

Rock art listing not enough, say MPs

NICK BUTTERLY, RHIANNA KING
and CHRIS JOHNSON

Three Federal MPs have hit out at the Government's decision to award a national heritage listing to big areas of land on the Burrup Peninsula.

Federal Environment and Heritage Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced yesterday the Government would list 241sqkm of land on the Burrup after striking an agreement with oil and gas giant Woodside, the WA State Government and Aboriginal communities.

The move should protect thousands of Aboriginal carvings, some of which date back more than 30,000 years.

However, the fine detail of the listing will allow Woodside to continue building its big gas processing plants, Pluto A and B. In a joint statement, Greens Senator Rachel Siewert, Labor's Carmen Lawrence and Independent Peter Andren said they welcomed the move to protect some rock carvings, but warned many could still be damaged by industrial development.

They also complained some carvings had already been damaged when they were moved to make way for building.

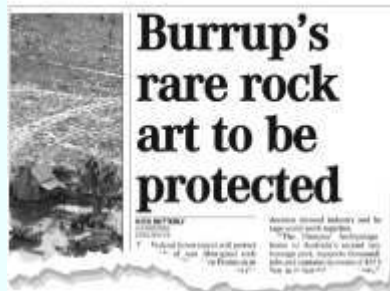
Woodside has already shifted a number of carvings under the guidance of Aboriginal experts.

"The Minister's belated decision to recognise the undisputed heritage values of the Dampier Archipelago and the Burrup Peninsula comes too late to stop the damage that has occurred and is sadly framed to allow further damage," the statement read.

"It would have taken uncommon courage for the Minister to protect the full scope of the Burrup art against the



Safeguard: Rock art in 241sqkm of the Burrup will be protected..



How we broke the story on Tuesday.

wishes of Woodside Energy. Unfortunately, he hasn't shown that courage." All three MPs called on the WA Government and Woodside to shift the gas plant somewhere else so no more carvings would be damaged.

State Development Minister Eric Ripper said the move would not stifle industry and would protect the ancient rock art. He said the next step to protect the site — world heritage listing — was not currently on the agenda.

WA Liberal MP Colin Barnett, a prominent supporter of heritage listing, said he was pleased the rock art had finally been recognised nationally.

"The danger is that the Commonwealth Government will now use heritage laws to try to manage the process of industrial development and that would be a mistake," he said.