

By WA Correspondent KEN BOASE



FRIENDS of Australian Rock Art (FARA) have sounded more alarm bells over the future of Aboriginal rock art on the Burrup Peninsula in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

The Perth-based advocacy group says a new aerial photograph shows more damage on the site of energy giant Woodside's Pluto gas field, north-west of Karratha.

The Burrup is home to up to one million ancient rock engravings dated back to 30,000 BC.

Woodside was given exemption from National Heritage listing last year and received permission to 'remove' almost 1000 pieces of rock art for its processing plant.

Leading scientists have called for the Burrup to be World Heritage listed and for any development to be moved away from the region, a position supported by new WA Premier Colin Barnett.

FARA spokesman Robin Chapple said the aerial photograph, taken from a helicopter hired by the group, showed the levelling of the Pluto A and B platform sites, with no evidence that rock art has

been moved safely to a secure location.

"Woodside advise us that it's been moved, but we're not in a position to see that because they are not bound under the Aboriginal Heritage Act, believe it or not, to show anybody where they've moved it to," he said, adding that Woodside would allow only traditional owners to view the new location.

"So therefore, other than Indigenous

pressure on the peninsula through rock crushing needed as in-fill for Woodside's Pluto construction.

Leading international archaeologist Professor Sylvia Hallam said any future resources development in the Pilbara should logically be moved further south, which would be the centre of future gas fields being developed in the region.

"The Pluto project represents

devastation on an unprecedented scale in one of the densest areas of rock art on the entire Peninsula; it should never have happened, and it must never happen again," she said.

Mr Chapple will return to the Upper House of the WA Parliament in May next year as a Greens MP, and will use his position to recommend that the Burrup be placed on the World Heritage register.

Premier Barnett said in the lead-up to this year's WA election that he supported the

protection of the rock art, and any future heavy industrial development should be situated elsewhere, although he did not specify which area he favoured.

Professor Hallam said a decision on a future industrial zone should be modelled on the recent site identified in the Kimberley, involving all stakeholders to ensure that cultural and environmental concerns are satisfied.

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- FARA's Robin Chapple



people who really in the main do not want to go out there and see what's been done, Woodside are the only people who can attest to where it's been moved to and whether it's suitable."

Mr Chapple said other businesses were also going ahead with plans to base their operations on the Burrup. These included two explosives companies and a fertiliser plant, and he said there was added



The aerial photograph taken by FARA, showing the Woodside Pluto development of its on-shore gas processing facility on the Burrup Peninsula in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.