

Safeguard heritage of the Burrup

Given the State Government's shameful record on protecting WA's unique cultural heritage, the call by the Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation for Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett to refuse to ratify the State Government's farcical draft heritage management plan for the Burrup Peninsula, is timely.

The State Government's proposal is breathtaking in its candour. It asks Peter Garrett to surrender to the State Government his Federal regulatory powers in relation to the Burrup's world heritage cultural values. This, it is hoped, would allow the WA Department of Industry and Resources a free hand in its

continuing program of industrial expansion and rock art clearance on a National Heritage-listed site which is the world's biggest and oldest rock art gallery. It has been on the World Monument Fund's list of 100 most endangered international cultural monuments for several years (along with Macchu Picchu in Peru and Angkor Wat in Cambodia).

In all other Australian jurisdictions, mining companies are required as a matter of course to relocate their own infrastructure, rather than Aboriginal cultural heritage which is in the way. Woodside had no objection to such arrangements in the routing of the proposed Trans

Territory Pipeline through the top end of the NT, a project I worked on extensively from 2003-5.

Here in the wild, wild West however, the situation is vastly different. The removal of rock art from its original cultural landscape is considered standard operating procedure, even though such practices breach the Burra Charter (which regulates all aspects of cultural heritage management in Australia), as well as the 2003 UNESCO Declaration on the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage.

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