

**TRIPLE J FRANCIS LEACH 9.49AM
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*THERE ARE PLANS FOR AN INDUSTRIAL ESTATE ON
THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SITE OF ANCIENT ROCK ART.*

*INTERVIEWS WITH WA GREENS MP ROBIN CHAPPLE;
ROBERT BEDNARIK, INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
ROCK ART ORGANIZATIONS; WESTERN AUSTRALIA
MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT CLIVE BROWN.*

VICKI KERRIGAN – FILL-IN PRESENTER:

A little while ago on the morning show we told you about the West Australian government's plans to develop a massive industrial estate on the Burrup Peninsula in WA's north-west. Now, the area is already home to the state's gas industry, but it's also the site of the world's biggest and most impressive collection of ancient rock art. Internationally renowned rock art experts have been studying the site and they've predicted any further development will destroy the petroglyphs, or rock carvings as they're more commonly known. But the government has vowed to push ahead anyway. In fact it's now looking for a second opinion to try to dispute the predictions that have already been published. The thing is, the development is worth six billion dollars to the state, so even if rock art experts think the Burrup carvings are

priceless, they're going to have a huge fight on their hands to convince the government.

ROBIN CHAPPLE - WA GREENS MP:

The government actually has to realise that this is not just some little Aboriginal artefact that they can merrily go and bulldozer over the top of. This has international and world heritage status and, as such, must be protected.

KERRIGAN:

Greens MLC Robin Chapple is among the growing band of opponents to the government's planned industrial estate on the Burrup Peninsula near Dampier in WA's north-west.

Burrup has the world's largest collection of rock art. It's estimated there are more than a million ancient petroglyphs scattered across the peninsula. But rock art experts believe many of these carvings will be lost forever if development goes ahead; they'll be eaten away by emissions.

CHAPPLE:

Here we have a heritage that goes back eighty thousand years to virtually the last ice age and it has no value, and yet on the international scale of things the world is saying, wow, we've got to deal with this. I mean, even UNESCO and people like that are writing to us and saying, what's going on in WA?

KERRIGAN:

An international campaign has been launched to save the Burrup rock art. Conservation groups and scientists from around the world are voicing their condemnation of the industrial estate following the release of research by the president of the international rock art federation, Robert Bednarik. He's predicted any further development in the area will be devastating.

ROBERT BEDNARIK - IFRAO:

Into very long-term it will destroy the rock art. The first loss of actual figures should be noticed by about 2025 or 2035, but by the end of this century some very ... a very great majority of figures are going to have to ... are going to be disappearing.

KERRIGAN:

The government has read Mr Bednarik's report but it's not convinced. State Development Minister Clive Brown.

CLIVE BROWN - STATE DEVELOPMENT MINISTER:

The first question is trying to understand exactly the nature of the research that he has done, given that he is the only person in the world, according to his paper, that uses this particular form of predictive work.

KERRIGAN:

Do you think he might be fudging his figures?

BROWN:

Oh no, I don't think it's ... I don't think it's fudging it as such; I think that would be wrong to say, but I think it ... like in other areas where ... in other areas of the professions there are people who are internationally recognised and they have a different view. And my understanding is that my department, the Department of Minerals and Petroleum Resources, has sought to clarify with him some of the underlying science that he's used in arriving at the conclusions.

KERRIGAN:

Basically, the minister wants a second opinion, but as Greens MLC Robin Chapple points out, that might be hard.

CHAPPLE:

Who's going to dispute the facts? Because they seem to be saying, oh, we're going to put forward an expert panel, but the only person who's basically an expert in this who has the longevity of the whole process of Burrup is Mr Bednarik and Patricia Vinnicombe. They did the initial work, they're the people with all the panels that can show impact of various sites, and these are the people that are globally the experts.

KERRIGAN:

Burrup Peninsula is home to WA's gas industry. The environmental protection authority has already approved two downstream processing plants and four more are under consideration. It's worth six billion dollars to the state, so the government is not backing down.

BROWN:

If we were to turn around now and say to those people, after they've spent a lot of money investing here and obtained envi... proper environmental approvals to go ahead with their projects, that we simply said to them that you can now not go ahead for some reason or the other even, after getting those approvals, then that would be an act of gross bad faith on our behalf. And indeed would damage Western Australia's reputation internationally very significantly.

KERRIGAN:

Minister, do you think it will damage Western Australia's reputation internationally, to allow something to go ahead that could potentially damage an ancient record of humanity?

BROWN:

Well, I think the days when it's develop-at-any-cost are well and truly gone.

KERRIGAN:

Yet, Minister, opponents of the project at Burrup are calling you cultural vandals.

BROWN:

Well, you see, what ... well, what I say in relation to that is even if you accept that the absolute science is that contained in the paper that has been produced, that paper says in any event the petroglyphs are at risk, even if none of the projects get under way.

KERRIGAN:

Clive Brown, WA's Development Minister.

Now, the government has said in parliament it will move any rock art boulders that are in the way of development but that's cause for concern too, because twenty years ago when the initial development took place rock art boulders were placed in a nearby fenced-off compound, and it's recently been discovered that some of those boulders are now missing and many other artworks have been ruined. In fact, nearly twenty per cent of s... the rock art that was supposedly protected has been trashed. So it's not necessarily good news.

END OF SEGMENT