

## Rock art fears alarmist: Brown

By Anne Calverley April 27th 2002

STATE Development Minister Clive Brown has defended industry expansion on the Burrup Peninsula, labelling the Greens' fears about saving ancient rock art as alarmist and uninformed.

Greens (WA) MLC Robin Chapple said yesterday a massive cluster of petroglyphs - engravings imprinted on cliffs and boulders thousands of years ago - were under threat from pollutants expected from the proposed downstream processing plants.

A \$1 billion methanol plant and a \$600 million ammonia plant are among six new gas-to-liquid projects undergoing feasibility studies for the area just off Dampier in the North-West.

Mr Chapple said the historic area should be left alone because the Maitland industrial estate on the mainland could accommodate the projects.

Research showed gas emissions would have an acid-rain effect on the painted monoliths, causing them to fade over time.

But Mr Brown said the new gas-to-liquid plants would run on lower sulfur fuels and lubricants than existing production sites on the peninsula.

There was little evidence emissions disrupted climate patterns.

He rejected Mr Chapple's claims the Government was promoting development at the expense of the environment or cultural assets. He said a government team would gather data to measure emission impacts and a cultural heritage management plan would be drawn up in conjunction with local indigenous people.

There had also been a lot of public discussion about the projects, expected to get off the ground in the next five to 10 years.

"It therefore seems most peculiar for Mr Chapple to suddenly now demand a halt to these activities, when companies have already spent tens of millions in feasibility, engineering, heritage and environmental studies," Mr Brown said.

The Melbourne-based chairman of international rock art federations, Robert Bednarik, has been pushing for the 700 concentrations of rock art on the Burrup Peninsula to be put on the World Heritage list.

A Department of Aboriginal Affairs spokesman said Burrup rock art was recognised and protected by its listing with the National Estate.