that he tried to persuade the company to build the processing plant on alternative sites, either at the Maitland industrial estate near Karratha, or another site to the south-west where mining company Apache had agreed to base its operations.

Other sites

"We've always been asking Woodside to move, but they keep telling us it's too expensive to build out on the Maitland, but there are other places that they can build along the coastline, like Apache, out at the 40-mile there," Mr Hicks said.

"They're building a plant out there and there's less heritage matters involved, but Woodside is just there to damage all our sites."

Mr Hicks said pleas to Woodside not to destroy any more rock art on the Burrup had fallen on deaf ears.

"I've had meetings with Woodside and they just look at you and more or less tell you, 'well you can sit there and complain as much as you like but we're just going to go ahead'. That's the very thing I get from them.

"On the other hand, they say they're trying to save the artefacts and all our heritage, but that's not really what they've got in their mind."

Mr Hicks said it was obvious that Senator Campbell had deliberately delayed any decision on heritage listing so that Woodside could develop its preferred sites for the gas processing plant.

National Trust of Australia (WA) Chief Executive Officer Tom Perrigo said Senator Campbell and the Federal Government, as well as the WA Government, had one last chance to salvage their reputation overseas on heritage matters.

"After Woodside the line will be drawn in the sand; We've always stated that, Senator Campbell has stated that, and he is basically on notice publicly, professionally and quite frankly, his credibility is right on the line," Mr Perrigo said.

"If he does not list the entire precinct as recommended by his experts, by the National Trust, by many others and puts it on the National Heritage List, then there will be chaos."

Support groups are already planning a sustained protest outside Woodside's Australian headquarters in Perth later this month, and other action is being planned by the newly-formed Perth-based group 'Friends of Australian Rock Art.'

Mr Perrigo said he had spent some time in the United Kingdom over the Christmas break, and heritage groups and even some corporate entities had expressed disgust over the way the issue had been handled, particularly by the WA Government.

He said another campaign would directly target Woodside's shareholders.



National Trust WA CEO Tom Perrigo.