



Push to list WA rock art as national heritage

By David Curry

A move of only 500m of Woodside Petroleum's proposed Pluto LNG project on Western Australia's Burrup Peninsula would save the most significant rock art site in the world, Greens senator Rachel Siewert said yesterday.

Senator Siewert joined Labor's Carmen Lawrence, Independent Peter Andren and a group of activists in front of Parliament House to support the national heritage listing of indigenous rock art on the Burrup Peninsula.

The peninsula, 267km west of Port Hedland, contains the largest concentration of rock art in the world, with some rock carvings dating back 30,000 years. The carvings include what may be the first representation of the human face in history.

Some of the rock art is threatened by Woodside Petroleum's \$10 billion Pluto gas project. Woodside has already removed 42 motifs, which number in the thousands. The National Trust has

sharply criticised the removal of the carvings and has also warned of the degradation of the remaining rock art that would result from industrial pollution if the Pluto project proceeds.

Dr Lawrence, the federal Member for Fremantle, said the Woodside project had already resulted in the destruction of about 15 per cent of the site.

"Some of that's been done in ignorance, some with the full knowledge of what was being done," Dr Lawrence said.

"We cannot now claim not to know how significant it is, and what damage is likely to be done by further destruction."

In April, the Minister for Environment and Heritage, Malcolm Turnbull, said most of the rock art would be protected under national heritage listing by the middle of the year.

Senator Siewert said she was concerned the heritage listing would

omit the Pluto site. "The important thing is they've got to list the whole site - [including] the Pluto site," she said. "What the minister, as we understand it, is contemplating at the moment is listing it without the Pluto site, which will mean further loss of art." She stressed that she was not opposed to the development, just its location.

Woodside and the Western Australian Government resisted heritage listing until late 2006 but have since been in negotiations with the Federal Government over the listing. Woodside has argued it would support heritage listing, but only if it allows industry and heritage to co-exist on the Burrup.

Mr Turnbull said he remained committed to making a decision by the middle of the year and that he intended to "consult key parties to ensure the long term protection of the area's heritage values and national interests".



PROTEST: Greens senator Rachel Siewert, fourth from the left, Labor's Carmen Lawrence, sixth from the left, and Independent Peter Andren, seventh from the left