



Feature articles

Burrup Peninsula: Take Action!



Aboriginal rock paintings on the Burrup peninsula, photo Karen Robinson

The globally significant Burrup rock art precinct could be destroyed if the Federal and Western Australian Governments allow the construction of a giant gas processing plant on the Burrup Peninsula by Woodside, the Perth based oil and gas exploration and production company.

An assessment by the Australian Heritage Council found Burrup Peninsula meets 5 of the 9 criteria for National Heritage Listing. To qualify, a site need only meet one of the criteria. However the Federal Minister for the Environment appears set not to nominate the area for Heritage Listing, instead saying the cost to the Australian economy would be too great.

Woodside have been very much against the listing of Burrup but on November 28 2006 the company issued a media statement in which they said they were dropping their opposition to the listing of Burrup on the National Heritage List. They believe there can be both protection of the rock art and industry development.

However rock art experts, Indigenous groups etc don't believe such a 'win/win' is possible at such a sensitive site and want Woodside to find an alternative site (something other resource companies involved in LNG production off the WA coast have done already). On Friday (10/12/2006) Federal MPs Racheal Siewert (Greens) and Carmen Lawrence (ALP) with a few other supporters applied for emergency listing of the Burrup under s.324F of the EPBC in a move to quicken a decision.

****Update 22 January 2007****

Federal Environment Minister Senator Ian Campbell had 10 days in which to respond. Unfortunately just before Christmas, Minister Campbell rejected the application for emergency listing of the Burrup saying the building of a major gas installation did not warrant emergency listing.

In a statement Senator Campbell said "On the basis of evidence presented to me, which includes advice from the Australian Heritage Council, I do not consider that the perceived threat to national heritage values of the area warrants an emergency heritage listing". He also said Woodside had lodged a separate application for approval to proceed with its broader Pluto gas project which would require the approval of both the WA and Australian governments before it could proceed.

As of the 22 January 2007 Woodside have already begun work to construct a large gas processing plant on the Peninsula. It is likely the work will cause priceless rock art to permanently be damaged. In Perth, the Friends of Australian Rock Art (FARA) are staging a protest outside the Woodside offices to hopefully pressure the company to build its facility at a more appropriate site on the West Australian coastline.

Links: <http://www.dampierrockart.net/>
<http://www.burrup.org.au/>
<http://www.ntwa.com.au/>

People are urged to write to the editor of The West Australian and The Australian newspaper to voice your concerns of the Burrup:

The West Australian

Go to www.thewest.com.au and scroll to the bottom - Contact Us

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